

COTA

For older Australians



**COTA Tas Submission to
Tasmanian Government Community Consultation
2012-2013 State Budget**

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About COTA Tas

COTA Tas is an autonomous member of the national COTA network, operating as a peak body for a wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to supporting the contributions of older persons. COTA Tas works to encourage communities to think positively about ageing. It does this by championing the rights and interests of all older people in Tasmania and by promoting and supporting social inclusion.

For further information please contact

Maxine Griffiths AM
Chief Executive Officer

COTA Tas
'Westella'
181 Elizabeth Street
Hobart TAS 7000

Ph: 03 6231 3265
Mobile: 0448 281 897
Email: maxineg@cotatas.org.au

Submission written for COTA TAS by Miriam Herzfeld (Miriam Herzfeld Consulting)

Introduction

COTA Tas' vision is for an inclusive society which values, supports and respects older people.

Older Tasmanians make an enormous contribution to our community. While many may regard the older population as an insurmountable burden on our society, COTA Tas recognises that many older people are extremely busy, productive and contribute socially, culturally and financially to our communities.¹ In addition, older people have made enormous contributions over time by developing the educational, organisational, work and other structures in Tasmania. They also make other unique contributions, such as wisdom, guidance, support, and transmitting cultural knowledge, which are arguably as valuable as more tangible contributions.

It is our collective role to ensure that we recognise, value, support and respect these contributions, despite the fiscal challenges facing Tasmania. COTA Tas recognises the Government's focus on returning the State's financial situation to a sustainable position; however it also recognises that this can not come at the expense of recognising and responding to the needs of older Tasmanians. If we don't make the most of the opportunities presented by our older population now, the challenges associated with the ageing population will only be exacerbated in the future.

As such COTA Tas calls on the Government to find innovative and enhanced ways of responding to the ageing population, which will benefit our older population as well as Tasmanian's financial position into the future. COTA Tas calls for a new approach to:

- ensuring that the voices of older Tasmanians are central in the decisions that affect their lives
- developing a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges of an older Tasmanian population
- seeking improved ways in which policies, programs and services are developed that will benefit the health, wellbeing and quality of life of older Tasmanians.

Who are older Tasmanians?

When we talk about older Tasmanians, we are referring to people aged over 60 years.

While it is difficult to put an age to the term 'old' it is generally accepted that this is the approximate age when many people undergo significant transitions in their lives and when such changes have a greater impact than they may have had previously.

Some examples of these transitions include:

- moving from work to retirement or reduced work
- becoming a recipient of income support payments (pensions)
- becoming grandparents
- changing housing and transport needs
- becoming involved in different types of social activities
- as we age we may become less resilient to maintaining health and wellbeing.

¹ Ranzijn, R & Andrews, G, 1999, *Ageing and the economy in South Australia: Social capital and productive ageing* (Ageing Series No. 7). Adelaide: Department of Human Services, Government of South Australia.

As outlined in this submission there are currently notable defects in the existing policy development, program planning and service delivery structures and processes relating to the needs and aspirations of older Tasmanians. Older people are not being given the opportunity to be heard. There are also gaps in our understanding of the needs and issues of older Tasmanians because research and information about older Tasmanians isn't being pulled together in a comprehensive manner. It is time for us to find new ways of doing things so we can build an inclusive society which values, supports and respects older Tasmanians now and into the future.

Our Recommendations

COTA Tas invites the Government to share in its vision for an inclusive society which values, supports and respects older people. In this Submission to the Tasmanian Government, as part of its Community Consultation for the 2012-2013 State Budget, COTA Tas recommends the following:

Recommendations

1. The Government resource COTA Tas to establish a knowledge hub that will:
 - Help ensure that the voices of older Tasmanians directly inform policy development, program planning and implementation, and service delivery;
 - Bring together existing information and research, and commission further research, to give us a clearer picture of the trends, opportunities and challenges of our older Tasmanian population; and
 - Propose and advocate for innovative, appropriate and evidence-informed approaches to developing policy, program planning and service delivery so as to benefit the health, wellbeing and quality of life of older Tasmanians.

