

COTA Over 50s, National Policy Office, Canberra

Message from the Chair COTA Over 50s congratulates Mr Rudd and the new Government on its election and looks forward to working with new Ministers. At the same time we express our thanks to outgoing Ministers and Shadow Ministers with whom we have worked in the past.

In February, representatives from COTA Over 50s raised issues of concern to our constituents in very successful meetings with Minister for Ageing Justine Elliott, Minister for Housing, Status of Women, Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Housing, Status of Women, Susan Ley, Shadow Minister for Ageing, Margaret May, and an Officer from the office of Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Of the issues discussed 2 major concerns, namely the adequacy of the Aged Pension, particularly for single women, and the rapidly accelerating problems surrounding housing were raised. Poverty was the subject of our Forum last May and as featured in this Newsletter, COTA Over 50s will be addressing the issue of Housing in our Forum at the end of May this year. As we get closer to the date, confirmed information about Speakers will be available on the COTA Over 50s website.

Bettine Heathcote
Chair
National Policy Council



Report from the Executive Director, Dr. Geoffrey Bird

COTA Over 50s National Policy Office focuses its activities exclusively on negotiating local (state and territory) community interests with those of Australia as a whole. This year this negotiation is taking many forms and is still ongoing.

Examples of our work so far include our presence at local community meetings struggling their way through tough employment and training issues in Aged Care Centres as they relate to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, building constructive alliances between different focus groups and organisations for COTA Over 50s to give support to, and learn from, research and community initiatives, drafting policy papers (e.g. on housing, workforce in aged care centres, end of life planning) for their further review and follow up, and establishing the National Policy Research Centre to give a shared focus to the numerous research initiatives generated by the National Office with the assistance of experts and organisations working with the interest of older Australians in mind. In this regard, the objective has been for COTA Over 50s to ensure that it forms its policy and strategy advice by drawing on a wide spectrum of experiences. This illustrates COTA Over 50s' commitment to its leadership role in advising the government and the community on strategies best supporting the welfare and wellbeing of older Australians.

National Policy Council Forum: COTA Over 50s will hold a meeting in Canberra of its National Policy Council from 26 – 28 May, to be followed by a special Forum on "Housing for older Australians" – in particular, issues of supply, affordability and suitability. The Hon. Justine Elliot is opening proceedings and Hon. Tanya Plibersek has agreed to speak at the conclusion. Various housing industry representatives, community organisations and officials will be in attendance. COTA Over 50s has

developed a position statement on housing for older Australians. In formulating our position we have attended to the work of AHURI and those involved in the National Housing Summit. As well, we have had discussions with private sector developers, the HIA, community housing associations and FHaCSIA officials. The forum will be addressed by an array of expert speakers with divergent backgrounds in the housing' industry. The forum will be held at the National Press Club.

The Ethics of Caring in a Good Society

COTA Over 50s' staff was invited to take part in a survey asking Australians how they imagine a caring society should look. The survey is anonymous and is conducted by St. James Ethics Centre on behalf of Carers NSW. The survey is drawing to a conclusion and has taken 2 years to complete. Although the survey asked for personal views, COTA Over 50s was able to flag to the participants and the St. James Ethics Centre examples of its initiatives reflecting its active involvement in enhancing the wellbeing and welfare of older Australians.

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Find out more on:
www.cotaover50s.org.au

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COTA Over 50s Welcomes Funding Boost (COTA NT)

In welcoming the Federal Government decision to provide \$6 million to Southern Cross Care to help build a new 65 bed residential facility in Darwin, COTA Over 50s Executive Director Dr Geoffrey Bird paid tribute to the hard work of COTA (NT) in advocating for additional care and accommodation options for the Northern Territory's older Australians.

The dramatic growth of the population of seniors in the Northern Territory (approximately 27% increase in numbers of people aged over 65 years between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses) means that the demand for aged care will continue to increase in the foreseeable future. The entry of Southern Cross Care into the Territory not only provides additional choice regarding aged care, but it is hoped it will also lead to more options in supported accommodation and independent (retirement village) living. COTA Over 50s strongly supports the greater level of choice and potential new options which are expected to be available to Territory seniors as a result of this Federal Government initiative.

Tribute to Gayle Richards

It was with sadness that we learnt, just before Christmas, of the death of Gayle Richards, our first National Policy Officer.

Her initial few months with COTA Over 50s were hectic in the extreme and Gayle showed great flair as she organised the launch in Parliament House of the new Company, set up the new office in Canberra and at the same time worked on producing policy position papers. On behalf of COTA Over 50s sincere sympathy was extended to Gayle's family on the death of their Mother and to her sister Naone who assisted us so much in our early visits to Parliament House.

Bettine Heathcote
Chair, National Policy Council,
COTA Over 50s.



