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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Older homeless receive long overdue attention**

Peak body for older Australians, COTA Over 50s, hopes that the government's White Paper on homelessness will usher in a new era of support for seniors who are sleeping rough or are in insecure accommodation.

"The White Paper is strong on both intervention and prevention", said Executive Director Dr Geoffrey Bird. "It recognizes the particular vulnerability of older Australians, where there has been a 30 per cent increase in levels of homelessness since 2001.

"It is good to see that the Australian Government will amend the Aged Care Act to recognise older people who are homeless as a special needs group. This will better allow the needs of older people who are homeless to be specifically taken into account during the annual allocation of new residential places and community care packages.

"But residential aged care should not be seen as the overall solution to older homelessness. Older Australians want to age in place, and community based prevention and support services must remain the core focus of the government's efforts.

"The provision of \$18.4 million over the next four years to boost the ACHA program for seniors who are homeless or at risk will be welcomed across the country.

"COTA Over 50s commends the Rudd government on its efforts to repair the neglect of housing policy that has occurred over the last decade or so. Housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of all Australians, and is particularly important for older people. It provides the secure base from which they can continue to participate in society and manage their health as they age. "

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