



Tasmanian State Budget Submission

Supplementary Paper

Tasmania has an opportunity to utilise its existing demographics to harness older workers who are an underutilised resource for their communities. The social capital of older people has been recognised by the World Economic Forum Report “Global Population Ageing: Peril or Promise?”¹ According to the authors, the key to unlocking this resource is health (physical and mental). Healthy ageing as a principle is supported by the World Health Organisation and is critical to supporting communities with ageing populations.

COTA Tasmania would welcome the opportunity to work with the Tasmanian Government to develop programs to create age friendly workplaces that retain and increase the engagement of older workers.

From our original submission:

Tasmania’s Population Growth Strategy highlights the importance of the role Government can play in providing leadership to support long term sustainable population growth through facilitating job creation and workforce development.

COTA has a strong interest in employment issues for older workers and the broader issues of workforce planning and optimising the employment opportunities for older Tasmanians who are willing and able to continue in the workforce, either on a part time or full time basis.

As well as providing significant social outcomes, the economic case for increasing mature-age labour force participation has been proven at the national level. The Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research found that a five percentage point increase to participation rates of 50-69 year olds is projected to be worth 2.4% of GDP in 2050. If all inactive people aged 55 and over who say they want to work did so, the participation rate for that group would increase six percentage points – also worth 2.4% of GDP. And if Australia had the same mature age participation as New Zealand, GDP in 2012 would be 4% higher.²

¹ S. J. Olshansky, J. Beard and A. Borsch-Supan, (2012) “The Longevity Dividend: Health as an Investment” Chapter 11, pages 57-60

² Rafal Chomik and John Piggott in CEPAR briefing paper 2012/01; Mature-age labour force participation: Trends, barriers, incentives, and future potential

The World Economic Forum contend that the economic value of a growing healthy older population should be aggressively pursued on its own merits as a societal investment.

COTA is committed to continuing the work with age friendly communities to give greater emphasis on creating workplaces that value and support older workers, and also encourage the active development of both age friendly workplaces and age friendly businesses and services. There is an opportunity to leverage off existing work done by both the World Health Organisation and the International Federation of Ageing in both these areas, as well as current research within Australia.

Age- friendly Businesses

COTA Tasmania has also identified an opportunity to engage the business community through developing and age-friendly business program. We already have some interest in the concept which could well be expanded to the whole state once tested. Such an approach would benefit our local community and also tourism businesses for whom a large proportion of clients are in the older demographic

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Age Friendly Workplaces

Whilst the economic benefits of improving workforce participation of older people has been clearly identified, COTA is well aware of some of the challenges that are faced by them. These are the areas of work that COTA feels that an investment in changing workplaces will be of great benefit to the Tasmanian community.

Ageism at Work:

*COTA has been working closely on the issue of ageism in the workplace over the last 12 months. Specifically, we have been speaking with older Tasmanians about their experiences in the workplace and their concerns regarding barriers to workforce participation.*³

Many mature age workers are very positive about continuing to contribute to the economy through the workforce...

"I am only 54 and I have plenty of life in me yet."

"I will be 58... That doesn't stop me from contributing. I'm still going to be smart, I'm still going to be capable."

For many mature age workers, their sense of self is closely connected to their work and the contribution they make through work to the community.

"My psyche, wellbeing – everything; who I am – my identity – is tied up with what I do ...my career.... how I contribute through employment."

³ COTA Tasmania, Willing to Work Inquiry Personal Interviews, October 2015

We are consistently hearing that discrimination in the workforce against mature aged workers is strongly felt by many workers over the age of 45 years but is hidden by loop holes and ambiguity.

Age discrimination in the workplace can be difficult to prove but notwithstanding this fact, the Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon Susan Ryan AO and Tasmania's Anti Discrimination Commissioner, Robin Banks report that workplace discrimination is the most commonly reported complaint received by their offices.

COTA Tasmania believes there is a key leadership role for the Tasmanian Government to play in raising awareness of, and addressing discrimination against mature aged workers. In the current environment Tasmania can ill afford to overlook the wealth of knowledge, experience and skills that mature age workers can bring to the workplace. The effects of discrimination impact both individuals and the community

*"Older job seekers can become severely stressed and discouraged when searching for work. These feelings of frustration sometimes lead to . self-selecting out of the workforce through unemployment or involuntary early retirement."*⁴

COTA believes there are significant opportunities to leverage existing programs to implement flexible working arrangements, ongoing training and opportunities for two-way intergenerational training opportunities.

As a cost effective and practical first step, the Employer of Choice Awards managed through the Department of State Growth, could be encouraged to showcase best practice in mature age recruitment and retention through the introduction of a mature age friendly award in the 2016 program. COTA would be pleased to assist in the development of such an initiative.

Recommendation 2b:

Introduce a mature age friendly award to the Employer of Choice Awards in conjunction with COTA Tasmania.

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We would welcome the opportunity to extend our work in this area beyond the Employer of Choice awards to develop specific programs to enhance workplaces in Tasmania for older workers. Potential areas of work include intergenerational programs such as

⁴ Williams, Ruth; The Conversation.com/Tackling hidden issues for older works delivers wide ranging returns; extracted 26 November 2015

mentoring of other employees, and recognition of the need to effectively implement knowledge transfer in businesses and workplaces. Many businesses do not know how to effectively manage succession planning or transition to retirement programs.

COTA believes there is a need for mentoring programs for older entrepreneurs who may wish to transition from paid employment to business opportunities.

COTA is working closely with local governments to introduce Age -friendly community concepts and would welcome the opportunity to continue to support local governments in their work in this area. This approach would benefit the whole community by:

- Harnessing the crucial role older people play through paid and volunteer work and the transfer of knowledge,
- Leveraging effort from the community, business sector, local and federal governments
- Complementing the Population Strategy by facilitating opportunities for Tasmanians to actively contribute to our community, both socially and economically, as they age.
- Implementing a vision for an integrated, strong and caring community that will benefit all age groups and make Tasmania an attractive place to live.
- Complementing the life course approach to Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan development

Timing is ideal for setting the goal to become an age-friendly state with the WHO joining other world leaders to gather in Brisbane in June 2016 to discuss these issues at the International Federation of Ageing Conference.⁵ There is a specific conference stream dedicated to Age Friendly Cities and Communities, and it will provide a good forum for those working in the space to learn of other work from around the world. Tasmania can take a lead in this area.

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The Opportunity

The Tasmanian Government has a responsibility to implement an effective ageing policy that will set us on a positive course to create an integrated and supportive community that empowers and engages older Tasmanians and keeps them in the workforce .

COTA Tasmania is well placed to continue to work towards developing and educating age friendly businesses and workplaces. COTA has a proven record of strong networks and is a key source of latest information in this area with support and links both nationally and internationally to new trends in this space. We also have grass roots contact with the older Tasmanians, which is essential to this policy approach.

⁵ <http://ifa2016.org.au/>

COTA would like to continue work on Age-Friendly Communities beyond our current grant deed we believes that this work would aligns with the policies of the Tasmanian Government to strengthen the Tasmanian community.

Recommendation

The State Government funds COTA to support age-friendly businesses, workplaces and further work with local councils toward age friendly communities.

Forward estimates for each of the three budget years commencing 2016/17 include funding to support the co-ordination of state-wide Age-Friendly community effort of \$125,000 per annum plus GST and CPI increases per annum