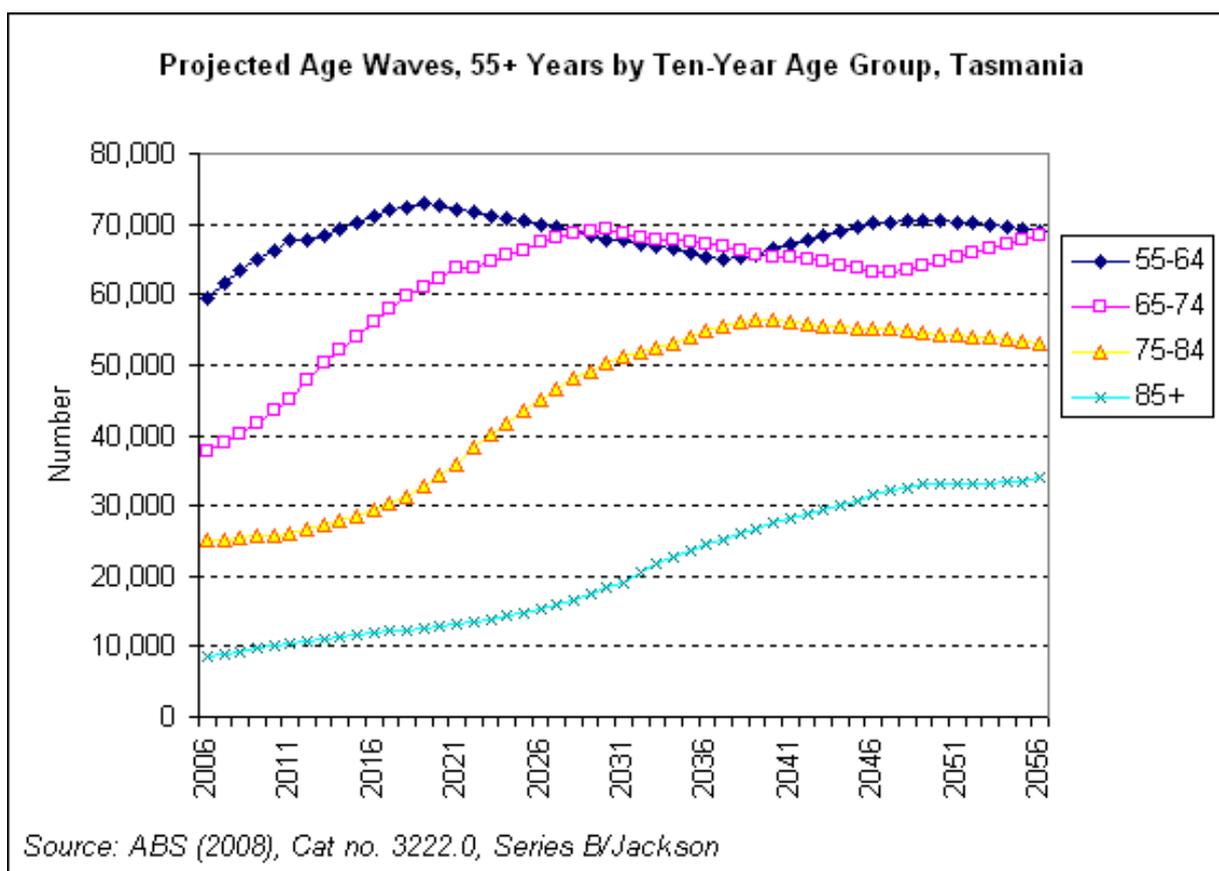
Recurrent funding sought: \$200,000

2. The Government provide COTA Tas with annual indexation on funding it receives from the State Government.

Tasmania's Ageing Population

It is well known that Tasmania's population is ageing more rapidly than any other state or territory in Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) at 30 June 2009, there were 76,900 people aged 65 years and over in Tasmania, making up 15.3% of the population. This was the second highest proportion of older people of all the states and territories in Australia.² It is predicted that by 2012, Tasmania will have the highest proportion of older people compared to all other jurisdictions in Australia.

