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State Budget  
Community  
Consultation  
Submission

**2023**

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**2024**

NOVEMBER 2022

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*Age is a number, not a use-by date.*

## About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing [Tas] Inc) is a not-for-profit organisation, operating as a peak body for a wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to encouraging our community to think positively about ageing. This involves promoting and encouraging social inclusion and championing the rights and interests of Tasmanians as they age. We have been the voice of older Tasmanians for over 50 years.

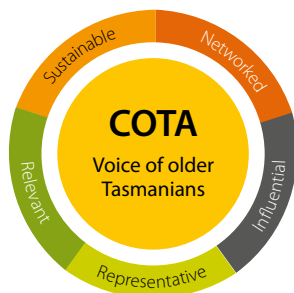
**Our Vision:** Ageing in Australia is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.

**Our Mission:** We advance the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age.

For further information or advice regarding the content of this document please contact:

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## Acknowledgement to Country

COTA Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the resilience and knowledge of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the traditional custodians of lutruwita, Tasmania. We acknowledge the wisdom, resilience and knowledge of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and we stand for a future that profoundly respects their perspectives, culture, language and history.

## COTA Tasmania's Strategic Plan Priority Areas 2020–2025:

- Making ageism a thing of the past
- Positive reform in aged care
- Claiming a space for mature age workers in the workforce
- Increasing online access for older people
- Prevention of elder abuse



## Introduction

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the development of the State Budget 2023-24. At a time where we see cost of living and demand for community services increasing, we believe there is an even greater need for a coordinated and long-term commitment to improving the lives of older Tasmanians.

COTA Tasmania's 2023-2024 Budget submission is based on the experiences of our members, broader community, organisations we collaborate with and backed by evidence-based research. Through our advocacy work and programs, we know that older Tasmanians continue to experience ageism as they access healthcare, education, and training and more generally as they connect with and move around their communities. This impacts their health and wellbeing and in turn, the health and wellbeing of all future older Tasmanians unless there is a cultural shift in the way we view and support the ageing process.

Older people are diverse, with different expectations of how they work and live into their later years. They are active in their communities, maintain and take up caring roles, work longer with more flexible plans around retirement and are looking for opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with others.



## Tasmania's Ageing Profile

From Tasmania's current total population, 116,625 (20.92%) are aged 65 years +. A further 117,387 Tasmanians were 50-65 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

The 50 years+ age cohort (227,989 Tasmanians) therefore represents 40.89% of the total population.

**It is projected that more than one in four Tasmanians will be aged 65 or older by 2050.<sup>2</sup>**

With an ever-growing ageing demographic, we need to shift our thinking, policies and funding towards a preventative, proactive approach based on a healthy longevity lens. We must ensure that within this digital literacy and accessibility is supported alongside increased health promotion and health literacy initiatives so that no Tasmanian is left behind.

Government can play a key role in creating a community that:

- actively engages older people both socially and economically;
- converts opportunities presented by an ageing population into social and economic capital;
- empowers individuals to make positive decisions affecting their own ageing; and
- cares for those experiencing hardship and challenges.

To do this effectively, we need a whole of Government approach to the intersecting issues that impact on inequalities experienced by Tasmanians, noting that these do not cease to exist as people age, indeed in some cases they increase.

COTA Tasmania has long advocated a life course approach to ageing policy and strategy. We can expect to live longer, healthier lives and we all have a role to play in making decisions that will support us to age well.

**"Individuals are living well, for longer, enjoying life as they age – adding health to life."<sup>3</sup>**

We therefore encourage the Government in their 2023-2024 Budget to consider proactive measures that assist Tasmanians to plan ahead, develop knowledge and strategies, and feel empowered to age well with appropriate place-based supports and services that meet their needs. This will provide Tasmania with the opportunity to embrace the ageing journey, where indicators of health and wellbeing will improve as communities become more accessible, connected and person centred.

In this state budget submission, COTA Tasmania also recognises that the Tasmanian Government will be concurrently developing its next Active Ageing strategy. Some initiatives within the next Active Ageing strategy may need to be allocated funding within the 2023-24 budget period. Therefore, we have included a supplementary set of recommendations for the Government to consider within the Active Ageing strategy.

