



Dear Friends,

COTA (Tas), since its inception in the mid 60's until today, has undertaken constant consultation with older Tasmanians and their families in an attempt to stay abreast of the issues they face. Throughout this consultation we have observed a constant theme: many older Tasmanians do not know where to go to get reliable and accurate information on a range of matters relating to their needs and interests.

The information needs of older people are not only about residential and community aged care, or obvious issues such as equipment or transport but also in many other aspects of day-to-day life.

Older Tasmanians have told COTA Tas that they worry about where they can find 'trusted' services such as plumbers, builders, cleaners, garden maintenance services, all of which the general public easily access via the internet, telephone or word of mouth. However, for an older person, perhaps living alone with no support network, this can be a daunting exercise into the unknown.

Many older people struggle to find a 'friendly' face to talk over issues relating to Wills, financial matters and issues relating to Power of Attorney. General health and wellbeing information can also be hard to come by for older Tasmanians. I'm sure you or I would not think twice about searching on the internet for a naturopath, a masseuse or an optometrist in our local area, but many older people are not accustomed to finding information in the way we do, especially if they do not have a good support network of friends and family.

COTA Tas believes that older people should not have to become a client of a government funded program in order to get information that should be freely and readily available to people of all age groups.

Tasmania needs a properly funded review of the needs of older people, focusing on what kind of information older people need and the most effective way to deliver this information.

An informed person will make better choices about meeting their own needs. An information program would potentially reduce pressure on existing health and care services because older people would not need to make unnecessary and time consuming phone calls asking for advice, as is currently the case. But before these needs can be met, and the right information provided, it is imperative that we find out exactly the kind of information older Tasmanians' need.

An independent review into the needs of older Tasmanians is something that our State Government should think very seriously about undertaking. The completed review would assist COTA Tas and the State Government to ascertain the best model for an information service in Tasmania, and the best avenue to provide it.

It really is a very simple formula of research and provision; surely it is not too much to ask?

Maxine Griffiths, AM,
Chief Executive Officer

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COTA Australia – Federal Budget neutral for seniors

Apart from the very welcome National Health and Hospitals Network (NHHN) funding initiatives already announced in health care, seniors are neither major winners nor losers in this year's Federal Budget, according to Ian Yates, Chief Executive of COTA Australia. "The major disappointment is that although the Budget delivers the aged care commitments promised as part of the NHHN, and additional funds for staff training and development, it has left aged care funding in a precarious state in 2010/11 while the government waits on the reports of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into aged care - not due until April 2011," Mr Yates said. COTA Australia has welcomed the continuation of stimulus funding to public housing, as seniors face a growing crisis in housing, but is disappointed there are no specific housing initiatives for seniors and no action on the Henry Review recommendations to assist low income private renters. COTA Australia have stated that with few promises surrounding improving dental, community and residential aged care this Budget has no new pluses for the millions of age pensioners in Australia. COTA Tas is supporting COTA's campaign for a better deal for seniors from all major political parties in the lead up to this year's federal election.

Depression in Carers and Older People

Are you an older person who has taken on a caring role for a relative or friend or do you care for someone who is ageing? If so, it is important to learn and understand how ageing, and being a carer, can affect mental health and well-being. *beyondblue* and Council on the Ageing Tasmania (COTA Tas), through their Peer Education program, provide information sessions free of charge to seniors groups throughout Tasmania. These sessions will assist participants to understand about depression while learning about the common signs and symptoms. In addition, participants will be informed about treatments, where to get help as well as strategies to avoid/manage depression. To have a trained peer educator visit your group or club please contact the Peer Education Coordinator on 6228 1897 to make a booking. For more information about depression, anxiety and related disorders please visit the *beyondblue* website www.beyondblue.org.au or call their information line 1300 22 4636.

Caring for Older Australians issues paper available

The Australian Government has released the Productivity Commission's issues paper for the inquiry Caring for Older Australians. The Commission has released this issues paper to assist individuals and organisations to prepare submissions to the inquiry. It contains and outlines:

- the scope of the inquiry
- the Commission's procedures
- matters about which the Commission is seeking comment and information
- how to make a submission

Participants should not feel that they are restricted to comment only on matters raised in the issues paper. The Commission wishes to receive information and comment on issues which participants consider relevant to the inquiry's terms of reference. The due date for initial submissions is 30 July 2010 with a draft report due for release in December 2010. The issues paper is available online at <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/aged-care/issues>.