The ABS further predicts that the proportion of people aged 65 years and over in Australia will increase from 13% in 2007, to 18% in 2020 and to between 23 and 25% by 2056. A significant portion of this rise will be in the number of people aged 85 years and over which is growing rapidly. People aged 85 years and over equated to 1.8% of the Australian population in 2007, and this proportion is expected to increase to between 4.9 and 7.3% by 2056.³ The graph below illustrates the sequence of numerical growth and decline that will occur within the older age groups.⁴ The time to plan for and act on these important demographic changes is **now**.



² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, 3235.0 - Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2009.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, 3222.0 - Population Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2101.

⁴ Jackson NO, 2011, Tasmania's Population, www.taspop.tasbis.com (accessed 20 September 2011).

Tasmania Together

Because older Tasmanians represent such a large and growing segment of the Tasmanian population, the *Tasmania Together* framework in its entirety is of direct relevance. While there are some issues that are of particular importance to older Tasmanians, every stated goal is of relevance. Older Tasmanians, like other age cohorts, are concerned about our economy, our environment, our education and training structures and about the challenges facing families and children. However, this submission seeks to focus on another crucially important *Tasmania Together* goal:

Goal 8: Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future



1. The Voices of Older Tasmanians

COTA Tas's purpose is to give a voice to older Tasmanians. Giving a voice to older Tasmanians means:

- *Being accessible* for older Tasmanians from all walks of life
- *Listening* to older Tasmanians, including those with the loudest voices and those with the softest voices
- *Valuing and respecting* the voices of older Tasmanians from diverse backgrounds
- *Empowering* older Tasmanians to speak up even when it comes to difficult and unpopular issues
- *Reaching out* directly to older people where they live in all parts of Tasmania
- *Being equitable* by ensuring that the most vulnerable are supported to have a say.

COTA Tas has a number of important programs that enable it to be the voice of older Tasmanians, including our *COTA Champions* program. *COTA Champions* are volunteers who seek opinions from and listen to the needs and issues of older Tasmanians in their local community and provide this information back to COTA Tas. COTA Tas currently has *COTA Champions* in four Tasmanian municipalities and plans to expand this model to other localities into the future.

Another one of our programs, COTA Tas Peer Educators, recognises older Tasmanians as 'experts' with an ability to share knowledge and discuss ideas with other older Tasmanians. COTA Tas' Peer Educators connect with older Tasmanians from all walks of life through community presentations.

COTA Tas also facilitates quarterly round table networking meetings with groups that represent older Tasmanians, known as Seniors Alliance Tasmania (SAT). SAT is made up of Tasmanian Pensioners Association (TPA), Tasmanian Association of State Superannuants (TASS), Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association (SCOA), Tasmanian Permanently Incapacitated Association (TPI), Association of Independent Retirees (AIR), Australian Retired Persons Association (ARPA), National Seniors Australia (NSA) and Country Women's Association (CWA).

Given that COTA Tas has a direct connection with older Tasmanians, as well as organisations representing older Tasmanians, we are appropriately placed to be the primary channel between the voices of older Tasmanians and those developing policies, programs and services for older Tasmanians. COTA Tas has a diverse membership, including organisations such as *Working It Out*, *Advocacy Tasmania* and *Community Support (South) Tasmania*. By being established as a knowledge hub, COTA Tas will be able to facilitate the vital connection between those in the government and non-government sector and the voices of older Tasmanians.

Older people expect and deserve to be formally recognised in the Government's decision making processes and mechanisms in the same way that other significant communities within Tasmania are e.g. Premiers Disability Advisory Council and the Tasmanian Women's Council. At present there is no clear pathway that enables the Government to engage directly with older Tasmanians. By working through COTA Tas to access the voices of older Tasmanians, the Government can ensure that it engages appropriately with older Tasmanians into the future.