**"I believe that nothing should really change in the way we live as we get older. Life should remain relatively the same – we just get a little slower at doing things we have always done. I want to have the opportunity to be involved in the same activities that I have always been able to participate in my younger years."**

— H.E.A.R Survey Participant

# Key Priorities: 23–24 State Budget

## Key investment opportunities

### PRIORITY 1

#### STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND INCLUSION

Peak Body Funding

Digital Inclusion officer

Helpline for older  
Tasmanians

Support to Plan Ahead

### PRIORITY 2

#### CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Social connection and  
isolation grants

Community Activities  
webpage

Seniors Week funding  
commitments

### PRIORITY 3

#### TACKLING AGEISM

Education and Training

Intergenerational  
Programs toolkit

Raising Awareness of  
Elder Abuse

Mature Age Workforce

## PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND INCLUSION FOR OLDER TASMANIANS

### Peak Body Effectiveness

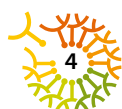
COTA Tasmania is grateful for the Peak body funding it receives from the Tasmanian Government. However, there is a substantial gap between the funding we receive and what is required to resource peak body functions such as community advocacy and representation, information dissemination, and research, policy and sector development services.

To effectively represent older Tasmanians, COTA Tasmania needs to maintain a broad policy remit. As government departments, state owned companies, private and community organisations improve their own engagement frameworks, peak bodies such as COTA are required to participate in an ever-growing number of consultation and engagement initiatives. Without the resources to support this effort, the voice of older Tasmanians cannot be appropriately heard and represented. Lived experience can, and should, inform structural change. To do this well, our organisation needs the resources and time to strengthen community relationships, build on our engagement with older Tasmanians and community groups and continue to utilise evidence-based research to guide policy recommendations, ensuring that Tasmania can lead the nation in age friendly, community development.

Equally, COTA Tasmania must be able to effectively share and distribute information to the community, as well as make recommendations to the Tasmanian Government and other organisations about how to effectively communicate with and engage older Tasmanians. Our expertise is critical to ensuring that no one gets left behind.

#### COTA Tasmania Peak Body funding Budget Submission Comparison Table

Currently funded roles (FTE)		Proposed funded roles (FTE)	
CEO	1FTE	CEO	1FTE
SCHADS Level 8.3		SCHADS Level 8.3	
		Administration & Finance	1FTE
		SCHADS Level 6	
		Role: Policy and Research	1FTE
		SCHADS Level 7	
		Role: Communications and Engagement	1FTE
		SCHADS Level 6	





COTA is seeking sustainable, secure, and continuous peak body funding. This will support operational sustainability and retention of a skilled workforce to lead COTA Tasmanians advocacy work within a strong, long-term strategic focus that will benefit and enable all Tasmanians to live healthy, informed, active lives.

Funding the above will ensure the Government meets the recommendations made and accepted in the PESRAC 2021 Report (*specifically Recommendation 43*).

*Total investment:*

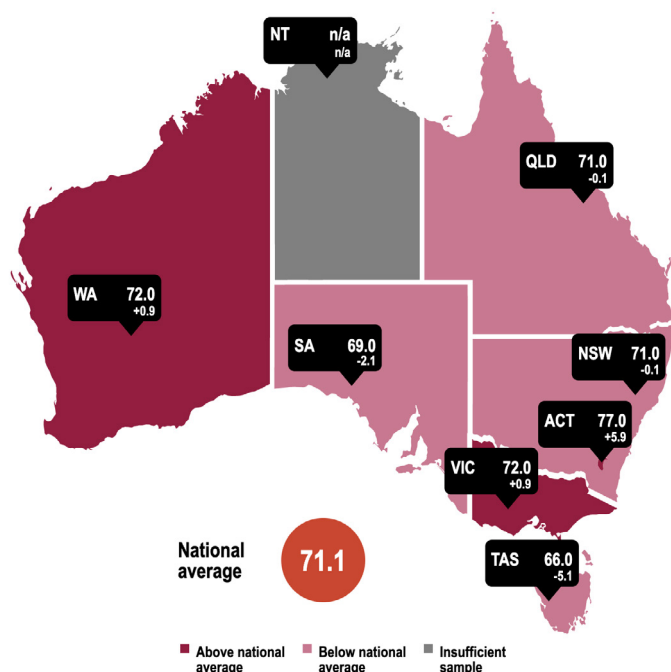
### Peak Funding

**An additional \$400,000 above current funding and commit to continuing 6 years secured peak body funding with appropriate indexation.**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

