



## Appendix to COTA TASMANIA's 2023-2024 State Budget Submission Recommendations for the next Active Ageing Strategy

COTA Tasmania's 2023-24 State Budget Submission contains immediate recommendations and measures to improve the lives of older Tasmanians. We also recognise that the Tasmanian Government is currently considering the report from the [H.E.A.R Active Ageing consultation](#) and will be developing its next Active Ageing Strategy 2023-2029. Therefore, we have provided our recommendations for the next Active Ageing Strategy, recognising that some of the initiatives within that Strategy may have implications for the 2023-24 budget period.

### Tasmanians' key priority areas

Throughout our recent [H.E.A.R Active Ageing consultation](#), Tasmanians were asked to choose the areas the Government should focus on to support older Tasmanians to remain active and healthy participants within their communities.

Over 1500 Tasmanians participated in our consultation, identifying **good health, having enough money, having good relationships and maintaining independence** as both positively and negatively impacting on quality of life. An accessible place to live and the ability to move around your community safely were also expressed as core factors influencing older Tasmanians wellbeing, impacting feelings of hope and positivity for the future.

Access to and confidence with digital technology was frequently cited as impacting people's overall sense of connection and involvement in their communities. The increased reliance on online technology has caused significant stress and a sense of loss, with many reporting they now struggle to liaise with and connect to services due to this.

Policies and funding initiatives that address the following areas identified by Tasmanians will improve the capacity of individuals and provide timely support that prevents ill health, creates age friendly communities and respects the wellbeing of older Tasmanians.

*"We want to feel included as we age – to be connected, contributing and be heard"*

H.E.A.R Community participant

The top 3 areas of concern identified across our consultation methodology were:

1. **Health and Wellbeing**
2. **Appropriate Housing as we age**
3. **Cost of Living**



## 1. Health and Wellbeing

***“Consistent health support is needed – there are long wait lists for allied healthcare, inconsistent GPs and appointments are too short”***

Community Conversation Group participant, H.E.A.R participant

Greater life expectancy is good reason for celebration, but it also requires thoughtful planning to ensure that as we age there are proactive supports and services available within a health prevention framework, so Tasmanians are empowered and supported to age well across their adult lifespan and barriers to healthy ageing are reduced.

There is a close relationship between people’s health and the circumstances in which they live, work, play, grow and age, known as the wider ‘determinants of health’. These social, environmental, structural, economic, cultural, commercial and digital factors can lead to unfair and unequal health outcomes for some people and communities.<sup>1</sup>

We must continue to consider how these factors impact older Tasmanians and we ask the Government to consider this when planning future healthcare services and messaging.

Access to allied health services alongside timely rehabilitative programs will assist older Tasmanians to remain as independent as possible, living in their own homes, safely.

Increasing the availability of GP and dental services, particularly in regional locations and in residential aged care, must be a priority. Working with local Councils to build on the current success of [Live Well, Live Long Programs](#) and assisting to fund low-cost ongoing exercise options across the state will undoubtedly build individual and community resilience, knowledge and physical capabilities all of which would positively impact older Tasmanians.

COTA Tasmania would like a greater focus on the mental health and wellbeing of older Tasmanians. **With men over 85 years of age now the highest rate of suicide in Australia, older people are identified as a priority population for suicide prevention strategies.**<sup>2</sup>

Social connection, additional support to navigate services and opportunities for psychological support, information and interventions need to be included in a comprehensive health strategy. Investment in social prescribing initiatives, place based social connection programs and specific mental health supports for older Tasmanians will ensure a holistic, proactive approach to the health needs of an ageing population.

*To support vulnerable older Tasmanians and provide them with greater support to identify and manage their health needs, we specifically recommend the following:*

- ❖ **Increase funding and availability of rural GPs and Ambulance services** in all regions of lutruwita, Tasmania, to ensure holistic health care is efficient, placed based and supports Tasmanians to maintain their health and independence.
- ❖ **Increase the level of investment in preventative and rehabilitative health** infrastructure and services that will target the needs of older Tasmanians at various life stages and contribute to healthy ageing, with a **focus on decreasing wait lists for OT and Physiotherapy**.
- ❖ Continue to offer **telehealth options** to those that wish to use them (where clinically appropriate), extending this as first option provided for pre-elective surgical and specialist appointments for people living in remote rural areas.
- ❖ **Investigate extending the successful [Ticket to Play scheme](#) to adults and older Adults** in Tasmania, to assist more to access health and exercise programs and sporting club membership in their communities. Consider within this an additional value for those on pension or carers payment.
- ❖ Advocate for a **Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme** to enable older Tasmanians to access affordable and subsidized dental care. Provide greater **oral care services in residential aged care**, those living in Supported Residential Services and those living in rural and regional areas.
- ❖ Continue to **increase funding to Patient Travel Assistant Scheme** and the new **Community Paramedic program**, alongside long-term commitment to **Community Transport** providers.