COTA Tas believes it is important that we strive to hear the voices of **all** older Tasmanians including those who are socially excluded. Some of the most disadvantaged older Tasmanians include those who:

- Are geographically disadvantaged, such as those in rural and regional areas of the state
- Live alone, especially women (who generally outlive their male partners), those that are socially isolated and with no family or community support system
- Live with a physical, sensory and/or intellectual disability
- Are financially disadvantaged, including those on low incomes, pensioners, carers of ageing family members and grandparents caring for children
- Have low-level literacy skills. This includes literacy in all its forms e.g. IT literacy, health literacy, financial literacy and general literacy.
- Have chronic illness
- Are members of the Aboriginal community
- Have poor mental health
- Are members of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities
- Are members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community.

Different communities have different needs and expectations and require different consultation approaches to make sure the process is as inclusive and representative as possible.

It is difficult for the Government to develop appropriate policies and implement effective strategies for older Tasmanians, without consulting with older Tasmanians from all walks of life regarding their needs and aspirations. Information gained directly from older people is necessary for informed and responsive policy development. Informed policy development is essential given the demographic projections in Tasmania and the need to develop cost-effective approaches to supporting an older population.

COTA Tas notes that the ageing population was recently recognised as a key issue in Tasmania *Together's* 10 Year Review: *What the Community Said* (please refer to the text box). How will the Government respond to such issues and how will it continue to consult with the community on issues related to ageing without waiting for the next 10 year review?

While COTA Tas welcomes the work of the Tasmania *Together* Review, it did not set out to scrutinize the issues nor provide comprehensive strategies for action. With appropriate resourcing, COTA Tas would be able to contribute to providing greater detail on the issues identified by the Tasmania *Together* Review consultation process, using our direct link with older Tasmanians.

Tasmania Together

Issues effecting older Tasmanians was a key issue raised during Tasmania *Together's* 10 Year Review, *What the community said.*

People in Tasmania are concerned about:

...access to, and the availability of, health services and health professionals, particularly for the elderly...

...a perceived lack of adequate planning and infrastructure is compounding the problem by not keeping up with...an ageing demographic...

...the impact of an ageing population on the health system...

...the lack of availability and the affordability of in-home and residential care services for ageing Tasmanians....

...infrastructure development not keeping up with high growth urban areas and a general ageing of the population.

Similarly, COTA Tas would be able to assist Government agencies such as the Community Development Division to directly and comprehensively consult with older Tasmanians. COTA Tas would be able to provide an avenue for consulting with older Tasmanians on agency-specific as well as whole-of-government responses to the ageing demographic.

As our population continues to age, there is an urgent need for the Tasmanian Government to establish a clear pathway for engaging with older Tasmanians. Older Tasmanians have made, and continue to make, a significant and direct contribution to the state's economy and its social and cultural fabric, yet they receive very little recognition and have virtually no opportunity to influence directly, policies and services developed and implemented ostensibly in their interests. This severely restricts the choices and opportunities for older Tasmanians to continue to control their lives. It assumes (quite wrongly) that older Tasmanians are no longer interested in, nor do they have the capacity to, make decisions which influence our society, current and future.

Recommendation

The Government resource COTA Tas to establish a knowledge hub that will help ensure that the voices of older Tasmanians directly inform policy development, program planning and implementation, and service delivery.



2. A Clearer Picture

It is vital, particularly in these pressing economic times, that we base our actions on sound evidence. Evidence informed practice will assist us to develop policy, deliver services, programs and activities using information about what works. It can inform us of the potential benefits, harms and costs of interventions.

Evidence implies knowledge derived from a variety of sources that has been subjected to testing and found to be credible. Evidence is collected in a systematic manner and may be of a qualitative or quantitative nature. It is informed by research and/or evaluation using scientific principles and methods or is subject to peer-review processes.

Numerous organisations have collected evidence about the needs, concerns, and what works and what doesn't work for older Tasmanians (see examples in the box on the right). At the moment however there is no one organisation synthesising this information in a comprehensive manner and encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration. Importantly no one is giving older Tasmanians the opportunity to learn about this research and engage them in utilising this knowledge to shape responses to the needs and aspirations of older Tasmanians.