Communities Working Together — Australian Catholic University (Canberra), St. Vincent de Paul Society (ACT) and COTA Over 50s

Since January 2008, students at the ACU, Canberra Campus, have been involved in developing interactive activities for the COTA Over 50s' website: yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au.

The majority of these students belong to the Clemente Australia program which is supported by St. Vincent de Paul Society and developed for adults who had never had a chance to attend university. The program is now being taught for the second year and has been an overwhelming success. This year, Dr. Ania Lian is teaching in the program. She is COTA Over 50s' IT consultant and has conceptualised the Community Connectivity Project (see the proposal online under the activities of the National Policy Research Centre).

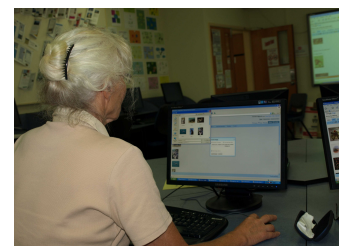
The COTA Over 50s Community Connectivity Project Proposal — Hands-on Policy Research in Action

As part of the activities of the National Policy Research Centre, COTA Over 50s is seeking government support for its Community Connectivity project. The aim of the project is for COTA Over 50s and its state and territory members to provide leadership in implementing the federal government's *Making Ends Meet, Seniors' Fund*. COTA Over 50s plans to do so by providing the government with an educational perspective on the program (see also ready resources of yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au) and a network of residential aged care centres across Australia who are willing to embrace the government program. COTA Over 50s strongly believes that, unless technology for older people is approached to maximise their potential, the government's initiative is likely to advantage those who are able and are possibly already semi-fluent in the use of technology.

Some of the expected outcomes of this project include:

- A hands-on context for identifying needs of residents and staff in aged care centres.
- An umbrella for Australia's geriatric research. COTA Over 50s is already in touch with National Ageing Research Institute (University of Melbourne).
- An interactive database of residential aged care centres and their services. The software of this database is ready for inspection and trial on yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au
- The development of the database should give rise to original research into the categories of service actually offered by residential aged care centres and feedback on their suitability from the clients. This will help determine and compare the range of services and facilities available in aged care centres and clients' expectations.

Students from the Clemente Australia Program (ACU, Canberra) developing and learning to do so, activities for yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au



COTA Over 50s' Postgraduate Research Awards



Background

In March 2008, COTA Over 50s established the National Policy Research Centre on Ageing in order to give prominence to, and offer better support for, its national projects and numerous partnerships in order to provide the government with expert advice on issues relating to the welfare and wellbeing of older Australians.

One of the initiatives of the Centre involves resourcing the expertise of postgraduate research students in the areas relevant to COTA Over 50s' policy priorities for 2008. In this spirit, COTA Over 50s is offering Postgraduate Research Awards of \$500 each to students across Australia for cutting-edge research papers which focus on the social policy priorities of COTA Over 50s. The papers are first sent to academic institutions which declare the intention to support this program. Subsequently, their expert scholars review the submitted papers and make recommendation to COTA Over 50s for the awards. The selected research papers will be published in *Issues in Ageing: A Journal of Award Winning Postgraduate Research Papers*, published by COTA Over 50s' National Policy Research Centre. It must be recognised that this imaginative project was proposed and is being carried out by Wendy Whitem-Trunz, National Policy Officer, COTA Over 50s.



The Emerging Researchers in Ageing Masterclass 2008



The Australasian Centre on Ageing, University of Queensland, and the ARC / NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well are the first partners in the COTA Over 50s' Postgraduate Research Awards project. Through this initiative, University of Queensland aims to encourage and support researching in the field of ageing. Four \$500 prizes will be awarded at the conclusion of the Masterclass for Papers of Excellence, which will be selected from submissions made prior to the Masterclass.

COTA Over 50s is looking forward to more constructive partnerships of the kind described above.

For more information about the Awards initiative, please visit the COTA Over 50s' website www.cotaover50s.org.au or contact COTA Over 50s at: wwtrunz@cotaover50s.org.au.

Find our *Interactive Newsletter* online and much more on:

yourspace.cotaove50s.org.au

Moles 'good indicator of ageing'

King's College London scientists found those with more than 100 moles had longer telomeres (DNA) than those with fewer than 25 and lived longer by 7 years on average! (news.bbc.co.uk)

About age pension

The cost to government for the provision of income support to the retired aged (age and service pension) is the single biggest program expense item in the Commonwealth Budget - the estimated cost for the 2007-08 financial year of the age pension program being \$23.9 billion.

The Southern Region Training & Employment Strategy Group

The Southern Region Training & Employment Strategy group was recently formed to address and solve employment and training issues for residential aged care centres in the area.

The CEO of Cobowra Aboriginal Land Council, Mr. Danny Chapman, expressed his enthusiasm about the meeting and the positive spirit in which it formed its agenda and action plan. COTA Over 50s was invited to attend the meeting in order to provide a national perspective on issues that it was tackling.