### Australian Digital Inclusion Index score by location



Source: ADII Digital Index: The National Picture

## Digital Inclusion

**“[I] can get a bit confused with it and feel embarrassed to ask for help, so don’t ask.”**

—Survey respondent, H.E.A.R Project

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2021 shows Tasmania is still the most digitally disadvantaged state in Australia with a score of 66 (National average 71.1).<sup>4</sup>

Some 50% of Tasmanians aged 65+ are digitally excluded or highly excluded and, despite current programs, the situation is deteriorating rather than improving with the gap between Tasmanian and national figures for digital inclusion rising from 2.5% in 2015 to 5.1% in 2021.<sup>5</sup>

To fully understand digital inclusion, we need to appreciate how affordability and digital capability also impacts participation alongside a person’s access to technology and their confidence to utilise. This was especially evident as we navigated the early days of COVID 19 pandemic, where reliance of digital communications impacted many older Tasmanians who were not confident online or using Check in Apps.

**“There was a lot of confusion when COVID hit – it was stressful to get help navigating all the requirements.”**

— H.E.A.R community participant

These figures leave no doubt of the need to not only increase our efforts in this area but to re-examine our present approaches.<sup>5</sup> This is especially important given 48% of Tasmanians do not have the literacy and numeracy skills they need for life in a technologically rich world.<sup>6</sup>

Digital literacy, like language literacy, covers a wide spectrum of competence and confidence. At present, most of the IT learning resources in Tasmania are best suited to the needs and capacities of those towards the more competent and confident end of the IT literacy spectrum.<sup>5</sup>

We need an outreach model that meets people ‘where they are at’ – not just in terms of their physical and cultural location but their fears and anxieties, the pace and ways in which they are comfortable learning, and their expectations and aspirations for the journey. They require trainers and mentors who share their experiences and who can commit to travelling with them on that journey, however long.

Such a program would supplement, not replace, the Libraries Tasmania program working in parallel and cooperatively, and seeking, wherever appropriate, to connect learners to both that program and the many available on-line resources.<sup>5</sup>

**To support vulnerable older Tasmanians who are currently digitally isolated and provide greater support to be actively involved in their communities, we specifically recommend the following:**

- Fund COTA Tasmania to employ a **Digital inclusion officer** to develop and deliver digital inclusion initiatives and **provide insights and feedback to Government** about digital literacy and accessibility issues in Tasmania drawn from the experiences of Peer Mentors and older Tasmanians, thereby highlighting improvements that can be made to Government services and processes.
- A **minimum two years of program funding** to enable COTA Tasmania to train and support local IT peer mentor volunteers to operate within a digital outreach model and become self-sustainable.

Funding the above will ensure the Government meets the recommendations made and accepted by the PESRAC 2021 Report (specifically Recommendation 33 and 34).

*Total investment:*

**Digital Inclusion officer and program funding**

**\$235,000 per annum for two years with appropriate indexation.**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

## Support to Plan Ahead

**"Retirement can lead to a loss of your identity. You need assistance to move through this transition period."**

*H.E.A.R Community participant*

The ageing journey is experienced differently depending on individual health, social connections, opportunities and financial means. Entering the later part of your life brings changes in personal and professional identity, which can induce anxiety and grief around this identity change. Information and knowledge can assist to empower adults to manage this in positive ways, alongside engaging in activities and volunteering that can provide purpose and meaning.

Participants of the H.E.A.R consultation spoke of not feeling prepared to navigate Government systems associated with

retirement and a lack of knowing where to get further information was a common theme in the survey data. 51.83% of survey respondents had made proactive choices and plans to support their ageing, with 33.86% feeling they need to do more planning.

Solutions community members provided included:

- information expos;
- printed resource booklet;
- radio content;
- posters at GP and health providers;
- more face-to-face programs run locally; and
- mentoring approaches.

Informed and connected communities are more likely to proactively plan ahead for the ageing process, linking into services and taking preparatory steps earlier. This would also provide an opportunity for greater discussion about ageing, challenging ageist stereotypes, beliefs and expectations.

We see far too many older Tasmanians in urgent and crisis situations that can be prevented by:

- having conversations with family members about their wishes for care;
- having appropriate documentation in place and kept up to date; and
- removing fear and ageism from planning ahead.

