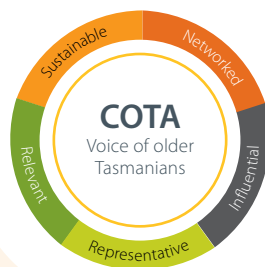




Budget Priorities Statement

2024–2025

NOVEMBER 2023



Age is a number, not a use-by date.

About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing [Tas] Inc) is a not-for-profit organisation, operating as a peak body for a wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to encouraging our community to think positively about ageing. This involves promoting and encouraging social inclusion and championing the rights and interests of Tasmanians as they age.

We have been the voice of older Tasmanians for over 50 years.

Our vision: Ageing in Australia is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.

Our mission: We advance the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age.

For further information regarding this submission please contact:

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Acknowledgement to Country

COTA Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the resilience and knowledge of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the traditional custodians of lutruwita, Tasmania. We acknowledge the wisdom, resilience and knowledge of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and we stand for a future that profoundly respects their perspectives, culture, language and history.

Executive Summary

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the development of the State Budget 2024-25 for Tasmania.

Our 2024-2025 Budget Priorities Statement covers the areas that we know impact Tasmanian's ability to age well in place, whilst also being valued for their contributions. It specifically builds on and confirms our commitment to the requests made in our 23-24 Budget Priorities Statement.

Whilst there are many policy areas relating to older people funded by the Commonwealth, there are measures and initiatives that State Government can undertake, especially in the prevention and social connection spaces, that will assist people to maintain good health and wellbeing as they age.

Our 2022 consultation piece, [H.E.A.R](#) (Healthy, Engaged And Resilient consultation), more thoroughly explores the issues and recommendations contained in this 2024-2025 Budget Priorities Statement and we encourage the Government to review the recommendations from this in conjunction with our submission.

Key issues identified by older Tasmanians included access to appropriate and timely healthcare, housing, transport, social connection and the pressures of cost of living. Experiences of ageism were expressed in all areas that we visited, with workplace discrimination an area of concern.

This large consultation project captured the lived experience of more than 1,500 Tasmanians across the State. It is disappointing that progress on the 2023–2029 Strategy has been slow and we are eager to see the Government commit the time, resources and funding to whole-of-Government initiatives that enable older Tasmanians to feel supported, connected and valued as they age.



Key Investment at a Glance: 2024–2025 State Budget

It must be said at the outset that COTA Tasmania has not seen significant funding increases in our peak body funding for some years. Added to that, requests for indexation at least in line with CPI have not been granted in recent submissions. While we continue to seek indexation and increases in funding for this next financial year, it must be recognised COTA may have to consider its future reach and projects if additional funding is not granted. If this were to occur we suggest governments could not undertake the programs for older Tasmanians that are undertaken for anywhere near the same costs or within the same timeframes.

It's with this in mind, COTA Tasmania respectfully asks the Tasmanian Government to consider the funding requests set out as points at a glance below as a matter of priority. The rationale for these funding requests is provided in the remainder of our submission.

PRIORITY 1: Strengthening Advocacy and Inclusion

Peak Body Sustainability:
**Additional \$590,000
per year**

Support to Plan Ahead –
resource development:
\$150,000

Peer Education Review
Project:
\$50,000

PRIORITY 2: Connection and Community

Social Connection
Grants:
\$200,000

Community Activities
web page – promotion
and maintenance:
**\$50,000 one-off +
\$60,000 per year**

Seniors Week Funding:
**Additional \$110,000
per year**

Seniors Week Grants:
\$20,000

PRIORITY 3: Tackling Ageism

Ageism Awareness
\$45,000 over 2 years

Enhancing the
Awareness of Elder
Abuse:
**Additional \$80,000
per year**

Mature-age Workforce –
increasing our reach:
**\$20,000 one-off for
events +
\$145,000 per year**

Tasmania: An Age-friendly State?

Older Tasmanians deserve to be heard and afforded equity of services, opportunities and representation.

COTA Tasmania has long advocated a life course approach to ageing policy and strategy. We can expect to live longer, healthier lives and we all have a role to play in making decisions that will support us to age well. It needs to be recognised that many inequalities experienced by Tasmanians do not cease to exist as people age, indeed in some cases they increase.

