

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued 21 October for immediate use

Seniors education pilot program wins innovation award

An innovative and popular pilot project addressing the financial abuse of elders in the Tasmanian community has won a major award for Tasmania's peak seniors advocacy body, Council on the Ageing (COTA).

COTA's *You're Worth It* pilot program won the Innovation Award in the category of Best Team Contribution for Service Excellence in the annual awards presented by the Department of Health and Human Services.

You're Worth It commenced as a pilot project in January 2012 with seed funding from the state government community support levy and involved the development and implementation of a program to train COTA peer educators about the prevention of financial elder abuse.

More than 430 community members from geographic, socio-economic and culturally aware groups attended the 23 session sessions presented by 11 of COTA's band of volunteer Peer Educators.

The vast majority (89%) of audience participants said that the information presented at the sessions increased their awareness of this subject and gave them information allowing them to act to protect themselves from financial elder abuse. Significantly, more than two thirds of participants indicated they would be taking steps to protect themselves.

Importantly, numerous participants told how their new awareness had alerted them to look out for others who may be at risk of financial elder abuse.

COTA Tasmania CEO Sue Leith says that the awards not only recognise the vision and efforts of principal facilitator Miriam Herzfeld and the COTA Peer Educators.

"This award puts the spotlight on the plight of so many older Tasmanians who are, sadly, being financially abused by family members," Mrs Leitch said.

"COTA is actively seeking private sector support to enable this important and popular education program to continue throughout Tasmania.

"The *You're Worth It* format and content is clearly appropriate and the demand is certainly there – we have a waiting list. We just need the financial support to continue this important and worthwhile education program for the benefit of our treasured older Tasmanians."

More information or interview with Sue Leitch – contact David Rose 6231 3265