**To support older Tasmanians to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the services and supports available to them as they age, thereby empowering them to take steps to plan ahead and connect with services in their communities we specifically recommend the following:**

- **Fund COTA Tasmania to develop accessible resources** (available online as well as print) that contain information for older Tasmanians in relation to retirement and planning for later years that are co-designed with older workers, retirees and industry representatives. The Where to from Here publication provides a good basis for such a resource, offering broad information and links to empower older New Zealanders in decision making later in life.
- **Fund a new Peer Education program delivered by COTA Tasmania** to include sessions on the resources outlined above, connecting with local Councils, employers and community groups to coordinate.

*Total investment:*

**One-off funding of \$210,000**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.



## Helpline for Older Tasmanians

Older Tasmanians need a trusted source of information that helps them feel informed, welcomed, supported and empowered. With information regarding supports and services scattered over a large number of agencies and providers, it is often difficult to navigate to the correct source of information.

Many older Tasmanians are digitally excluded. The equity gap for these people is increasing as more information and services move online. There will continue to be a cohort of older Tasmanians who do not have the capacity to confidently access information and services online. Recent high profile cyber security incidents involving major Australian organisations have only increased their level of concern and avoidance of digital interactions. It is critical that there are low-tech, age-friendly communication channels available to meet their needs.

Older Tasmanians are more likely to seek information and services if they can call and speak to a person who will help them find the information they need. However, many services are unable to, or choose not to, provide phone-based services.

**To support older Tasmanians to access information about services and supports available to them, we recommend the following:**

- **Fund COTA Tasmanian to establish and provide a phone-based information service** where older Tasmanians can call to get help finding basic information about a range of services such as concessions, transport, health, community services.

### Total investment:

**\$150,000 per annum for two years**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Supporting Tasmanians with the rising cost of living;
- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes;
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.



## PRIORITY 2: CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

### Social Isolation

**“Loneliness is an increasing issue in society.”**

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

Social isolation and loneliness have serious consequences for longevity, health and well-being. **In older age, social isolation and loneliness increase the risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, cognitive decline, dementia, depression, anxiety and suicide.**<sup>7</sup>

We also know that the most vulnerable cohort to suicide in Australia is now men over 85 years.<sup>8</sup> Connecting with new people and groups as you age is often harder due to mobility and health issues impacting confidence, lack of suitable transport options, limited family networks nearby and difficulties knowing where to find out about local activities and groups.

High-quality social connections are essential to our mental and physical health and our well-being. Social isolation and loneliness are important, yet neglected, social determinants of the health of older people.<sup>9</sup> Investing in social connection programs and supports and ensuring clear and accessible information is available about these is vital in minimising further social isolation amongst older Tasmanians.

In recent years COVID 19 has impacted on people's abilities to connect and participate in community groups and activities, and older people were significantly impacted by the ageist messaging conveyed about vulnerability being linked directly to one's age. For many older Tasmanians the restriction period (lockdown, or other restrictions on movement and contact) disrupted their connection to community and this loss of community-based social connection contributed to feelings of isolation.<sup>10</sup>

Community organisations have felt the impact of COVID 19 through reduced volunteerism. Improving social connection should encourage older Tasmanians to participate in volunteering and help to rebuild community capacity. Now is the time to help build older Tasmanians confidence in accessing their community, but there remains an ongoing need for information to be provided in ways they can locate and access easily.

**“I never know when things are happening, only ever find out about things after they have occurred.”**

—H.E.A.R Consultation, survey respondent

Educating local volunteers, allied health, care providers, families and friends to know where to find accessible, accurate information about available services and social activities is vital if we are to

support the holistic needs of older Tasmanians. Coupled with significant digital and literacy issues in Tasmania, we need to focus greater attention on support for people to find out about local place based social and learning opportunities.

The COTA Community Activities webpage has over 900 activity listings located in all regions and has operated since 2018. It is now time to increase local knowledge of and usage of this resource, which is ideal for social prescribing initiatives. Having dedicated staffing to promote, connect and increase the visibility and promotion of this page will ensure more older Tasmanians connect with activities to assist them to remain active and connected.

