



*Making a
difference
for older
Tasmanians*

Impact Report

2023-24

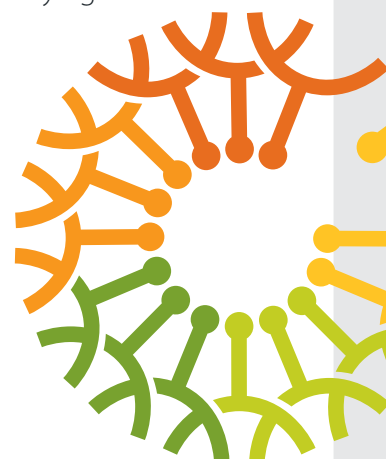
COTA Tasmania is the peak body for older Tasmanians. Established in 1964, we have been the

voice of older people in our communities for more than 60 years. We are a registered not-for-profit organisation funded through grants from the Tasmanian Government, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, along with other partnerships and grants.

We are committed to encouraging all Tasmanians to think positively about ageing. We promote and encourage social inclusion and actively champion the rights and interests of Tasmanians as they age.

Our organisation is guided by our values:

- Respect
- Diversity
- Collaboration
- Integrity



Advocacy and engagement

Peak Body

COTA Tasmania is part of the COTA network that is represented in every Australian state and territory and at a federal level through COTA Australia. As the peak body for older Tasmanians, COTA advocates at all levels of Government particularly for the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

We collaborate and partner with community and aged care organisations across the state to work towards an inclusive society for all ages.

COTA staff visited

73

postcodes across the state



POLICY

5.4

Staff FTE



194

individual members



18

ageism presentations delivered to



9

policy submissions; budget priorities statement and election statement submissions



Revenue increased by

19%

to \$1,876,963



1,190

e-newsletter subscribers



295

community members



Representation in

25

Advisory/Working Groups covering health, housing, energy, aged care, mental health and workforce issues

7,800

resources distributed to the community

3,000

Living and Eating Well at Home brochures



300

Estate and Advance Care Planning booklets

4,500

Staying Strong at Home booklets



I really enjoyed that talk, it's made me think about my thoughts towards myself.



I will think about my own ageing differently now.



WEBSITE

73,000

views

5

opinion pieces in
major newspapers

12

radio interviews
across all timeslots

A fortnightly radio
segment on ABC
Northern with Kim
Napier – Ageless
Conversations

221,000

interactions



8

published
Letters to the
Editor



Regular interviews
with ABC's
statewide Morning
Program with
Leon Compton



Without doubt
the absence of a
Minister for the
Ageing in Tasmania's
new ministerial
portfolios is a
missed opportunity
to prioritise and
address the
diverse needs of
older adults.

COTA Tasmania
Opinion Piece,
The Mercury,
18th April 2024

LINKEDIN

734

followers
(increase of 43%
from last year)



FACEBOOK

1.8M

reach (up 4.1K%)

3.2K

followers

25.1K

visits (up 361%)

80%

of our followers
are female



Our people



**Ingrid Harrison,
COTA President and
Chair of the Board**

This past year, our 60th year supporting older Tasmanians, has been an important one for COTA Tasmania, marked by

our team's inspiring achievements, along with a renewed sense of purpose for our organisation. With the appointment of our CEO, Brigid Wilkinson, we have been invigorated with fresh leadership and energy, strengthening our resolve to advocate for the needs and rights of older Tasmanians. Brigid's dynamism motivates our team, driving us forward with enthusiasm and a shared commitment to our mission.

Our team's spirit remains unwavering, even as we navigate the challenges of a shrinking funding pool for not-for-profits. We know financial pressures are real, but they also remind us of the importance of resilience, creativity, and collaboration. Together, we'll continue to forge strong, enduring relationships with our partners, particularly the Tasmanian Government, along with other NFPs, and our primary stakeholders, to ensure our voice is heard and our impact is felt across the community.

I would like to thank the retiring members of our Board, James Versteegen and Alison Wiss and acknowledge their time and valuable counsel in Board and Committee deliberations. They have gone above and beyond in their collective service to COTA Tasmania, and we thank them both most sincerely. I would also like to pay tribute to our retiring Treasurer Carl Cooper who is stepping down at this annual meeting. While he's decided he'll no longer continue in an Executive role, Carl will continue to provide sage advice as a Board Director.