- ❖ Work with local Councils to **invest in age friendly infrastructure** that enables older Tasmanians to exercise safely in their local communities. Infrastructure includes walking and cycling tracks, warm water pools, appropriate heating and inclusive accessibility to buildings and streetscapes, with consideration for all age playgrounds and exercise parks.
- ❖ Ensure that both the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program and the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy Project **reflect the needs of older Tasmanians specifically and intentionally**, drawing insight from the lived experiences of Tasmanians in the older age cohorts.
- ❖ Consider funding mental health training programs specific for older people, similar to [Anglicare's Suicide Prevention for Seniors](#) course.
- ❖ **Establish a yearly grants program** to support community led creative events and initiatives that provide sustainable ways to **reduce social isolation** for older Tasmanians, with a focus on intergenerational connection and community capacity building.
- ❖ Fund a **public awareness campaign** with **inclusive age friendly language** co-designed with Older Tasmanians to combat ageist stereotypes and provide a **stronger positive narrative around ageing**.

\* Please read in conjunction with health recommendations in our submission to [Our Healthcare Our Futures](#).

## 2. Appropriate Housing as we age

*“How to find a rental on single pension?”*

Community Conversation Group participant, H.E.A.R participant

Adequately planning and funding the housing needs of an ageing population guided by a robust Tasmanian Housing Strategy will ensure the Government meets the recommendations made and accepted by the PESRAC 2021 Report. Specifically, we draw attention to Recommendation 32 *“The strategy should encompass: ageing and shifts in household composition”*).<sup>3</sup>

Appropriate shelter is paramount to living a healthy, resilient life. We continue to be concerned about older Tasmanians in private rental not fit for purpose as they age. Housing stock that has age friendly characteristics such as accessible design for changing mobility is pivotal for our ageing demographic.

The recent Anglicare Ageing in Place report found 87 percent of respondents wanted to remain at home as they age, and almost three-quarters of those living in private rentals viewed housing costs as a barrier to ageing in place.<sup>4</sup>

The August 2022 Housing Dashboard shows there are currently 4,455 households waiting for social housing - an increase of 36 from 4,419 in July.<sup>5</sup> This has an impact not only on older Tasmanians awaiting

social housing, but also impacts those who support children and grandchildren with interim housing options.

**Older women have been recognised as the fastest-growing group of homeless people in Australia in recent years**<sup>6</sup>, a reminder of the intersectionality impacting the current housing crisis. Women's housing needs are influenced by domestic and family violence, low incomes and caring responsibilities.<sup>7</sup>

We need a long-term commitment to extend programs like the Rapid Rehousing Program, broadening the scope to older women and those leaving elder abuse situations with a focused approach to supporting this demographic.

*To support vulnerable older Tasmanians and ensure that appropriate housing options are available across Tasmania that assist people to age in place, we specifically recommend the following:*

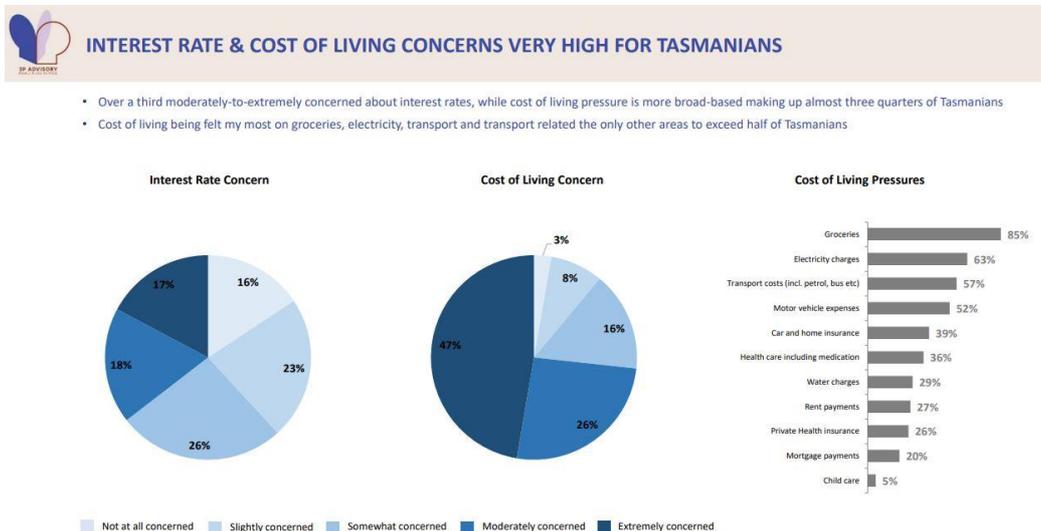
- ❖ **Adopt innovative approaches** to address the needs of older Tasmanians in the private rental market, introducing **incentives for landlords to modify properties** to support ageing in place.
- ❖ **Develop an appropriate housing solution** for Tasmanians **escaping elder abuse**. There is currently no dedicated housing response for people who have experienced elder abuse and do not have a safe home, as this group is not included in the family violence response.
- ❖ **Increase targeted accommodation options for Tasmanians over 50yrs** with further funding for Wintringham models committed to all regions across the state. This will further support ageing in place and provide support to older Tasmanians struggling to maintain secure and affordable accommodation.
- ❖ **Explore intergenerational shared accommodation models** as a way of supporting both older and younger Tasmanians to maintain suitable housing alongside reducing social isolation.
- ❖ Commit to **mandatory accessibility standards** within the National Building Code, bringing accessible design standards (Liveable Housing Standards - **Gold**) into state legislation.
- ❖ Ensure that the new Tasmanian Housing Strategy **consider the needs of older Tasmanians specifically and intentionally**, drawing insight from the lived experiences of Tasmanians in the older age cohorts.
- ❖ As part of the **Housing Connect Reform** process, commit to **capturing information about older Tasmanians** as a group in relation to intake and journey with Housing Connect.