We have known for some time that Tasmania has the highest ageing demographic in Australia. **Tasmanians over 50 years of age now represent 40.89% of our total population (227,989 Tasmanians).** It is projected that more than one in four Tasmanians will be aged 65 or older by 2050. Whilst this is a milestone that should be celebrated, not seen only through an economic burden lens, we must also ensure we plan ahead for this demographic profile and associated needs.

“You deserve to be respected – you are worth it.”

— Attendee at GRIT film screening, Seniors Week 2023

We encourage the Government in its 2024-2025 Budget to consider proactive measures that assist Tasmanians to plan ahead, develop knowledge and strategies, feel connected and empowered to age well with appropriate place-based supports and services that meet their needs as well as value their lived experiences of ageing. Alongside this, we need significant commitment by all government agencies to explore demographic data and projections when planning initiatives and programs of work in order to capture the needs of older Tasmanians, have an equity lens at the core of decision-making, and ensure age-friendly principles are used to guide this planning.

COTA Tasmania is aware of and has been working closely with our DPAC partners in the development of the next Strategy for Older Tasmanians 2024–2029 and we urge the Government to consider our Budget Priorities Statement alongside this to ensure there is adequate resourcing, support and commitment for the life of the strategy and associated action plans.

We must ensure that within this strategy development, digital literacy and accessibility is supported alongside increased health promotion and health literacy initiatives so that all Tasmanians receive information and resources in accessible formats.

“Older people who are digitally literate need to be employed (and paid) to teach older people – WE NEED TO BE DIGITALLY LITERATE! But, we need to be taught by people who understand what older people don’t understand.”

— Attendee at GRIT film screening, Seniors Week 2023

Alongside specific funding requests within this submission, we also make the following considerations:

- Commitment from the Government to establish an **Ageing in Tasmania Advisory Committee**, providing valuable lived experience and maintaining connection to the specific issues experienced by older Tasmanians. This group would also support the review of the Action Plans against the 2024-2029 strategy for Older Tasmanians. This new committee could also meet twice a year with existing *Premier’s Youth Advisory Council* to encourage intergenerational connection and sharing of experiences.
- The Tasmanian Government should sign up to the **WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Network**, which reflects a ‘commitment to listen to the needs of their ageing population, assess and monitor their age-friendliness and work collaboratively with older people and across sectors to create age-friendly physical and social environments’.
- The **Ticket To Play Program** should be extended to adults and older adults across Tasmania – supporting them to maintain both physical fitness alongside social connection. Such an initiative can be seen as a preventative health measure, as well as supporting Tasmanians to remain active at a time where cost of living is high and access to regular exercise classes may not be financially possible.
- Commitment to promote the digital supports available through Libraries Tasmania across Tasmanian, as many are not aware that this service exists for one-to-one support. Digital inclusion supports are imperative to ensuring older people are confident and skilled in accessing information and navigating technology based systems required in today’s digital environment.

PRIORITY 1: Strengthening Advocacy and Inclusion for Older Tasmanians

Peak Body Sustainability

Whilst COTA Tasmania is grateful for the Peak body funding it receives from the Tasmanian Government, there continues to be a substantial gap between the funding we receive and what is required to resource peak body functions such as community advocacy and representation, information dissemination, media representation, research, consultation and engagement and policy and sector development services.

To effectively represent older Tasmanians, COTA Tasmania needs to maintain a broad policy remit. As government departments, state owned companies, private and community organisations improve their own engagement frameworks, peak bodies such as COTA are required to participate in an ever-growing number of consultation and engagement initiatives. We also need to have the time and resources to regularly engage with members and the broader Tasmanian community, to ensure we are hearing and reflecting the lived experiences of people over 50 years in Tasmania.

It has never been more important for the Tasmanian Government to consider this in light of the increasing demographic aged 50 years + and the need to ensure their voice is heard and supported.