With the support of the Government, COTA Tas proposes that it becomes a clearing-house for research, project information, evaluation findings, and other evidence-informed information relating to the interests of older Tasmanians.

COTA Tas would develop:

- A research and resources database on older Tasmanians, including data categorised by local government area
- A good practice database, which provides best practice advice and resources on engaging with older Tasmanians
- A researchers database, which provides up-to-date information about current research and who is undertaking it
- Commission research related to advancing the interests of older Tasmanians and responding to demographic trends and future population predictions.

What do we know?

Research relating to older Tasmanians has been carried out by numerous organisations.

Who is putting the pieces together to give us the picture we need to make informed decisions?

Numerous local councils have collected data or commissioned research on older Tasmanians.

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service has undertaken numerous HACC funded research projects.

Researchers at the University of Tasmania have carried out significant research on social inclusion and older Tasmanians.

The ABS provides important demographic data including projections about the ageing population.

Other organisations have collated data on issues affecting older Tasmanians who are Carers and who have disabilities.

COTA Tas notes that the Government has established *Kids Come First*, a whole-of-government initiative to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanian children and young people. The project has developed an outcomes-based framework with a database that allows analysis at a locality/suburb level for children from birth to age 17 for a number of indicators. This includes key indicators of health, wellbeing, safety, development and learning that reflect the influences of child, family, and community and service systems.

We currently have no comprehensive knowledge base on older Tasmanians despite the fact that one in four Tasmanians will be aged over 65 by the year 2056. A research and resources database, including data categorised by local government area (where possible), would be invaluable in assisting the Government to develop meaningful policy, appropriately allocate funding for programs, and expand services in areas where they are most needed.

Part of this database would include the research work undertaken by COTA Tas itself, for example as part of our *COTA Champions* program. COTA Tas recently published the findings of research on social inclusion undertaken as part of the *COTA Champions* program, *A Sense of Belonging: Social Inclusion Issues for Older People in Tasmania* (Jamieson, 2011). COTA Tas is keen to share these findings and piece it together with other research to help us develop a clearer picture of the trends, opportunities and challenges of the older Tasmanian population.

A good practice database would enable all agencies and organisations (government and non-government) to develop and implement policies, programs and services that will ensure positive outcomes for older people. It would focus on the promotion of evidence-based practice and the delivery of positive outcomes for older Tasmanians. And importantly it would help ensure that the voices of older people are front and centre of our practice.

A researchers' database, which provides up-to-date information about current research and who is undertaking it, would be invaluable in Tasmania for encouraging dialogue, collaboration and knowledge sharing, and identifying future research needs. COTA Tas would be in a distinctive position to commission research in relation to the interests of older Tasmanians. Unique to our approach to promoting and commissioning research would be our focus on the voice of older Tasmanians. COTA Tas believes there are numerous knowledge gaps that require greater understanding.

By providing older Tasmanians with a voice and piecing together the currently scattered research and information on older Tasmanians, COTA Tas will be able to provide a strong basis for those who develop policy, programs and services for older Tasmanians. This will be of tremendous value to the Government, as well as the non-government sector and the community.

Recommendation

The Government resource COTA Tas to establish a knowledge hub that will bring together existing information and research, and commission further research, to give us a clearer picture of the trends, opportunities and challenges of our older Tasmanian population.

3.0 Better ways of doing things

All of us need to do better. By listening to the voices of older Tasmanians and building a clearer picture of the opportunities and challenges of our older population we will be able to create a strong platform to do better when it comes to policy development, program planning and implementation, and service delivery.

Older Tasmanians have a lot to offer in terms of their knowledge, skills, networks, experiences, passion and enthusiasm. Older Tasmanians must be part of the solution to finding better ways to do things. As part of COTA Tas' proposal to become a knowledge hub for older Tasmanians, we will be able to foster innovative responses to the issues and concerns raised by older Tasmanians.