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

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AIHW report shows carers need care too

Many primary carers of people with disability due to arthritis and osteoporosis are older Australians who themselves need assistance and whose caring duties were often making their problems worse, according to a report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). In 2003, about 50,000 Australians received help from primary carers because of a severe or profound disability caused mainly by arthritis or osteoporosis. The report, *Primary carers of people with arthritis and osteoporosis*, shows that over 40 per cent of these carers were 65 years or older and 70 per cent had physical problems and limitations of their own, which were sometimes exacerbated by the care giving process. A copy of the report is available online at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10725>.

New Cancer Centre for NW Coast

Burnie will receive \$4.78 million to establish a new cancer care centre at the North West Regional Hospital as part of federal and state funding under the new state-wide Tasmanian Cancer Care Project. The centre will include a patient support centre and a new chemotherapy treatment service, with 12 chemotherapy treatment chairs. A million dollars will also go towards a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) unit. When fully operational this new facility at Burnie will provide an estimated extra 6,000 chemotherapy treatments per year. The Burnie regional cancer centre will be networked to enhanced cancer services across Hobart and Launceston and will enable all Tasmanians to have better access to essential cancer services closer to home.

Warning against fraud

Medicare Australia and Centrelink are warning Australians to watch out for hoaxes which involve dodgy callers pretending to be from the agencies. "Medicare Australia has recently received reports from women of suspicious phone calls from a man claiming to work for Medicare Australia," Human Services Portfolio General Manager Hank Jongen said. "He's phoned several women that we're aware of, offering cash and holiday prizes as rewards for participating in a survey. There have been reports of scammers who have posed as Centrelink staff members in an attempt to gain personal details from customers. "These personal details can then be used to commit identity fraud and other such criminal activity," Mr Jongen said. Anyone who is unsure of whether it really is Medicare or Centrelink calling them should hang up and call the organisation in question on your regular contact number to verify. The number for Australian Government's designated fraud tip-off line is 13 15 24.

Clearer pension rules for household solar panels

The Government has clarified the way feed-in tariffs from household solar panels are assessed for the purposes of the pension income test after public backlash for the previous assessment. Feed-in tariffs that are paid to pensioners as a credit on an electricity bill will no longer be assessed as income under the pension income test. The Government has taken this step to make the system clearer and fairer in response to pensioners' concerns about the way the pre-existing income test rules apply to feed-in tariffs on solar energy. Single pensioners are able to earn up to \$142 a fortnight without affecting the amount of pension they receive and couples combined can earn up to \$248 a fortnight without affecting the amount of pension they receive.

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Diversity and Older Peoples Care Networks research project

A new research project is under way, designed to look at gay and lesbian people over 60 throughout Australia who receive care or emotional support in relation to a health need or disability. The project, *Diversity and Older People's Care Networks* is new Australian study project sponsored by the University of Queensland and led by Mark Hughes and Sue Kentlyn of the School of Social Work and Human Services. It will be looking at the diversity of the care networks of lesbian and gay people aged 60 and over, and how care providers respond to these persons' sexual identity. The research involves interviews with the older lesbian or gay person, as well as their paid and unpaid carers. For more details about the study project as well as further contact details go to www.m2mtas.com.

More co-ordinated mental health care

Currently the federal government provides one-off support for a range of mental health services through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). The mental health sector has given the government feedback that this funding could be better spent. Consistent with this advice, in the most recent Federal Budget the government redirected funding to providing packages of care for up to 25,000 people diagnosed with severe mental illness. This means that people who are diagnosed with a severe mental illness will receive more coordinated care through a team of health professionals - including social workers and occupational therapists - to comprehensively look after their ongoing care needs. These new measures are due to be implemented on 1 July 2010. COTA Tas welcomes this adjustment to the provision of mental health funding, but would still like to see more attention specifically directed towards the mental health care of older Australians.

New housing model to address undersupply

The projected chronic undersupply of housing for Tasmania's ageing population will be alleviated with the launch of a housing development that sets a new benchmark in accommodation for over 55s. Situated near Old Beach, the new development, *Verve*, comprises 120 two-bedroom apartments to be sold for around \$345,000 each. The development looks beyond the traditional options for people aged 55+ as it doesn't align with any existing models for retirement living, creating a community for people who are working, semi-retired or retired. *Verve* will be managed by Tasmania's respected aged care facility St Ann's Homes. A bathroom and kitchen display suite is now available to view at Compton Downs, go to www.vervecommunity.com or call 1800 VERVE for more information.

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

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With your help we can have a stronger voice to effect change across Tasmania.

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 Johns Avenue, New Town Tas 7008

If you would like to add or remove your name to the COTA Tas newsletter mailing list, please email admin@cotatas.org.au with "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line.