Without the resources to support this effort, the voice of older Tasmanians cannot be appropriately heard and represented. Lived experience can, and should, inform structural change. Vital to this is having a funded **Policy Officer role**, something that until now has had to be absorbed within existing roles, (when possible). Equally, COTA Tasmania must be able to effectively share and distribute information to the community, as well as make recommendations to the Tasmanian Government and other organisations about how to effectively communicate with and engage older Tasmanians.

What we need:

Currently COTA Tasmania receives a combined grant 2022-2026 to cover the following:

- Peak Body Funding
- Consultation and initiatives under the Active Ageing Strategy
- Seniors Week Coordination
- Mature Age Workforce project (additional \$40,000 per year for 2 years)

Alongside this, COTA receives a grant of \$100,000 per year for our Elder Abuse Prevention work (unchanged since 2017).

The past 2 years have seen increasing demands and requests for our attendance and input in stakeholder and government-related bodies and committees. We have had to make the hard decision at times to decline input and not develop submissions on key issues of relevance to our cohort due to limited resources to do so effectively.

A dedicated Policy role would ensure that we have the ability to represent older Tasmanians and the community more broadly in formal submissions and in managing stakeholder relationships.

Additional funding would also enable us to promote our programs and projects via commercial and community advertising mechanisms, which continue to rise in cost.

Currently funded roles	FTE	Proposed funded roles	FTE	FTE Difference
CEO SCHADS Level 8.3	1	CEO SCHADS Level 8.3 + allowances	1	0
		Administration & Finance SCHADS Level 6	1	1
Communications and Events (includes SW & WEAAD coordination) SCHADS Level 5	0.8	Communications and Events SCHADS Level 5	1	0.2
Active Ageing & Mature Age Workforce SCHADS Level 6	0.6	Active Ageing & Ageism Awareness SCHADS Level 6	1	0.4
Elder Abuse Prevention Project officer SCHADS Level 6	0.6	Elder Abuse Prevention Project officer SCHADS Level 6	1	0.4
		Policy & Stakeholder Engagement Officer SCHADS Level 7 (with focus on digital inclusion, housing and social isolation)	1	1
		Mature Age Workforce Engagement Officer SCHADS Level 6	1	1
			Total	4

COTA is seeking **sustainable, secure, and continuous Peak Body & Project** 5 year funding commitments that support the above positions as a minimum in order to maintain our role as a peak body for older Tasmanians. Existing funding only enables us to employ part time staff - limiting our reach, scope and impact across the state. We need to be able to attract and retain skilled professional employees, the majority of which are Level 6 SCHADS (which equates to approximately \$145,000 with on-costs per year).

What will be achieved:

- Additional core funding will support operational sustainability and retention of a skilled workforce to lead COTA Tasmania's advocacy work within a strong, long-term strategic focus. Increasingly the community sector faces pressure on tight budgets whilst maintaining operational costs of rent, infrastructure, consumables and effective engagement and participation.
- Increasing our FTE load will also enable us to have a greater ability for statewide representation, enabling us to more effectively travel, engage and represent the 40% of Tasmanians over 50 years.

Indexation

We recommend the Government adopt the 70% WPI/30%(CPI) (wages to CPI) split in organisational costs, plus the superannuation guarantee, as the most appropriate formula to calculate indexation.

Total investment:

Additional funding of \$590,000 each year to support full time positions across the core peak and project areas listed above.

- **commit to 5 years secured peak body funding.**
- **commit to appropriate indexation formula.**

Support to plan ahead – resource development

“Retirement can lead to a loss of your identity. You need assistance to move through this transition period.”

— H.E.A.R Community participant

Entering the later part of your life brings changes in personal and professional identity, which can induce anxiety and grief around this identity change. The ageing journey is experienced differently depending on individual health, social connections, opportunities and financial means. Information and knowledge can assist in empowering adults to manage this in positive ways, alongside engaging in activities and volunteering that can provide purpose and meaning.

It is important that, just as we do with other life stages, we ensure accessible resources are available and promoted to older Tasmanians to assist with planning ahead for their later years. This type of resource could be made available by existing Government entities such as Libraries Tasmania, Service Tasmania and the Seniors Card program.

Participants of the H.E.A.R consultation spoke of not feeling prepared to navigate Government systems associated with retirement and a lack of knowing where to get further information was a common theme in the survey data. 33.86% of survey respondents felt they needed to do more planning for their ageing journey.