## Seniors Week

**“Seniors Week is great – it should be Seniors Month.”**

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

2022 was COTA Tasmania's 12th year coordinating Seniors Week with over 400 activities across the state providing an opportunity for older Tasmanians to make social connections and try an activity at low or no cost. This annual week-long event provides community groups and clubs the opportunity to welcome potential new members, showcase their activities and offers a place to meet in a safe, social environment.

**More importantly, Seniors Week provides a positive narrative around ageing, showcasing the wide variety of activities and interests that older Tasmanians engage in and in most cases, volunteer their time to organise and run.** It is a time to value this contribution, celebrating the important connection that comes alongside these activities.

For 12 years we have planned, organised and evaluated successful Seniors Weeks with no increase to our funding, absorbing increased costs. Whilst sponsorship assists to meet financial needs for running such events, we need a stronger commitment by Government to provide funding that will ensure we can meet the current costs of Seniors Week alongside review and reinvention to ensure this flagship event is contemporary and promoted as widely as possible.

**To support older Tasmanians who are currently socially isolated and provide greater support to access information and be actively involved in their communities, we specifically recommend the following:**

- **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. A grant scheme similar to that of NSW Health grant program. Although COTA Tasmania does not see its role in administering this program, we would welcome the opportunity to assist the Government to plan for such a program, promote it widely and to sit on the assessment panel. We recommend a \$200,000 per annum grants program for two years with a review before committing to ongoing funding.

- **Expand COTA Tasmania's Community Activities** webpage to enable greater promotion, collaboration and uptake, alongside increased functionality of the platform. Enabling current and future listing owner to control their activity information and updates will allow greater sustainability and enable COTA to concentrate on promotion and advertising more widely within the community and NFP sector and to the general public.
- **Increase Seniors Week funding to facilitate greater promotion of activities** and better coordination resulting in improved awareness and participation. Additional funding will allow COTA Tasmania to create a digital events guide that supplements the printed guide.

**“Social isolation and loneliness is a huge issue for older Tasmanians.”**

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

Funding the above will ensure the Government meets the recommendations made and accepted by the PESRAC 2021 Report (*specifically Recommendation 35, 36, 37*).

*Total investment:*

**Community activities webpage**

**\$62,000 one off plus \$80,000 per annum appropriately indexed for ongoing administration.**

**Seniors Week**

**\$110,000 additional funding per annum appropriately indexed.**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Supporting Tasmanians with the rising cost of living;
- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes; and
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.





## PRIORITY 3: TACKLING AGEISM

**“The older you get the more you are labelled into a category.”**

— H.E.A.R survey respondent

Ageism is alive and well in Tasmania.

Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act). Ageism starts in childhood and is reinforced over time. From an early age, children pick up cues from those around them about their culture's stereotypes and prejudices, which are soon internalised. People then use these stereotypes to make inferences and to guide their feelings and behaviour towards people of different ages and towards themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Ageism is associated with earlier death, poorer physical and mental health, and slower recovery from disability in older age. Ageism can change how we view ourselves, limiting our self-belief and confidence. Like all forms of discrimination, ageism generates divisions and hierarchies in society and influences social position on the basis of age.<sup>12</sup>

Both the recent [WHO Global report on Ageism](#) (2021) and the Australian Anti Discrimination Commissioners report [What's Age got to do with it?](#) (2021) found that overwhelmingly people feel ageism exists and high rates of people within the community have experienced it. In the Australian survey, over half the survey respondents agreed that making jokes about age is more socially acceptable than making jokes about other things like race or gender, and two thirds said it affected people across the lifespan.<sup>13</sup>

Participants in our H.E.A.R consultation often spoke about how they felt treated differently due to their age, ignored or overlooked because of their visible ageing appearance. For Tasmanians to have opportunities to age well, we must work towards a society that views older people equally – not differently. For ageing to be seen as part of the lifespan journey to be embraced, not feared.

WHO identifies three strategies to reduce ageism have been shown to work:

- **Policy and law** can address discrimination and inequality based on age and protect the human rights of everyone, everywhere.
- **Educational activities** can transmit knowledge and skills and enhance empathy.
- **Intergenerational interventions** can contribute to the mutual understanding and cooperation of different generations.

## Education and training

COTA firmly believes that we need open conversations about the ageing journey and raise awareness more broadly about the impact's ageism has. As one of the largest employers in lutruwita, Tasmania, a targeted education program across agencies and departments within Government would assist to challenge negative stereotypes, create age-friendly inclusive spaces and workplaces and allow a broader dialogue for sharing lived experiences. This will have a direct impact on both State service employees and the broader community which they support and assist Tasmanians to think ahead about their own ageing journey.

