

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Federal Budget recognises role of older Australians**

The 2018 Budget includes important measures to fight ageism in the workforce, tap into the experience of older Australians and provide financial flexibility in retirement, Australia's leading seniors' advocacy organisation, COTA Australia said today.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said he was pleased the Government had recognised the need to reframe how Australia responds to our ageing population.

"It is time that as a nation we start thinking of an ageing population as an opportunity, rather than a burden," Mr Yates said.

"That means making sure we don't just live longer, but that we have independence and quality of life as we age. Older Australians have a wealth of experience and knowledge, which is not recognised often enough or harnessed nearly as effectively as it could be."

The Budget will provide \$189.7 million over five years to support workers aged 45 to 70 to adapt and remain in work; and \$17.4 over 4 years for a Skills Checkpoint For Older Workers program.

The Budget will also provide more financial flexibility for Australians of retirement age, by:

- Increasing the Pension Work Bonus by \$50 a fortnight so people can earn \$300 per fortnight that is not counted in their pension income test and expanding the scheme to include self employed retirees.
- Extending the Pension Loan Scheme to everyone over pension age and increasing the maximum fortnightly income from the scheme to 150% of the Aged Pension rate.

"We are particularly pleased about measures to protect consumers by requiring Super Funds to create a retirement income strategy for members and ensure information is easier to understand for consumers," Mr Yates said. "We welcome the decision on a realistic means test treatment of comprehensive income products for retirement."

The *Protecting your Super Package* also includes measures to

- Cap fees on superannuation balances less than \$6000 at 3%;
- Ban superannuation fund exit fees; and
- Crack down on automatic insurance policies within superannuation policies.

However Mr Yates said he was concerned the Government has not increased the Newstart Allowance to help job seekers, including the significant number of unemployed people over the age of 50.

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