What we need:

- **Fund COTA Tasmania to develop accessible resources** (print as well as online) that contain information for older Tasmanians in relation to retirement and planning for later years that are co-designed with older workers, retirees and industry representatives.
- The **Where to from Here** publication provides a good basis for such a resource, offering broad information and links to empower older New Zealanders in decision making later in life.

What will be achieved:

- Informed and connected communities are more likely to proactively plan ahead for the ageing process, linking into services and taking preparatory steps earlier.
- Increased sense of empowerment for older Tasmanians.
- Opportunities for greater discussion about ageing, challenging ageist stereotypes, beliefs and expectations via the resource.

Total investment:

One-off project funding of \$150,000 – to develop, design, print, distribute, launch and promote the resource across the State (including radio and print advertising).

Ongoing commitment for annual print run and refresh by DPAC, distributed via Libraries Tasmania and Service Tasmania.

Peer Education Review Project

Our Peer Education program began more than 11 years ago as part of an Australia-wide project, funded and resourced by Beyond Blue. The importance of having volunteer Peer Educators engage directly with members of community groups is highly valued by COTA Tasmania, as it provides us with a valuable connection to communities as well as the ability to empower others with knowledge and information. 2022 saw us deliver 63 Peer Education sessions across the state on the following topics:

- Home Fire Safety (**funded by Tasmanian Fire Service*)
- Understanding Elder Abuse
- Protecting your Finances from Abuse
- Eat for Life
- Getting Your House in Order

We do not receive core funding to deliver the **Peer Education Program**. Over time, project budgets have become strained and project funding less certain. We have therefore had to make the decision to place our Peer Education program into recess at the end of June 2023.

What we need:

- One-off project funding to do a thorough independent review of our Peer Education program, including the development of recommendations around volunteer management and recruitment processes, review of current topics and analysis of evaluation tools used.
- Consultants undertaking the review will collate feedback, experiences and insights from both community organisations and Peer Educators.
- We do not have the resources internally to undertake this important piece of work without additional funding.

What will be achieved:

- This review project will provide an evidenced-based proposal for a future Peer Education program with associated costings to be presented to Government for consideration.
- A future-focused, considered plan for ongoing commitment to lived experience and peer mentoring as a means of educating and empowering older Tasmanians.

Total investment: Peer Education Program Review

One-off funding of \$50,000 to complete the Peer Education Program review.

PRIORITY 2: Connection and Community

Social Connection grants

“[There is] a lack of ability to talk to people for assistance, [if] no computer skills – there is more loneliness, it is denigrating.”

— Attendee at GRIT film screening, Seniors Week 2023

Social isolation and loneliness have serious consequences for longevity, health and well-being. In older age, social isolation and loneliness can increase the risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, cognitive decline, dementia, depression, anxiety and suicide.

The Ending Loneliness State of the Nation report 2023 showed loneliness to impact one in six Australians, with those who are lonely 5.2 times more likely to have poorer wellbeing as a result. Connecting with new people and groups as you age is often harder due to mobility and health issues impacting confidence, lack of suitable transport options, limited family networks nearby and difficulties knowing where to find out about local activities and groups.

Investing in social connection programs and supports and ensuring clear and accessible information is available are vital in minimising further social isolation amongst older Tasmanians.

What we need:

- **Establish a yearly grants program** to support community led creative events and initiatives that provide **sustainable** ways to **reduce social isolation** for older Tasmanians.
- A focus within the grants on **intergenerational connection** and community capacity building.
- A grant scheme similar to that of [NSW Health Connecting Seniors grant program](#).
- Transport options to be factored into grant applications to ensure accessibility is addressed.

What will be achieved:

- Greater opportunities for connection and initiatives for older Tasmanians organised and located within their local area.
- Increased social and emotional wellbeing.
- Intergenerational contact.

Community Activities web page

There remains an ongoing need for information about opportunities to connect with others to be provided in ways people can locate and access easily.

“I never know when things are happening, only ever find out about things after they have occurred.”