We welcome the opportunity to design and deliver education-based workshops across the state, collaborating with Government departments, to commence this important work. Built on evidence base and working with older Tasmanians to deliver the content, the training would be delivered face to face with online and print content materials to compliment. We suggest offering this training initially to front line staff eg Libraries Tasmania and Service Tasmania, evaluating and amending as needed before expanding to other Government agencies.

Future training packages would include Tasmanian businesses and community organisations, as well as schools and tertiary education providers.

**“Getting old vs Ageing – one can feel irrelevant in society, you get left behind.”**

— H.E.A.R Consultation Community participant

Language is important and can shape and influence our self-beliefs on ageing, as well as the views others have towards us. An age friendly language guide developed as part of this educational awareness program will assist Tasmanians to have a greater awareness of the impact language has on ageing experience.

In our H.E.A.R Consultation, 51.48% of those completing postcards felt positive about ageing, with 33.15% neutral and 15.37% of respondents feeling anxious or worried about their later years. Survey respondents also scored high on positivity at 46.96% with 34.78% neutral and 18.26% of respondents feeling anxious and worried about getting older. This shows us that whilst many feel positive about their ageing journey, there is still many Tasmanians who fear the ageing process and in part this may be due to how they perceive they will be or are treated.

We ask the Government to commit to 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. This campaign would be used across various mediums and also included in staff and volunteer induction processes across Government departments.

**‘Age isn’t the problem. Ageism is.’  
What’s Age Got to do with It?<sup>13</sup>**

## Intergenerational Programs Toolkit

Fostering meaningful engagement and bonds between the young and old should be a core focus of communities across Tasmania, supported by Government. Research in intergenerational practice recognises that there are common issues and needs affecting the young and old, and that mutual benefits are evidenced when younger and older generations form relationships with one another.<sup>14</sup>

COTA Tasmania is passionate about intergenerational connection and see this space as pivotal in supporting cultural changes to how we view ageing. There is a need to support community groups, schools and organisations to come together in a formal, supported way to provide regular opportunities for social connection, offering evidence-based examples to assist in planning their own place based activities.

Assisting communities to organise intergenerational activities, events and programs aligns well with the WHO recommendations to combat ageism and ideally would cross education, employment, leisure, volunteering, creative arts and sporting areas.

**“We need more opportunities for older people and younger people to come together so we can better understand one another. We all have a story.”**

*H.E.A.R Community participant*

**To support Tasmanians by raising awareness of the ageing journey, educating Government agencies and ensuring our community is inclusive by offering cross generational connection, we specifically recommend the following:**

- **Funding COTA Tasmania to plan and deliver an Ageism Awareness program**, inviting discussion around lived experiences of ageing, assisting to develop **age-friendly inclusive workplaces**. Program funding for 3 years initially, to research, design, implement and evaluate the training program, working initially with two Government agencies. **As part of this, COTA Tasmania will develop an Age Friendly Language guide** for use by Government, community organisations, businesses, media, volunteer organisations and the wider community, contributing to a cultural change in how we view the ageing process.
- **COTA Tasmania to create and promote an Inter-generational Programs Toolkit**, to build capacity in local communities, offering evidence-based practice examples and templates for community groups and local councils to use when developing their own programs.
- **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. To be delivered across a range of advertising mediums. COTA Tasmania does not expect to develop and deliver this campaign but would welcome the opportunity to provide advice and input into campaign strategy and creative development and to facilitate the co-design process.

*Total investment:*

**Ageism Awareness Education training program 3 years \$650,000**

\*Intergenerational Toolkit resource Funding included in Education and Training resources.

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes; and
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

## Mature Age Workforce

**“When I applied for a job at 58, one of the employees told the rest of the staff that I was too old for the position.”**

*—Survey respondent, H.E.A.R Project*

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines anyone over 45 as a ‘mature/older’ worker.

