

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ageing population needs responsible planning not policy on the run

Pensioners and seniors across Australia are growing increasingly alarmed by the Government's surprise and haphazard announcements in response to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population, says Australia's leading seniors advocacy peak, COTA Australia.

COTA Australia CE Ian Yates said Joe Hockey's comments at a G20 media conference this morning calling for an increase in the pension age were irresponsible given the Government's lack of a comprehensive evidence based policy which considers a whole range of public policy measures that affect the budget.

"COTA Australia has been calling for months for a coordinated approach to planning for the ageing population, with all major stakeholders involved.

"Yes we can talk about the pension age but at the same time we have to discuss superannuation - which is currently inequitable, inefficient and costs the taxpayer just as much as the pension - together with health care, housing, employment and the pernicious effects of age discrimination - they all need to be in the mix.

"The ageing population poses serious questions and also presents opportunities - and we need serious well researched answers, not throw away lines in media conferences which seems to be the Treasurer's current modus operandi.

Mr Yates said the pension went through a major review in 2008/09 and the results were supported by the Coalition as well as Labor. The pension age is already due to increase by six months every two years from July 2017 to 67 years in July 2023, and the pension income test taper was tightened in 2009. Treasury said then that the new system was now sustainable - what has changed?

"In addition given the ongoing issues of age discrimination in our society and particularly in the workforce, increasing the pension age will just push more older workers onto Newstart for longer, increasing other costs on the federal budget and causing major health issues.

"This is hardly the solution to future budget challenges and that's why we need real leadership to approach this in a coordinated way."

"Let's treat older Australians with respect rather than scaring them with surprise announcements about losing the pension; and let's have a considered discussion based on good research and evidence with all players involved."

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