As we celebrate our special anniversary year, we remain focused on the work ahead, confident that together as a team, we will continue to positively advocate for a Tasmania where every person is respected and valued as they age.



**Brigid Wilkinson,
Chief Executive Officer**

Another busy year has seen us continue in our efforts to reframe ageing and to represent the needs of older Tasmanians. I am fortunate

to find myself in a role leading such a diverse and skilled team who share my passion for advocacy and have trusted in my leadership and vision since stepping into the CEO role.

We celebrated 25 years of Seniors Week in October 2023 with a wonderful launch party in Riverside. Our theme of CELEBRATE continues into our 60th year as we remind ourselves of the contributions, participation and the journey of ageing older Tasmanians undertake.



This year we have welcomed several new staff across our Care Finder and Project teams who bring with them curiosity, enthusiasm and knowledge that has enhanced our organisation. Engaging with community has been a core focus, with many workshops, information sessions, ongoing legal clinics and a trip to King Island to ensure Tasmanians are aware of COTA and know how to connect with us for information and support. We look forward to meeting more Tasmanians as COTA commences offering free COTA Supporter individual membership later in 2024.

We were pleased to see some aspects of our Budget Priorities Statement receive Election commitments in March and we look forward to working with the current Government in seeing these come to fruition. As the State with the fastest growing ageing demographic, we will continue to advocate for a Minister for Ageing to champion policies and initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by Tasmanians as they age.



Our connections with media have grown and I am extremely proud of our new regular ABC mornings segment with Kim Napier in Northern Tasmania, called Ageless Conversations. Within these conversations we challenge stereotypes and embrace the richness of every stage of life, featuring personal stories, expert insights, and strategies for creating an inclusive society for all ages. Partnerships like this are vital for ensuring we expand the conversation about ageing and the awareness of our organisation.

Our World Elder Abuse Awareness Day events each June continue to draw awareness of the importance of social connection, contribution and respect for people of all ages, ensuring they are safe and free from abuse. Elder abuse is everyone's business, and these events assist us to convey that message widely across the state.

Our work and impact are only as good as our team and their passion and commitment. We have invested time and resources this year on staff wellbeing, reflection processes and team days to support our staff to bond and connect in our united vision to support older Tasmanians. Our Board and sub committees continue to provide valuable advice, clear governance and oversight as well as an encouraging ear for myself and the team.

Once again, thank you to all our staff and volunteers who support our organisation and live by our mission – that ageing in Tasmania is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.



John Pauley, Chair, Tasmanian Policy Council

The last 12 months have been an important period of renewal for the COTA Tasmanian Policy Council (TPC). We have recruited five new community members located across Tasmania. These new members join our two new Board representatives and offer the opportunity for new perspectives to drive the policy agenda in the year ahead.

During the year we had the sad news of Ian Fletcher's sudden death. Ian had been a long term and enthusiastic member of the TPC and his contribution is sadly missed.

Principal activities of the TPC during the year centred around providing input into the Tasmanian Government's Housing Strategy to ensure the needs of older Tasmanians are appropriately considered. TPC members also provided feedback from a Tasmanian perspective on the Commonwealth Government's new Aged Care Legislation. This included representations to COTA Australia on funding proposals for the new Act.

The Council also provided input into COTA Tasmania's budget submission and maintained our strong input into energy issues to ensure the needs and requirements of older Tasmanians are kept front and centre. This included drafting the COTA Tasmania submission to the Legislative Council investigation on energy matters.

Banking and changes to banking also came onto our radar during the year as proposals to reduce access to cash, increase electronic transactions and remove cheques gained momentum. This is likely to be an important issue in the coming year.

Particular thanks are given to Lisa Free (Former General Manager) and Deb Lewis (Lead – Advocacy, Policy & Engagement) for the support they provided the Council during the year.