Ageism impacts employment opportunities, career advancement and our ability to undertake further training and learning possibilities. Estimates in Australia suggest that if 5 per cent more people aged 55 or older were employed, there would be a positive impact of AUD\$48 billion on the national economy annually.<sup>15</sup> We know that age discrimination continues to occur, with *The Employing Older Workers* report, (overseen by the Australian Human Rights Commission), finding almost a third of Australian employers continue to specify an age limit for job applicants, despite the practice being illegal.<sup>16</sup>

Whilst we applaud the announcement at the Jobs Skills summit that aged and veteran pensioners can earn a further \$4,000 before their pension is reduced, this does not go far enough. We have vast workforce gaps that can be filled by experienced older Tasmanians who want to continue working and earning an income. They should be encouraged to do so without having to consider potential financial impacts or fear of discrimination. We ask the Tasmanian Government to continue to advocate the Federal Government in this space and ensure their own recruitment processes are inclusive and encourage age diversity.

Greater education and support for employers to design and adjust employment conditions to support employees to have fulfilling work lives at all life stages is needed. Our nation cannot afford

to have older generations' skills wasted, or their participation minimised – often due to employer concerns about older workers' skills and contribution at work.<sup>17</sup>

The recent changes to workers compensation entitlements for workers aged 65 and over in Tasmania is one excellent example of the removal of a disadvantage to older workers. COTA Tasmania would like to work together with the Tasmanian Government to see further barriers and disadvantages removed.

COTA Tasmania currently receives a small amount of project funding to support and enable age-friendly workplaces. We encourage the Government to extend this support so that COTA can work in partnership with businesses on strategies that support retention of older employees through enabling mutually fulfilling extended transition to retirement phases.

**To support Tasmanian job seekers and employers across the state, we specifically recommend the following:**

- **Fund COTA Tasmania to develop and implement resources** that support workplaces to retain older workers who would like to continue working rather than retire, but in a more flexible or different way.

Funding the above will ensure the Government meets the recommendations made and accepted by the PESRAC 2021 Report (specifically Recommendation 17,20,21,23).

*Total investment:*

### **Mature Age Workforce**

#### **Additional funding of \$80,000 above existing commitment.**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Supporting Tasmanians with the rising cost of living;
- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes; and
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

## **Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse and Related Services**

**“Elder Abuse was raised often at community discussion groups, with people providing examples and concerns of situations within their communities and a lack of awareness of who could assist when such abuse occurs.”**

— (Healthy, Engaged and Resilient Consultation Outcome Report)

Elder Abuse remains a significant and under-reported issue in Tasmania.

COTA Tasmania has been at the forefront of raising awareness of elder abuse for 20 years. Elder abuse may involve physical or sexual abuse, taking an older person's money or possessions, neglecting them, making threats, or stopping their social contacts. It can happen at the hands of an adult child or other family member, and it often occurs in the home.

Since 2015, COTA Tasmania has received funding from the Tasmanian Government to deliver a range of awareness-raising activities and provide input into the Statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee (SEPAC). Our activities currently include peer education about financial elder abuse; information sessions for staff and volunteers who encounter older people as part of their work; qualitative research into LGBTIQ+ perceptions and experiences of elder abuse; and development of a trial elder abuse survivor advocates program in partnership with Engender Equality.

## **Elder Abuse in Tasmania**

The 2021 Australian Census found there are 116,643 Tasmanians aged 65 or older.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, Australia's first nationally representative elder abuse prevalence study found that 14.8% of Australians aged 65 or older with cognitive capacity living in the community experienced elder abuse in the year before the survey.<sup>19</sup> This equates to 17,263 Tasmanians.

The prevalence study, conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, was an action arising from the *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023* – a plan endorsed by Tasmania's Attorney-General in her capacity as a member of the Council of Attorneys-General.<sup>20</sup>

Worryingly, only around 36% of Australians experiencing elder abuse seek help,<sup>19</sup> and of those only 5.3% ring an elder abuse helpline, according to the study.<sup>19</sup> It is likely then that fewer than 3% of Tasmanian cases of elder abuse came to the attention of the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline in 2021-2022.

In 2021-2022, the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline (the Helpline) dealt with 418 cases. If we assume 17,263 people experiencing elder abuse is equivalent to 17,263 cases, this means around 2.42% of Tasmanian cases came to the attention of the Helpline.

Also noteworthy is that only 30% of calls to the Helpline (one case may involve several calls) were from the person experiencing elder abuse.<sup>21</sup>

While COTA Tasmania's elder-abuse activities have diversified and expanded over the years, our funding for elder-abuse prevention and awareness raising has remained unchanged since 2015-2016.