— H.E.A.R Consultation, survey respondent

The [COTA Community Activities web page](#) has more than 900 activity listings located in all regions and has operated since 2018. This resource had limited funding in the Active Ageing space since its inception. This has resulted in an inability to ensure it is properly promoted, updated and contemporary. We rely on group listings to contact us to update current information, with many listings potentially out of date or obsolete.

Educating local volunteers, allied health, care providers, families and friends on where to find accessible, accurate information about available services and social activities is vital if we are to support the holistic needs of older Tasmanians. Coupled with significant digital and literacy issues in Tasmania, greater support is needed to assist people find out about local place-based social, physical and learning opportunities. Social Prescribing initiatives across Australia and the UK have shown that supporting people to find information, resources and supports in their area can have a direct positive impact on physical and emotional health.

“It doesn’t matter what the group is – it’s the connection that is important.”

— Attendee at GRIT film screening, Seniors Week 2023

It is now time to increase local knowledge of and usage of this resource, which is ideal for social prescribing initiatives. Having dedicated staffing to promote, connect and increase the visibility and promotion of this page will ensure more older Tasmanians connect with activities to assist them to remain active and connected.

What we need:

- **Expand COTA Tasmania’s Community Activities** web page to enable greater registration and uptake of activities, alongside increased functionality of the platform.
- Funding for a statewide promotional campaign.
- Specific staffing for ongoing management of this online platform.

What will be achieved:

- Greater opportunities for connection and participation in regular groups and activities in their communities.
- Enhanced awareness of the importance of connection and regular activities to a person’s wellbeing and physical health.
- Increased awareness by community members, service providers, GP and volunteer organisations to assist others in finding an activity or referring them to the resource.

Seniors Week

The year 2023 was COTA Tasmania’s 13th year coordinating Seniors Week and the 25th year of Seniors Week in Tasmania. Seniors Week provides an opportunity for Tasmanians to make social connections and try an activity at low or no cost. We know and value the opportunity this provides older Tasmanians, celebrating the important social connection that comes alongside the activities themselves during the week-long celebration.

“Seniors Week is great – it should be Seniors Month.”

— Community participant, H.E.A.R consultation

Perhaps more importantly, Seniors Week provides our communities, workplaces and regions with a positive narrative around ageing, showcasing the wide variety of activities and interests that older Tasmanians engage in and in most cases, volunteer their time to organise and run.

The past 13 years has seen us plan, organise and evaluate successful Seniors Weeks programs, absorbing increased costs of production and coordination. We welcomed the additional funding for 2023 as the Government’s commitment to the 25th year celebrations, but this is needed as an ongoing commitment if we are to continue to project manage and promote such a valuable community capacity building event. Whilst sponsorship assists to meet associated financial costs, we are unable to rely on this and in today’s tight economic situation, it is becoming more difficult to secure ongoing sponsorship.

“Congratulations for celebrating 25 years of Seniors Week – what a great time! Thank you COTA Tasmania for continuing to support Tasmanians.”

— Social media comment, October 2023

The Tasmanian Government currently supports the following community event weeks by way of a grants program:

- Youth Week
- Carers Week
- Mental Health Week
- Childrens Week
- Harmony Week
- International Women's Day

Seniors Week should be provided the same equity and interest as other statewide celebrations. A grants program similar to that afforded to other event weeks will showcase the Tasmanian Government's commitment to this important community week.

Offering grant opportunities to local groups will assist in their ability to host events during Seniors Week, as well as support the cost of activities in rural and regional areas. Grants could be used to support an activity or towards transport initiatives to enable community members to attend their event.

What we need:

- Stronger commitment by Government to provide funding that will ensure we can **meet the current costs of Seniors Week** alongside review and reinvention to ensure this flagship event is contemporary and promoted as widely as possible.
- Additional funding will allow COTA Tasmania to create a digital events guide that supplements the printed guide as well as potential for launch event activities in various locations across Tasmania.
- Consideration for the provision of a **Seniors Week Grants** program, similar in nature to that offered several other jurisdictions.

What will be achieved:

- Broader scope of activities on offer across the state
- Increased participation and connections made during Seniors Week
- Government is seen to provide the same equity of funding grants that exists for other 'Weeks', as listed above.