Our core project areas

Care Finder

4.8

FTE staff



44%

of clients were male

56%

were female

supported

221

clients providing

2,354

hours of support

An additional 495 callers were ineligible for Care Finder and were provided with 386 hours of support due to our 'no wrong door' policy

54%

of clients were located in the south

20%

in the north and

26%

in the north west

75%

of clients were aged 70 and older, 25% were aged between 50 and 69



COTA Tasmania was successful in tendering for the Australian Government-funded Care Finder Program in February 2023. The Care Finder program is a navigation service specifically for vulnerable older people who need intensive support to connect with services they need. COTA was one of four organisations selected by the Primary Health Network to deliver the program in Tasmania. We have Care Finders based in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.



Joint Care Finder and Elder Abuse Prevention Information Session with the Launceston Legal Literacy Volunteers



JOHN'S STORY

In September 2023, Care Finders were able to help John move into an aged care residential facility. John, a 78-year-old man, lived alone with no support from any family or friends. He had mental ill-health and a terminal illness.

A COTA Tasmania Care Finder met with John at his home. He was very clear about wanting to move into a specific residential aged care facility as soon as possible but was not able to work out how to make it happen. The Care Finder spoke with John about what he needed and wanted and was able to call the Admissions Manager to ensure they could provide John with appropriate care. John wanted to be able to move into the facility as quickly as possible.

The Care Finder assisted John to complete all 84 pages of the admissions paperwork, and 12 other forms required, and advised his current housing provider he would be vacating soon.

John had been in his unit for 16 years and needed assistance to get his unit cleared out and packed up. With help from Palliative Care Services, the Care Finder was able to arrange for additional support hours to assist John with the big task of planning, sorting, cleaning, and packing everything, ready to vacate the property.

With support from our Care Finder Team and the residential facility, John had completed documentation, including financial and medical, and moved very quickly to his facility of choice with little complication or hold ups.

By accessing the Care Finder program, John received prompt and intensive support and had choice and control that met his goal to move to a new home quickly, where he could receive the level of care and services he needed.

On the way to his room several staff members welcomed and greeted him by name, saying they would look in on him later to say hello. When he was settled in, he told the Care Finder "Thank you, I don't know how I could have done this without your help".

John passed away in the middle of November, safe, comfortable, and well looked after at the end of his life.



Lifelong Respect – Elder Abuse Prevention and Awareness

COTA Tasmania is funded by the Tasmanian Government to increase awareness and knowledge about the nature of abuse of older people. In 2024 we launched our Lifelong Respect program which encompasses community awareness and prevention, advocacy, policy, research and referral pathways.

Our Older Voices for Change advocates continued to share their stories attracting local and national media attention. Tasmania is the first state to trial an elder abuse advocates program.

On June 15 we marked World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with community walks in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie as well as additional activities across the state.

This year we re-established a Lifelong Respect Community of Practice, meeting regularly with other services that support older people across the state at risk or experiencing elder abuse.

19

information sessions delivered across the State to

222

people with

100%

of participants reporting improved awareness and knowledge of elder abuse

Community outreach provided to

50+

organisations

64

clients attended Legal Clinics



Knowing what elder abuse is, it is difficult to define sometimes especially when it has some cultural elements, but we know where to seek help now.

**Migrant Resource Centre
South staff member**



I really enjoyed myself today. That is what I love to do. Great audience helped. I appreciated your ease working the platform between us, worked so well. You giving me free rein helped with the flow when I had the floor. Great opportunity.

Older Voices for Change Advocate



The feedback from staff who attended the session was overwhelmingly positive. [The advocates'] contributions were very insightful, staff appreciated their honesty when speaking of their own personal experiences.

Anonymous participant





Active Ageing

COTA Tasmania promotes positive ageing through community engagement and education. Our ageism awareness workshops focus on changing the narrative around ageing in line with our vision that ageing is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.

During 2023-24 we increased our focus on intergenerational connection, fostering relationships within our community through our Generations Connect Fun Days.



Seniors Week

Held annually each October, Seniors Week is a week packed full of events for older Tasmanians. Seniors Week provides a platform for social connection which we now know is a major contributor to good health. In fact, researchers have equated the health effects of isolation and loneliness as the equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Along with individual benefits, Seniors Week also provides an opportunity for community groups to grow, increasing membership and volunteer participation through free promotion in our Seniors Week guide.

In 2023, we celebrated 25 years of Seniors Week in Tasmania.