The current funding commitment ceases at 30 June 2023 and COTA Tasmania will be unable to continue this work beyond that period without continued funding.

**To support vulnerable older Tasmanians at risk of elder abuse and to raise greater awareness of elder abuse in the community, we specifically recommend the following:**

- **Ongoing funding** at an increased level for six years for **COTA Tasmania's Elder-abuse prevention and awareness raising** advocacy and program work.
- Commitment to involve COTA Tasmania in the planning and design of the next **Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy** and to take a co design and consultative approach to its development.
- **Support awareness raising campaigns** about the programs and supports available to older Tasmanians and their families in relation to elder abuse.

*Total investment:*

### **Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse and Related Service**

**Ongoing funding at an increased level of \$180,000 per annum for 6 years appropriately indexed.**

This funding request addresses the following Tasmanian Government 2023-24 budget priorities:

- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

## Final Reflections

COTA Tasmania has a strong track record collaborating with State Government, local Councils, service providers and community groups across the state.

We look forward to strengthening these partnerships into the future, with support to widen our scope and focus over the coming 2-5 years as we aim to grow awareness of ageism and the importance of inclusive communities across Tasmania. We strive to be part of a Tasmania where age is not seen as a barrier, but a contributing piece to the unique fabric of lutruwita, Tasmania.

The recent Regional Senates have been a welcome initiative by Government to meet with local communities and listen to their experiences and concerns firsthand. Older Tasmanians have told us they value a regular opportunity to provide Government insights into their experiences and ideas. The high level of engagement in our H.E.A.R consultation shows that people want to share their experiences, views and ideas for improving the ageing journey in Tasmania.

COTA Tasmanian looks forward to working with the Tasmanian Government to use the outcomes from the H.E.A.R. consultation to inform the development of Tasmania's next Active Ageing Strategy. In recognition that the Active Ageing Strategy may include some initiatives for the 2023-24 budget period, we have included some recommendations for inclusion within that strategy as an attachment to this submission.

In closing, we would welcome commitment from the Government to establish an **Active Ageing Advisory Committee**, meeting quarterly with representatives from across the state, providing valuable feedback and solutions and maintaining connection to the specific issues experienced by older Tasmanians. COTA Tasmania is keen to provide input to the committee, which could be drawn from and work in collaboration with Local Government Councils, thereby strengthening commitment to liveable community frameworks across the state.





# Summary of Budget Priorities

Amounts listed in this table are in addition to current funding commitments

Initiative	Funding Type	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028-29	TOTAL
Peak Body Effectiveness	Ongoing*	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$790,000	\$790,000	\$3,180,000
Digital Inclusion	Two Years*	\$235,000	\$235,000					\$470,000
Support to Plan Ahead	One-Off	\$210,000						\$210,000
Help Line	Two Years*	\$150,000	\$150,000					\$300,000
<b>Total Priority 1 – Strengthening Advocacy and Inclusion</b>		<b>\$995,000</b>	<b>\$785,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$790,000</b>	<b>\$790,000</b>	<b>\$4,160,000</b>
Seniors Week	Ongoing*	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$220,000	\$220,000	\$880,000
Expand COTA Tas Community Activities	One-off	\$62,000						\$62,000
	Ongoing*	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$480,000
<b>Total Priority 2 – Connection and Community</b>		<b>\$252,000</b>	<b>\$190,000</b>	<b>\$190,000</b>	<b>\$190,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$1,422,000</b>
Ageism awareness and education	Three Years*	\$230,000	\$230,000	\$190,000				\$650,000
Mature Age Workforce	Two Years*	\$80,000	\$80,000					\$160,000
Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse and Related Services	Ongoing*	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$1,080,000
<b>Total Priority 3 – Tackling Ageism</b>		<b>\$490,000</b>	<b>\$490,000</b>	<b>\$370,000</b>	<b>\$180,000</b>	<b>\$180,000</b>	<b>\$180,000</b>	<b>\$1,890,000</b>
<b>Total funding required for priorities</b>		<b>\$1,737,000</b>	<b>\$1,465,000</b>	<b>\$960,000</b>	<b>\$770,000</b>	<b>\$1,270,000</b>	<b>\$1,270,000</b>	<b>\$7,472,000</b>

\* + indexation added annually

## Endnotes

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