### 3. Cost of Living

*“Cost of living is adding to already stressful situations for many in the community”*

Community Conversation Group participant, H.E.A.R participant

The recent Cost of Living Report by 3P Advisory found the rising cost of living is squeezing Tasmanians’ household budgets from all sides and there is no end in sight. **Almost three-quarters of Tasmanians surveyed now report they are “extremely concerned” with cost-of-living pressures.**<sup>8</sup>



Source: [Tasmanian Community Sentiment on Cost of Living](#). 3P Advisory. September 2022

With international circumstances impacting cost of fuel and food and national disasters here in Australia compounding this strain, many Tasmanians now find themselves struggling to meet everyday expenses, this in turn impacting on local businesses. Looming threats of increases to energy costs and groceries will have a significant impact on older Tasmanians, many who are on a fixed income with no means of finding additional funds to meet these increased costs.

Rising day to day costs was a topic at every community conversation we held as part of our H.E.A.R consultation. People spoke of accessing food support, cutting back on non-essential items and being more mindful of their heating usage as ways of coping with the additional strain. Basic human rights are now being restricted due to escalating cost of living pressures.

**We seek commitment to appropriate and proportional indexation for Community Service organisations (CSOs), to meet the increased costs of doing the business of supporting their communities in times of increasing cost pressures.**



*To support vulnerable older Tasmanians and ease the financial pressures associated with continued cost of living pressures, we specifically recommend the following:*

- ❖ Continue to **fund and expand the support from NILS Tasmania** to ensure Tasmanians have a safe and reliable way to access financial assistance at times of need.
- ❖ Investigate the potential for **free transport for older Tasmanians**, as is currently offered in several other Australian States ([Western Australia](#), [South Australia](#)).
- ❖ Provide **greater funding to Emergency Relief providers** in the state to ensure that the level of demand for food relief support can be met without delays and this funding be provided for minimum 5-year terms.
- ❖ Ensure that **food security** remains a key focus with adequate funding for place-based initiatives to support local communities that increase health literacy.
- ❖ Support initiatives to **improve energy literacy**, including areas of energy efficiency to increase understanding of how to make the most of time-of-use pricing. **Commit to continuing the Aurora + free membership** to Tasmanian residents beyond the initial 12month trial.
- ❖ Consider mechanisms to **subsidize** more efficient purchases/upgrades to **household energy systems**.
- ❖ **Indexation for Community Service organisations** - Commit to TASCOS recommendations in relation to indexation for CSOs.

We look forward to continuing to advocate for older Tasmanians to ensure that the outcomes from this consultation, alongside our knowledge from ongoing programs and policy work, are heard and influence the next Active Ageing Strategy for our state.

*\*Please read this Appendix in conjunction with recommendations made in the H.E.A.R Active Ageing Community Consultation Outcome Report, Supplementary Data Report and Organisation Submissions.*

COTA

TASMANIA  
for older Australians

SUPPORTED BY  
Tasmanian  
Government



HEALTHY,  
ENGAGED  
and  
RESILIENT

Contribute to the  
new Government  
Strategy for  
Older Tasmanians  
2023-2029

## ENDNOTES

1. [Healthy Tasmania 5 Year Strategic plan 2022-2026](#)
2. [Life in Mind: Older Adults](#)
3. [Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Recommendations](#). March 2021
4. [Ageing n Place, Home and Housing for Australian Older Renters](#). Australian Fair Series. August 2022
5. [Shelter Tasmania newsletter](#) 26 October 2022
6. [400,000 women over 45 at risk of homelessness in Australia](#). The Conversation, August 4 2020.
7. [National Plan on Gender Equality: Affordable and Appropriate Housing for Women](#). Equality Rights Alliance, 2018.
8. [Tasmanian Community Sentiment on Cost of Living](#). 3P Advisory. September 2022