Our events and highlights

Seniors Week 2023

We began Seniors Week 2023 with a huge Launch Party attended by the then Minister for Community Services and Development Jo Palmer MP, and Kim Millar, as our enthusiastic MC, who added much laughter to the day.

We were honoured to have June Hazzlewood join us to share her lived experience with a powerful talk titled 'Age and IN the way or Age and ON the way'. June has been a passionate advocate of all things ageing and a friend of COTA Tasmania for more than 25 years, so it was fitting to have her as a guest at our 25th anniversary. June's talk showed us that age is never a barrier to personal growth and transformation.

Visual Scribe, Julia from Social Alchemist, brought our conversations to life with vibrant illustrations and a souvenir of the day that will hang proudly in our offices.

Other highlights included the Launceston PCYC walking soccer demonstration and a guided tour of the West Tamar Council local community gardens.

*Survey data from the 20% of event hosts who reported 1,100 attendees at their collective events, to estimate total event attendees.

Celebrating

25
years

57%

of events were held in the south

353

events

23%

of events were held in the north

approx

5,000*

attendees

20%

of events were held in the north west

75

event hosts

23,000

event guides distributed across Tasmania

87%

of event hosts reported that new people were introduced to their regularly-held events because of Seniors Week and the majority expected these people to continue to attend on a regular basis.



It was a privilege to be involved in this anniversary week.

Teresa, Polish Association in Hobart



The people who attended enjoyed the afternoon very much and said how it was more about just socialising.

Diane, Cressy Bowls & Community Club



We were very happy both with your organisation of the week and the response we had from the public.

Adriana, St John's Catholic Church



Generations Connect Fun Day

The Ulverstone Sports and Leisure Centre came alive with laughter, joy, and intergenerational connections in April, as we hosted our first Generations Connect Fun Day.

This event was made possible through a grant from the Mental Health Council of Tasmania. The day was fun filled with a variety of activities and meaningful interactions for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Organised in collaboration with Respect Aged Care, the Generations Connect Fun Day coincided with Global Intergenerational Week, (April 24-30) highlighting the importance of bridging generational divides and fostering understanding amongst different age groups.

Intergenerational programs and events play a vital role within our communities by promoting mutual respect, empathy and friendship. These initiatives offer unique opportunities for individuals of all ages to learn from one another, share experiences, and form meaningful connections that enrich lives and strengthen the fabric of society.

366

people attended

Stallholder
feedback was
extremely positive:

85%

of stallholders
would attend again

Research has shown that intergenerational interactions have numerous benefits, including reducing ageism, combating loneliness and social isolation, enhancing emotional well-being, and promoting lifelong learning. By bringing together young children, teenagers, adults, and seniors in a shared space, events like the Generations Connect Fun Day create a sense of belonging and inclusivity, fostering a more cohesive and supportive community.



We had a beautiful morning chatting with a wide variety of people including the very young, mums, children and older grandparents and everyone in between.

What a wonderful way to connect with community.

Dianne, Central Coast resident



I would like to congratulate the organisers of the Generations Connect Fun Day. Trudy and I attended with two of our grandchildren and we had a great time with all the activities provided, I even found out I can drum in time.

**John Beswick, Deputy Mayor,
Central Coast Council**



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2024

This year, we were able to expand on our awareness walks and host additional activities across the state. A record number of people participated in these events which included:

- A webinar on Lifelong Respect
- Long table lunches in Rosebery and St Marys
- A WEAR Purple campaign
- Lifelong Respect walks in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie
- A Purple on Parliament Lawns trade table during the popular Salamanca Market

In addition to this, landmarks across the state were lit up in purple to acknowledge the day and recognise the silent plight of the one in six Tasmanians who experience elder abuse, with most at the hands of a trusted family member or friend.

240

people attended awareness walks across the state

52

people attended the Lifelong Respect webinar

13

organisations participated in the Wear Purple Campaign



140

people attended the Long Table lunches





From left: Emeritus Professor Don Chalmers AO, Ingrid Harrison COTA Tasmania President, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania, Brigid Wilkinson COTA Tasmania CEO.



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COTA Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the resilience and knowledge of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the traditional custodians of lutruwita, Tasmania.

We value the wisdom of Aboriginal elders past and present and the role they play in continuing to care for Country.