COTA Tas will be well placed to enable the development of ideas for:

- New and improved products and services for older Tasmanians in their homes and out in the community
- Processes and practices including enhanced quality and efficiency in services for older Tasmanians
- New or fundamental changes to existing systems including knitting elements of different sectors together to create a more effective problem-solving approach
- Changing belief systems and rationalities, including the way the wider community views, values and respects older Tasmanians.

COTA Tas has already identified a number of areas where we need to improve practice and come up with innovative approaches, for example:

- Ageing in place: We need to better understand what it means to “age in place” and how we can support older people through this transition in their lives.
- Service provision: We need to reorient thinking when it comes to service delivery so that we move beyond the notion of “clients being recipients”, to working with older people in a more holistic way. For example, HACC service providers could play a greater role in assessing how socially connected their clients are. They could for example ask some simple questions about a client's social activities, whether they are involved in any community activities or volunteer with any organisations. Service providers could even provide information about current activities that may be appropriate and accessible for their clients. There are many simple ways that we can improve service delivery so as to enhance social inclusion for older people.
- Consulting: We need to develop more creative ways of ensuring that all older Tasmanians are able to have a voice on the issues that are important to them, including those who are socially excluded and vulnerable.
- Housing and Land Use Planning: We need new ideas for housing design and land use that will support older people to be able to age in place and stay connected to their communities.
- Technology: We need more practical ideas that support older people to take up opportunities offered by technological advances.

- Transport: We need innovative community-based models of transport that will make transport reliable for older Tasmanians.
- Employment: We need to find different ways to support older people who want to remain in the workplace.
- Volunteer: We need to make it easier for older Tasmanians to become volunteers and expand our thinking around what it means to be a volunteer, and educate the community on the value of older people.

COTA Tas approach to fostering innovation would be based on the following principles:

- Older Tasmanians are central to idea development
- Encouraging contributions from a range of sectors and partnerships
- Ensuring open dialogue and valuing all view points
- Recognising good practice that could be built upon
- Promoting monitoring and evaluation to contribute to the evidence base
- Utilising modern day opportunities such as technological advances.

The Cost of Living & Older Tasmanians

COTA Tas is particularly concerned about the cost of living and the impact this has on older Tasmanians across the spectrum – including those on low incomes as well as self-funded retirees. *A Cost of Living Strategy for Tasmania*, prepared by the state’s Social Inclusion Commissioner, Anglicare’s *The price of poverty: The cost of living for low income earners*, and the National Seniors Australia, Productive Ageing Centre’s *Are Older Australians Being Short Changed?* provide significant evidence of the problem of the cost of living. The National Seniors Australia report states:

“This analysis shows that older Australians typically spend proportionally more on basic, less discretionary items, and have had considerably less room to manoeuvre in the face of recent food and energy price increases. However, it also reveals that nearly three-quarters of a million older households (aged 50 years and over) are spending half their income on just three essential cost of living items (groceries; electricity & gas; and healthcare) because they have an average income of just over \$14,000 per year. These are the same items that are rising faster than inflation, in some cases up to four times faster than inflation.... it is of great concern that a large and possibly growing proportion of older Australians are facing substantial living cost pressures.”

