

**Dear Friends,**

COTA Tas has applauded the Productivity Commission's Draft Report *Caring for Older Australians*, released just over a week ago. The report lays the foundations for an aged care system over the next few decades that would offer older Australians faster and easier access to high quality support and care, where and when they need it on a fair and equitable basis, with older people having much greater choice and control.

Aged care reform has sat in the "too hard" basket for too long. It has become rigid and often unresponsive to older Tasmanians real needs. It is suffocated in red tape and outdated service menus and it is badly underfunded and inequitable.

The Commission's recommendations respond in a very positive and visionary way to almost all of COTA's concerns in its extensive submission to the Inquiry. COTA's submission was based on extensive consultation with older Australians over many years

We warmly welcome the adoption of our "Gateway" proposal to streamline, speed up, and simplify access to aged care and to allocate people an entitlement to care based on their needs.

The progressive phasing out of outdated and rationed service models like packages and bed licences is long overdue, to be replaced with a Medicare-like approach that enables consumers to have choice and flexibility and get care in their own homes or wherever suits them best, at a cost they can afford.

The Commission's funding proposals will require detailed review and discussion in the forthcoming consultation period, but are based on sound and fair principles that mean people contribute according to their means, with no one missing out on quality support and care because they cannot afford it.

This is an historic moment in the development of a better aged care and support system for Tasmanians that will last us the next 20 to 30 years.

COTA calls on providers, unions, professionals and all sides of politics to get behind the detailed work with the Commission between now and its' Final Report in June to come to a broad consensus on reform of aged care that will pass through parliament with bipartisan support and start being implemented in the 2012 Federal Budget.

Finally, COTA Tas will host a forum on our response to the Productivity Commission on Tuesday 15 March at the hockey centre in New Town, Hobart. The forum will be lead by Ian Yates, CEO COTA Australia and will run from 10-12 noon. For more information or to RSVP email admin@cotatas.org.au or call 6228 1897 by Tuesday 8 March.

For a copy of the Productivity Commission report visit www.pc.gov.au.

**Maxine Griffiths, AM,
Chief Executive Officer**

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Happy New Year to all from us here in Peer Education

As we begin another year, it is timely to reflect on the work that COTA's volunteer speakers do in this program.

Our trained speakers attend seniors meetings/groups throughout the State to provide information on issues of health and wellbeing to older Tasmanians. Topics covered offer a range of information on things like talking to your doctor or other health professional, how to manage your medications to avoid mix-ups, finding simple and inexpensive ways to increase your level of activity or what you can do to help yourself or someone else who might be feeling anxious or depressed.

These information sessions are not lectures; rather they are interactive discussions where audiences have an opportunity to share ideas. In this way we learn from each other and have a few laughs along the way. So if you would like to have one of our volunteers attend your meeting or group please feel free to contact us to arrange an information session. After reading this, you may also feel you would like to join our group of volunteer speakers. We always welcome new faces so give us a call and we can discuss this.

COTA Champions in your local community

COTA is pleased to inform readers that we have now recruited about 20 local people as COTA Champions in the Southern Midlands, Huon Valley and Kingborough municipalities. As volunteers, COTA Champions' role is to seek opinions from and listen to the needs and issues of older people in their local community and provide this information back to COTA.

The COTA Champions in the Southern Midlands and Huon Valley worked closely with COTA in late 2010 in eliciting input from their local communities into the 10 year review of Tasmania *Together*. One of the tasks for the COTA Champions in the first half of 2011 is to explore with older people strategies to encourage social inclusion and connectedness in their local communities.

COTA will soon be recruiting COTA Champions in the Hobart and Clarence municipalities and would like to hear from people keen on championing the rights and interests of older people in their local community. If you wish to find out more about the COTA Champions, please contact Linda Jamieson at COTA on 6228 1897 or lindaj@cotatas.org.au

New roles at COTA

Jane Jeppson, previously COTA's Administration/Project Officer, has been appointed to the newly created position of Operations Manager.

In her new role Jane will assume responsibility for providing leadership for organisational strategies, policies and practices and for the day-to-day management of COTA's operations including human resources, finance, records management, information and communications technology, and data collection and reporting.

This new business structure will enable CEO, Maxine Griffiths, to focus externally on the strategic development and growth of COTA as the peak body for older Tasmanians, and to continue to strengthen COTA's relationships with all of our stakeholders.

Recruitment of a new Administration Officer is currently underway. We look forward to announcing the new Administration Officer in the next edition of *Between the Lines*.

"For an inclusive community which values, supports and recognises the contribution of all older people."

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COTA has also recently appointed **Ms Chris Barclay** to the position of Communications Officer. Chris Barclay was previously the Project Co-ordinator for Communities for Children with Mission Australia.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honors Degree in Journalism, Media Studies and English Literature from the University of Tasmania. In her role as Communications Officer, Chris will manage public relations and projects for COTA including Seniors Week.

She will assist the CEO with publicity materials, processes and strategies within COTA, including the website, electronic communications, magazine and newsletter communications, brochures, media, public speaking presentations and the COTA Annual Report, as well as other communications activities which enhance the public profile of COTA. Chris will commence in mid-February.

COTA Australia on aged care reform

In recent news you will have seen the Gillard Government has been given a new post-flood funding challenge, with the Productivity Commission having released its 20 year plan for aged care reform.

