

MEDIA RELEASE

22 August 2013

Coalition's Health Policy fails to address affordability

COTA Australia has welcomed several initiatives in the Coalition's Health Policy released today but believes it does not go far enough in addressing several critical issues including health affordability which impacts negatively on many older Australians, and the critical areas of mental health and end of life care.

The Coalition's health plan has the potential to deliver meaningful benefits for older people through:

- more timely access to new medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme;
- improving diabetes management through a coordinated National Diabetes Strategy;
- fast-tracking full implementation of bowel cancer screening

However, COTA CE Ian Yates said the policy falls short in not addressing better access to and affordability of quality health services.

"We've recently asked older Australians across the nation what matters to them this election and access to quality and affordable health services is their number one priority," Mr Yates said.

"Many older people are struggling with excessive out of pocket expenses for their health care and COTA has been calling on all parties to look at ways to address this growing issue.

"Out of pocket expenses are on the increase, with every Australian now paying more than \$1000 a year to access health care.

"For many older people this is a huge financial burden and Medicare needs to be looked at to see where it is falling down.

"It is disappointing the Coalition policy falls short on addressing this issue."

Mr Yates said older Australians are hoping there will be more to come from the Coalition on mental health, end of life care and palliative care and dementia research, all highlighted in COTA's election platform.

"These areas are critical to the health of older Australians and we hope they have been left out of the health policy because they are being addressed in other policies which will be released separately within the next two weeks," Mr Yates said.

COTA's election platform *A New Deal for Older Australians* is available at www.cota.org.au.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.