Total investment: Social Isolation and Connection

Social Connection Grants program

- Funding pool of \$200,000 a year to be coordinated by DPAC, with support from COTA Tasmania.

Community Activities web page

- \$50,000 plus \$60,000 per annum appropriately indexed for ongoing promotion and administration role 2 days a week.

Seniors Week

- \$110,000 additional funding per annum appropriately indexed for the duration of the next Older Tasmanians Strategy 2024-2029 (5 years).
- Commit to ongoing free transport for the duration of Seniors Week each year.
- Events Grants program – \$500 grants, \$20,000 total.

PRIORITY 3: Tackling Ageism

“The older you get the more you are labelled into a category”

— H.E.A.R survey respondent

Ageism is alive and well in Tasmania.

From an early age, children pick up cues from those around them about their culture’s stereotypes and prejudices, which are soon internalised and reinforced over time. People then use these stereotypes to make inferences and to guide their feelings and behaviour towards people of different ages and towards themselves.

There is a need for greater awareness and valuing of older Tasmanians. We need to talk about ageing, to value the ageing journey and to plan for it in a proactive way, whilst challenging ageism and its impacts on people’s social, emotional and economic wellbeing. This will provide Tasmania with the opportunity to embrace the ageing journey, where indicators of health and wellbeing will improve as communities become more accessible, connected and value age diversity.

Through our advocacy work and programs, we know that older Tasmanians continue to experience ageism as they access healthcare, education, and training and more generally as they connect with and move around their communities. This impacts their health and wellbeing and in turn, the health and wellbeing of all future older Tasmanians unless there is a cultural shift in the way we view and support the ageing process.

Both the recent [WHO Global report on Ageism](#) and the Australian Anti-Discrimination Commissioners report [What’s Age got to do with it?](#) found that overwhelmingly people feel ageism exists and high rates of people within the community have experienced it.

Community members often tell us about how they are treated differently, ignored or overlooked because of their visible ageing appearance.

For Tasmanians to have opportunities to age well, we must work towards a society that views older people equally – not differently.

WHO identifies three strategies to reduce ageism:

- **Policy and law** can address discrimination and inequality based on age and protect the human rights of everyone, everywhere.
- **Educational activities** can transmit knowledge and skills and enhance empathy.
- **Intergenerational interventions** can contribute to the mutual understanding and cooperation of different generations.

Policy and Law

Legislation and policies governing Tasmanian citizens need to afford all people the right to inclusion and protection. An age diversity lens needs to be considered when amending or formulating any new legislation in the Tasmanian parliament, with a genuine commitment to ensuring that age is not a barrier.

- Policies and procedures held by Government, Councils, Business, Industry and Community organisations need to reflect the age diversity and needs of the Tasmanian demographic, including a proactive approach to planning for this within workplaces, community spaces and social and emotional support systems.

Educational Activities

COTA firmly believes that we need open conversations about the ageing journey and to raise awareness more broadly about the impacts of ageism.

“Getting old vs Ageing – one can feel irrelevant in society, you get left behind.”

— H.E.A.R Consultation participant

This year has seen an increase in our awareness-raising workshops on ageism delivered to community organisations and TAFE students. Workshops like these are a powerful tool that encourage participants to consider their bias and attitudes towards ageing. **Education on the impacts of ageist stereotypes and behaviour is vitally important for those working with older people, as well as the wider community.**

Evaluation of these has shown that participants have had a change in their beliefs after a short session, with post survey responses showing all participants now felt somewhat confident or confident to call out ageist remarks.

What was your greatest learning or takeaway from the Ageism Awareness workshop?

- “ *Small things can go unnoticed, which perpetuate ageism and it's worth having open conversations and asking questions to help make positive change.* ”
- “ *I think I am more considerate about some comments I make or have made jokingly about age, even though I am comfortable with the subject I am more conscious about how others may take those comments.* ”
- “ *How much work is still needed to do here to reduce stigma.* ”

As we continue our Ageism Awareness Education, we believe it is important to have robust evaluation and ask that funding is provided for research oversight into our work in this space.