One of the major concerns confronted were forms of training that would make aged care employment worthwhile and motivating. COTA Over 50s assisted with advice and is supporting initiatives, incl. representation to the minister FHaCSIA, The Hon. Jenny Macklin. Workforce issues as they relate to health and aged care services are one of seven policy priorities arenas of COTA Over 50s in 2008.



Ron Nyer — Mogo Aboriginal Land Council
Beverley Moreton—General Manager Cobowra CDEP

Geoffrey Bird—COTA Over 50s

Danny Chapman— CEO Cobowra Aboriginal Land Council

Grandparenting Forum, 7th—8th April 2008, Sydney. (COTA NSW and MACA) Contact number: (02) 9286 3860

COTA (NSW) in conjunction with the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing is holding a two day Grandparenting Forum in April 2008 during Seniors Week. You can still register by logging into <http://www.cotansw.com.au>.

This event is aimed at drawing together researchers, policy makers, funding bodies and service providers with grandparents to examine the issues and needs of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren; providing child care to their grandchildren and/or denied the right to see their grandchildren. Workshops will be provided in which grandparents will have the opportunity to share their stories.

The NSW Minister for Ageing and Disability, Kristina Keneally, will open the forum. Keynote speakers will include **Professor Bettina Cass** from the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW and **David Hardie**, benefactor of the COTA(NSW) Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project.

What if ..

If the population of Australia was represented in a village of 100, 64 people would live in a capital city, 80 people would speak English at home, and there would be 2,100 chickens. The nation, it seems, likes its poultry. "In Australia's village of 100, there would be 69 Christians, 490 sheep, and 17 people over the age of 50".

David J. Smith, *If the World Were a Village*, 2006
source: (usyd.edu.au/news)

Contact:

Dr Geoffrey Bird,
Executive Director,
COTA Over 50s
National Policy Office
27 Murray Crescent,
Manuka, ACT 2603
Phone: 02 6295 1844
Fax: 02 6295 1807
gbird@cotaover50s.org.au

Postal Address
P.O. Box 3508
Manuka, ACT 2603
www.cotaover50s.org.au



ARPA Over 50s Assoc., State and Territory COTAs — What's new?

- **ARPA Over 50s** Over 50s Association works with travel consultants and tour providers to give our members interesting programmes to see the rest of the World. Also check out LINKS page. www.over50sonline.com.au
- **COTA ACT** Visit our website to inspect the Senior's Week Program for 2008. see www.cota-act.org.au
- **COTA NSW** Celebrate NSW Seniors Week. Included are: Health Talks, Grandparenting Forum, Computer Club www.cotansw.org.au
- **COTA NT** In our Forum on End of Life Issues the two most valuable topics were aged care services and legal issues; these topics were each considered to have provided either "very useful" or "useful" information by 97 percent of respondents. The next most valuable presentations were on palliative care (92 percent found this presentation to be "very useful" or "useful"), planning a funeral (91 percent), euthanasia (86 percent), and housing as we age (84 percent). Check our website for more: www.cotant.org.au
- **COTA QLD** COTA Queensland has developed a joint State Budget submission with Association of Independent Retirees Queensland Division, Australian Pensioners and Superannuants Queensland, Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, National Seniors, Older People Speak Out, Older Women's Network Queensland and Queensland Retired Teachers Association. **Also** we have begun the next round of HACC Consumer Forums working in partnership with Carers Queensland and Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy Inc. These forums build on twenty forums conducted in major regional areas last year. In 2008 HACC consumers and potential consumers in the seven HACC areas including the western Cape York, Charters Towers, Richmond, Bowen, Cunnamulla and Charleville will have an opportunity to input into HACC planning. www.cotaqld.org.au
- **COTA SA** Make your voice heard by Government at COTA SA member forums on the proposed Older People's Health Care Plan. The South Australian Government is currently digesting the views of the 1000 older people consulted by COTA SA on care in their homes late 2007. Have your say also at End of Life Planning forums to be held in April and May. Contact COTA SA on 08 8232 0422 or cotasa@cotasa.org.au
- **COTA TAS** Our latest project "Still Gardening", funded by HACC as an 18 month pilot program, aims to assist older people wishing to remain in the 'family' home, to manage and enjoy their gardens. 'Garden Mates' are trained to assist older people to remain active and enjoy their garden rather than being overwhelmed by it. There is also a possibility, where the older person is experiencing particular difficulty with a high maintenance garden, for the project to look at converting some areas to low maintenance, such as raised or mulched garden beds. www.cotatas.org.au
- **COTA VIC** Moving More is the first of peer education activities introduced by COTA to help older people identify opportunities to increase their activities. Also, senior Victorians can now participate in a new cycling govt. program to help them remain active and healthy. www.cotavic.org.au