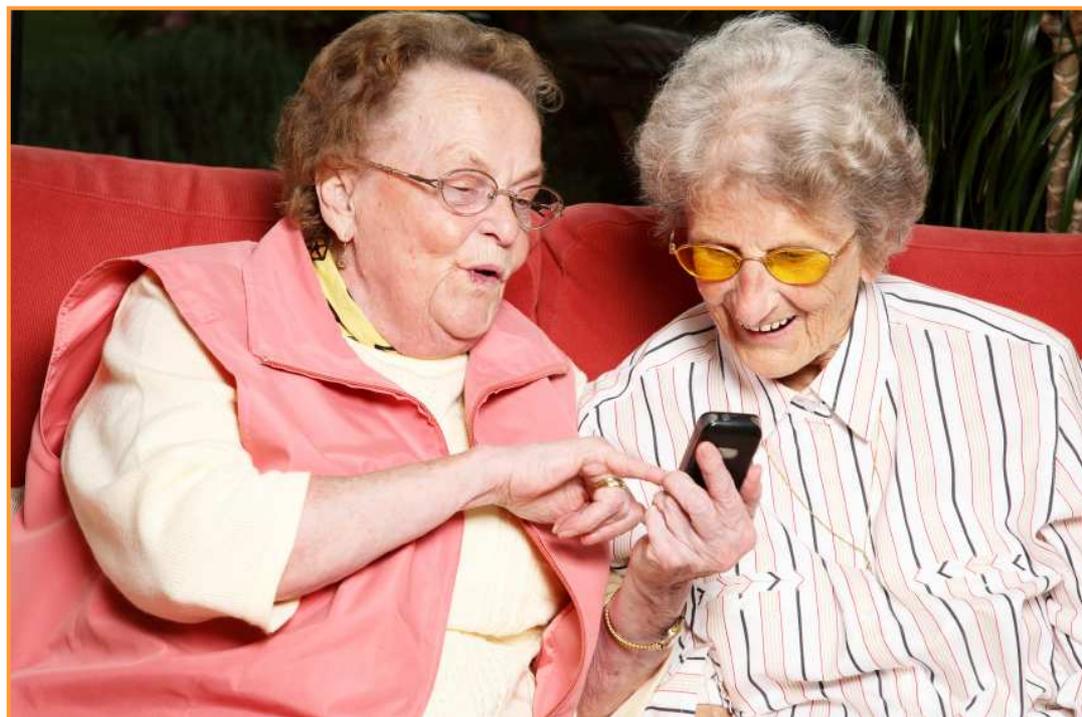
COTA Tas supports the recommendation that the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) has put forward in its submission: Develop a plan to fully implement and resource the actions presented in *A Cost of Living Strategy for Tasmania*.

COTA Tas further recommends that the Government specifically engage with older Tasmanians to address cost of living pressures through dialogue and active involvement in decision making.

COTA Tas would provide opportunities for older people to be directly involved in fostering innovative ideas. Combined with the other outputs of our proposed knowledge hub, we will be able to make the most of the opportunities as well as overcome challenges associated with our aging demographic. Older people would bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the knowledge hub that could be accessed by those involved in policy development, program planning and implementation, and service delivery. Allowing older people to be in charge of their endeavours is central to COTA Tas's vision for an inclusive society which values, supports and respects older people.

Recommendation

The Government resource COTA Tas to establish a knowledge hub that will propose and advocate for innovative, appropriate and evidence-informed approaches to developing policy, program planning and service delivery so as to benefit the health, wellbeing and quality of life of older Tasmanians.



4. Indexation Equity

COTA Tas has received annual grant funding from the State Government for some time however we have never received indexation on these grants, despite the fact that we receive recurrent funding.

Unlike most (but not all) other non-government organisations that receive ongoing funding from the State Government, COTA Tas does not receive any indexation to compensate for the real rising cost of running its operations. Despite this, the Government is expecting COTA Tas to deliver the same level of service. This places COTA Tas at a significant disadvantage. As the Government is well aware, the costs associated with administering an organisation (staff, insurance, rent, technology and so forth) continue to increase every year.

In 2006, COTA Tas received an annual funding grant of \$91,532 and this amount has not changed to this day. COTA Tas continues to get an annual grant of \$91,532. Using the ABS figures for annual increases in CPI since 2006, we calculate that COTA Tas's grant should now be worth around \$110,000. This additional money could make a real difference to our organisation and older people in Tasmania.

While COTA Tas is not seeking to be back-paid for the lost years of indexation, we do seek indexation on our funding grant in line with CPI rises into the future. COTA Tas further advocates for all non-government organisations that receive recurrent funding from the State Government to be treated equally when it comes to indexation.

COTA Tas' work into the future will become increasingly important as older people comprise a significant proportion of our population. COTA Tas believes it is the role of the Government to appropriately fund the peak body that is the voice of older Tasmanians.

Recommendation

The Government provide COTA Tas with annual indexation on funding it receives from the State Government.