We also ask the Government to commit to a public awareness campaign with inclusive age friendly language co-designed with Older Tasmanians to combat ageist stereotypes and provide a stronger positive narrative around ageing. This campaign would be used across various mediums and also included in staff and volunteer induction processes across Government departments.

“Age isn’t the problem. Ageism is.”

What we need:

- A whole-of-Government **commitment to the next Older Persons Strategy 2024-2029** with undertaking from each agency to review and include an age diversity lens to their work and programs.
- Commit funding to enable a research approach and evaluation of COTA's Ageism Awareness Education.
- **Fund a public awareness campaign** with inclusive age-friendly language co-designed with older Tasmanians to combat ageist stereotypes and provide a stronger positive narrative around ageing.

What will be achieved:

- **Inclusive and equitable service** from Government departments and community organisations
- Greater **respect for the ageing journey** and experience
- Appreciation and understanding of our **unconscious bias** towards ageing
- **Evidence-based research** to support ongoing education and workshops
- Potential publications

Total investment: Ageism awareness and education

Ageism Awareness evaluation – commitment to explore options of a research project with the University of Tasmania at \$45,000 for 2 years research support.

Public Ageism Awareness campaign – delivered by DPAC with support from COTA Tasmania.

Mature-age Workforce

“When I applied for a job at 58, one of the employees told the rest of the staff that I was too old for the position.”

— Survey respondent, H.E.A.R Project

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines anyone over 45 as a ‘mature/older’ worker.

Ageism impacts employment opportunities, career advancement and our ability to undertake further training and learning possibilities. While employees aged 55 and above currently comprise almost a fifth (20%) of the Australian workforce, this age cohort accounts for just 4% of the growth in employment levels in the 12 months to February 2023, despite the historically high levels of job vacancies.

We know that age discrimination continues to occur, with the *Employing Older Workers* report finding almost a third of Australian employers continue to specify an age limit for job applicants, despite the practice being illegal.

We have vast workforce gaps that can be filled by experienced older Tasmanians who want to continue working and earning an income. They should be encouraged to do so without having to consider potential financial impacts or fear of discrimination. We ask the Tasmanian Government to continue to **encourage to the Federal Government** in this space and ensure their own recruitment processes are inclusive and encourage age diversity.

Greater education and support for employers to design and adjust employment conditions to support employees to have fulfilling work lives at all life stages is needed. Our nation cannot afford to have older generations’ skills wasted, or their participation minimised – often due to employers’ biased concerns about older workers’ skills and contribution at work.

This year has seen us expand our advocacy work in the Mature Age Work space, delivering workshops to participants of the Career Assistance Program, collaborating on 2 Jobs & Training expos on the North West Coast and delivering a workshop for the 2023 Worksafe Conference. As our collaborations have grown, so to has the interest from Regional Jobs Hubs, Employment providers and Recruitment organisations. Now is the time to increase our reach and impact in this vital advocacy work supporting business and industry to value the skills and experience of Mature Aged workers.

What we need:

- **Fund COTA Tasmania to hire a Project officer for ongoing Mature-aged Workforce advocacy work** that support workplaces to explore age diversity principles, promote age inclusive recruitment practices and support older workers who would like to continue working rather than retire.
- Project officer will provide education, advocacy and collaborative partnerships with industry, business, community members and Job Skills Tasmania.

What will be achieved:

- Greater age diversity within Tasmanians’ workplaces
- Increased awareness of age discrimination in recruitment and retention
- Reduced barriers and challenges to employment for those 45+ years

Total investment: Mature-age Workforce support

- **Mature-age Project worker \$145,000 + indexation for 5 years to achieve agreed outcomes and outputs under the next Older Persons Strategy 2024-2029 in relation to mature-aged workforce issues. This role is included as part of our request for increased Peak Body Funding on page 5.**
- **An additional \$20,000 to collaborate and run a further 3 Navigating a Journey 45+ Expos with the Regional Jobs Hubs network in 2024.**
- **Commit funding for Skills Tasmania to develop a Mature-aged Jobs Strategy in a similar vein to the recent Youth Jobs Strategy and Consultation.**

Enhancing the Awareness of Elder Abuse

“Getting people to see they are in an abusive relationship is hard. Education is key.”

