



Dear Friends,

It has been an interesting last few months as we have steadily progressed with our community projects and our Policy Council. Both the *Conversations with our Community Project* and the Policy Council have been extremely effective in canvassing issues that need to be addressed for older Tasmanians. Updates on both are included in this edition of *Between the Lines*.

We are continuing to act in the interests of older Tasmanians and remain concerned at the lack of a policy arm within government to focus on the needs of older Tasmanians as a whole.

We recently welcomed the release of a discussion paper for the review of the older driver licensing system by the State Government.

However, the paper falls short of the mark as it fails to adequately address a number of key issues, including the discriminatory practice of mandatory annual medical assessments for older Tasmanian drivers.

We are strongly opposed to the practice of subjecting members of the public to mandatory medical assessments based on age as it clearly constitutes age discrimination.

Annual medical assessments are currently standard practice for drivers wanting to keep their license past 75 years of age.

We acknowledge that abolishing both on-road driving assessments and medical assessments for older drivers may not be received well by the public given the perception that older drivers are involved in more accidents.

But there is simply no evidence to suggest that older drivers are a greater risk than any other age group on Tasmanian roads. In fact the statistics clearly show that fatality rates for drivers aged over 80 are 5 points less than those aged 17 to 24 years of age.

Tasmanian demographics over the next 30 years are set to shift as the population ages and a greater number of people will be relying on motor vehicle travel to stay connected with their communities. Most older people see dependence on motor vehicles as an integral part of their lifestyle and one that plays an important part in keeping them active.

COTA has welcomed the decision to cease mandatory on-road driving assessments for drivers aged 85 years and over, which effectively sees them treated as they should be - an ordinary member of society.

A public education campaign to put in context the comparable risk of older vs younger drivers must be undertaken to help ease public concern over the changes.

Maxine Griffiths, AM,
Chief Executive Officer

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

(03) 6228 1897
www.cotatas.org.au

Update on COTA's *Conversations with our Community* project

COTA's *Conversations with our Community* project is funded through HACC for southern Tasmania and aims to provide opportunities at a local community level for older Tasmanians to have a say on issues that are important to them. To date, COTA's Project Officer Linda Jamieson has been working in the Southern Midlands and Huon Valley municipalities and has recently begun working in the Kingborough area. Linda has met with over 100 older people in these areas, listening to their issues of concern and recruiting older community members as COTA Champions. The role of the COTA Champion is to seek opinions from, and listen to the needs and issues of, older Tasmanians in their local community and provide this information back to COTA. About 20 people across the three municipalities have expressed interest in volunteering with COTA in this role.

The key issues that older people have discussed include access to transport, access to information, access to services in rural areas, difficulties in filling out forms, issues for gay and lesbian older people, activities and isolation, accessing garden and home maintenance services, and abuse of older people. COTA has outlined these and other issues in summary documents and has provided feedback to the Southern Midlands community via the *Have Your Say Feedback* newsletter.

COTA is also consulting the community via our *Have Your Say* postcards that have been distributed extensively throughout the State. Over 200 postcards have been returned to COTA with older people briefly telling us about their connectedness to their local community and key issues as they age.

COTA uses the information gained through the various consultation mechanisms in setting priorities for policy work, lobbying government and key agencies, and advocacy. If you wish to obtain copies of the Southern Midlands newsletter, the documents outlining key issues or more information about the COTA Champions, please contact Linda Jamieson at COTA on 6228 1897 or lindaj@cotatas.org.au.

Update on COTA Tasmania's Policy Council

The COTA Policy Council, established earlier this year, has now held four meetings and is beginning to work well together to provide advice and policy direction on issues of concern for older Tasmanians. To date the Policy Council has provided input into COTA's submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the Care of Older Australians, to the Greens document on Aged Care for the Future and to the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources on their Review of the Older Driver's Licensing System.

The Policy Council has also provided advice on COTA Australia's work in the adoption of universal housing design and age friendly urban design principles, as well as on changes to the retailing of energy and the possible introduction of time of use tariffs which have the potential to have a disproportionately high impact on older people. The Policy Council also provided input into COTA Australia's federal election campaign, lobbying on issues including age discrimination and ageism, mature age employment, mental and dental health, health promotion and aged care reform.