During the election the Gillard Government promised its second term would see aged care reform as a priority. The flooding recovery challenge will not reduce the urgency of the aged care challenge.

The last time government overhauled aged care was in 1997. The opportunities of that reform were never fully realised because of disagreement between aged care consumers and providers. That disagreement in part centred on aged care bonds.

Change opportunities come along once every political generation. With the opportunity to fix aged care and put it on a sustainable footing, aged care consumers and providers are now united about what needs to change and how. We're determined not to see this reform opportunity botched, and there is no real reason for the current budget deficit to stand in the way.

The Productivity Commission report will need debate and deep reading by government, consumers, and providers. In the interim, we see three main priorities for reform.

The first of these is to provide real service choice to consumers. Aged care services today are rationed by government, meaning consumers often have to make do with what's on limited offer rather than getting the kind of care and support they need. Scrapping the rationing system that limits services that consumers access would be a good start.

The second is the aged care system's complexity and inconsistency. Consumers and their families face major difficulties in navigating through the aged care system, and there are many absurd barriers and disincentives. The Council on the Ageing and Catholic Health Australia has put forward proposals for aged care Gateways or one stop shops to provide information, conduct needs assessment, and give to consumers entitlements enabling consumers to choose their preferred service providers.

The third is that the aged care system itself is over stretched. It is not funded at a level equal to the cost of its operation, and it suffers from staff shortages that are getting worse.

A positive outcome of the regulatory failures is the new unity among aged care consumer and provider bodies about what needs to be done. This consumer and provider unity seeks to put older Australians and their personal choices at the centre of the reform agenda. It will also make the reform task for government less complicated than it would otherwise be.

Putting older Australians at the centre of reform must involve an end to service rationing, with all older Australians guaranteed an entitlement to aged care based on assessed needs. Just as Australians have entitlement to Medicare, so too should they have an entitlement to aged care and support when needed. Client directed care should be central to this new entitlement.

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Older Australians should have a say in the types of services they use. Because consumers want to live in their own home with as much independence as possible, the option to exercise this choice should be available to all.

Resources for all services, be they for in-home or residential care, will need to be increased to cover the cost of actually providing them. We have proposed a new independent evidence driven process to determine the actual cost of care, and to review and adjust ongoing funding to meet actual cost of service delivery. Such a process would be similar to the Hospital Pricing Authority promised as part of health reform.

How extra resources are provided to aged care is where disagreement arose in 1997, when there was dissent over bonds for high care.

Today there is an understanding that individuals and their families who can afford to will need to take greater responsibility for some of their accommodation costs and the costs of daily living.

A robust system of government assistance for people unable to fund their accommodation and daily living costs must also be put in place, to guarantee people unable to self fund don't end up missing out.

This principle of funding accommodation and daily living operates at all other points of a person's life. It will need to be applied in a future aged care system or aged care will simply not be sustainable.

Bonds are part of this solution. They are refundable deposits that families receive back when no longer needed. They've existed in low care for 13 years, and have enabled consumers and providers to be able to access and deliver care.

The operation of bonds can certainly be improved, building on the experience of their 13 year history. Improvement should focus on reforms that avoid a need to sell the family home.

Even if government embraces the new consensus of consumers and providers and does the hard work of creating new funding and regulatory arrangements, we'll still face an even bigger problem.

Care givers are in too short supply be they doctors, nurses, personal carers, or extended family members willing and able to care for older Australians. We don't have enough people available to work in aged care, and that problem will only get worse.

A small but important part of this solution will be found in making it easier for family members to be involved in the care of a loved one. Respite, financial incentives, and support to family care givers will be key.

But we'll also need to address paid staff shortages. Successive staff recruitment and retention strategies have been tried, and we're going to have to do even better. As a key step government will have to fund better pay for care staff.

With the Commission report prompting the next phase of aged care debate, government will likely find that consumers and providers will be able to unite on why change is needed and how change should occur.

This unity of consumers and providers should make the job for the Gillard Government in reforming aged care a whole lot easier in 2011 than it was last time in 1997.

Ian Yates AM is the Chief Executive of COTA Australia. Martin Laverty is the Chief Executive of Catholic Health Australia.

"For an inclusive community which values, supports and recognises the contribution of all older people."

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Public hearing for further comment on report

There will be a public hearing for further comment on the draft report on aged care reform by the Productivity Commission on Thursday 24 March. The hearing will take place at the Hotel Grand Chancellor from 8.30am-5pm. For more information phone Jill Irvine on (02) 6240 3223.

Council On The Ageing (Tas) Inc

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name of Organisation: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

Number of members _____ clients _____ residents _____

Contact Person: _____

Position: _____

Address (if different from above) _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Membership Category

Annual Fees are due by 1 July each year (Amounts are GST inc)

Please tick your organisation type:

Full year (July to June)

- \$20 Senior's Clubs
- \$55 Consumer / Peak Organisations
- \$110 Service Providers & Government Agencies

Half year (Jan to June)

- \$10 Senior's Clubs
- \$27.50 Consumer / Peak Organisations
- \$55 Service Providers & Government Agencies

**For consideration by the Board,
please complete & send to:**

COTA (Tas), 2 St John's Avenue, New Town Tas 7008

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