— Older Voices for Change Survivor Advocate, 2023

Elder Abuse remains a significant and under-reported issue in Tasmania. A total of 116,643 Tasmanians are aged 65 or older. In 2021 Australia's first nationally representative elder abuse prevalence study found that 14.8% of Australians aged 65 or older experienced elder abuse. This equates to 17,263 Tasmanians.

Worryingly, only around 36% of Australians experiencing elder abuse seek help and of those only 5.3% ring an elder abuse helpline. Greater awareness and education of elder abuse is needed in order to empower people to learn about elder abuse and feel confident to seek support and information.

Since 2015, COTA Tasmania has received funding from the Tasmanian Government to deliver a range of awareness-raising activities and provide input into the Statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee (SEAPAC). Our activities currently include community education about all types of elder abuse; information sessions for staff and volunteers who encounter older people as part of their work; qualitative research into LGBTIQ+ perceptions and experiences of elder abuse; and development of a trial Older Voices for Change lived experience program in partnership with Engender Equality. We also continue to organise World Elder Abuse Walks in 3 locations across Tasmania each June.

Our current funding commitment will cease 30 June 2024, after which COTA Tasmania will be unable to continue vital advocacy and program work beyond this period without sustainable funding commitments.

Our funding for Elder Abuse prevention and education has remained the same since 2017. The past 12 months has seen us expand our reach into new programs and research in the elder abuse space. We need security of ongoing funding to maintain this reach, as well as an increase to enhance the footprint for our valued education sessions and maintain the increasing stakeholder relationship commitments in this project space. Importantly, we need to support and grow the voices of people with lived experience of elder abuse.

What we need:

- **Ongoing funding** at an increased level for 5 years for **COTA Tasmania's Elder Abuse prevention and awareness raising** advocacy and program work, in alignment with the Lifelong Respect Strategy 2023-2029.
- Commitment from all Government agencies to support the principles in the *Lifelong Respect Strategy 2023-2029*.

What will be achieved:

- Older Tasmanians will be aware of their rights and where to get support and information about Elder Abuse and its impacts.
- Older adults with lived experience will have played a critical role in enhancing awareness, discussion and prevention of elder abuse through the expansion of the Older Voices for Change program.
- All Government agencies are aware of the importance of Elder Abuse and its impact on Older Tasmanians
- Key organisations working in the Elder Abuse prevention space will connect and collaborate on a regular basis, with a Community of Practice coordinated by COTA Tasmania.
- Innovations initiated in Tasmania will be shared locally and nationally in collaboration with the Tasmanian Government and other stakeholders.

Total investment: Enhancing the Awareness of Elder Abuse

Increase funding to COTA by \$80,000 to \$180,000 per annum for 5 years appropriately indexed to align with *Lifelong Respect: Tasmania's Strategy to end the abuse of older people (Elder Abuse) 2023–2029* to enable this position to become full time and include provision for travel and printed educational resources. This role is included as part of our request for increased Peak Body Funding on page 5.

- **Commit to this increased funding for the duration of the *Lifelong Respect Strategy 2023–2029*.**

Final reflections

COTA Tasmania plays an important role in the Tasmanian community. We continue to foster and build our relationships and collaborations with State Government, local Councils, service providers and community groups to ensure older Tasmanians are represented and heard.

We look forward to a time where age is not seen as a barrier, but instead as a positive contributor to the unique fabric of lutruwita, Tasmania. **40.89% of our population is now over 50 years of age.** Supporting this cohort not only assists older Tasmanians of today – but will position us to support all other Tasmanians as they age, ensuring we create age-friendly communities where people are valued, supported and connected.

In order to realise this vision, we need **sustainable funding** to effectively widen our scope and focus over the coming 2-5 years as we aim **to grow awareness of ageism** and the importance of **inclusive communities** across Tasmania.

We also need our work to be valued and supported over the life of the strategies that our funding works towards, and supports. Funding commitments need to be a minimum of 5 years.

To effectively operate as a peak body, we need a guaranteed, longer-term commitment that values our advocacy work and programs and the contributions of our staff and volunteers.