At its last meeting in August, the Policy Council used the information obtained through the *Conversations with our Community* project to determine its priorities. Access to transport was recognised as one of the key issues highlighted by older people and the Policy Council aims to further explore this issue and its impact on the quality of life for older Tasmanians.

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

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COTA releases mobile phone for seniors

COTA, supported by many other organisations, recently conducted research into older Australians' ability to access and utilise technology. In the case of mobile phones the research showed that very few were made with older people in mind and that people found them not to be user friendly. With that in mind COTA is now proud to be able to offer members the exclusive benefit of mobile phones made specifically for older people.

The phones are unlocked and as such are able to be used with all existing GSM SIM cards. The phones also come with unique features such as larger tactile buttons, easy to read screen and numbers, hearing aid compatible and a digital number announcer. The phone also holds a specially built-in 'SOS' feature which calls four pre-programmed phone numbers when the SOS button is pushed. If none of the numbers answer the call, the phone automatically calls the emergency services and the speaker phone activates. If still no voice is detected by the person in distress the phone sends an SMS message saying "Emergency call, please call me!"

For more information and to order the phone visit www.cotamembership.org.au or call 1300 1400 50.

Power prices continue to skyrocket

The price of energy and water is a significant issue for many older Tasmanians currently surviving on the bare minimum that the existing pension provides. Much media attention has been focussed on the issue over the past months and the State Government must begin to act. COTA Tasmania is active in working to ensure older people are able to afford essential services and the recent slight pension increase has provided some hope.

At the national level the Australian Energy Regulator has a Consumer Consultative Group that COTA is represented on. In addition they have put out a number of issues papers and held stakeholder forums on the implementation of the new National Energy Customer framework. For more details go to www.aer.gov.au and for any local concerns contact COTA Tas on 6228 1897.

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WANTED PEER EDUCATORS

Do you have an interest in gardening?
Do you enjoy sharing information?
Would you like to train as a volunteer
speaker with the Still Gardening project?

After training your task would be to talk
with groups in order to encourage older
people to continue gardening.

**Join our peer educators program for a
rewarding and enjoyable experience.**

To register your interest and find out more
email stillgardening@hobartcity.com.au
or call Lena or Kim on 6236 9349
or 0437 585 665



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State Government Older driver licensing review

The State Government recently released a discussion paper for the review of the older driver licensing system. The discussion paper was welcomed by COTA Tasmania, however, the paper falls short of the mark as it fails to adequately address a number of key issues, including the discriminatory practice of mandatory annual medical assessments for older Tasmanian drivers.

COTA remains strongly opposed to the practice of subjecting members of the public to mandatory medical assessments based on age as it clearly constitutes age discrimination.

For more information and for a copy of the discussion paper visit http://www.transport.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/52339/Review_of_the_Older_Driver_Licensing_System_-_Discussion_Paper.pdf.

Submissions

COTA Australia has been active in highlighting older people's issues in response to a number of enquiries and other policy development processes as listed below:

- Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability.
- Submission in response to the Australian Energy Regulator's Issues Paper on Retail Pricing Guidelines.
- Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in response to Australia Post's 2010 price notification.

All COTA Australia submissions can be found at www.cotaaustralia.org.au.

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



WANTED GARDEN MATES

Do you like to keep active, enjoy gardening and the outdoors and like to support others in the community?

Then you may be interested in being a Volunteer Garden Mate. Garden Mates are trained to assist older people and people with disabilities in the garden so they can remain active, stay in their own home and enjoy their garden instead of being overwhelmed by it.

Join our garden mates program for a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

To register your interest and find out more email stillgardening@hobartcity.com.au or call Lena or Kim on 6236 9349 or 0437 585 665



COTA TAS Annual General Meeting

The COTA (Tas) AGM will take place 26 November from 2-4.30pm in the Churchill Room at the Salamanca Inn, Salamanca Place. RSVP for the event by Monday 22 November. Guest speakers at the meeting will include Cassy O'Connor and Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Robin Banks.

An invitation for nominees to the COTA Board is now open. For an information kit please phone: 62281897 or email admin@cotatas.org.au.

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 John's 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.