



FEDERAL ELECTION OUTCOME

We decided to hold back this issue of the National Policy Newsletter so we could report on the outcome of the Federal Election including the new Ministry. We thought that meant delaying its release a few weeks until around 27 August. We certainly did not envisage an extra three weeks delay, with the new Ministry not announced until 11 September.

COTA Australia congratulates Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the ALP on being returned to office for a further three years. We welcome the opportunity to continue working with the Gillard government on a series of key reforms that will protect and improve the well being of all older Australians.

COTA deals with a wide range of Ministers. Nicola Roxon has been reappointed Minister of Health and Ageing, a key portfolio for COTA priorities. Mark Butler has been promoted from Parliamentary Secretary for Health to the new Ministry of Mental Health and Ageing, so he will be seeing a lot of us. Catherine King has become Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing.

Jenny Macklin continues as Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs,

which includes pension policy. Jan McLucas has become Parliamentary Secretary for this portfolio.

Mark Arbib moves to be Minister for Social Housing. Kate Ellis picks up Mark Arbib's former role as Minister for Employment Participation (as well as Childcare). Tanya Plibersek moves from Housing to be Minister for Human Services and Minister for Social Inclusion.

We also deal with the Treasurer, Wayne Swann and new Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, Bill Shorten, in our work with ASIC and the ACCC, and with a number of other Ministers on key issues of concern to seniors.

COTA congratulates all these Ministers on their reappointment, new roles, or promotion to new positions. We look forward to working with them to implement the commitments the government made both in the election campaign and over the months leading up to it, including in the 2010 Federal Budget. We will also continue to pursue policy proposals we advanced in our election platform that were not picked up and a number of the election proposals from the Greens, now in alliance with the government.

Some of the commitments the Gillard government made to older Australians in its Delivering for Seniors package and other announcements include:

- real action on aged care reform, including the measures announced as part of the COAG health agreement, but more importantly for the longer term, responding to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians
- The appointment of a full time Age Discrimination Commissioner
- Changes to the pension bonus scheme to allow pensioners to keep all of the first \$250 they earn in a fortnight, rather than half the first \$500; and to be able to annualise periodic earnings.
- Strengthening the Experience Plus mature employment program with additional training grants of up to \$4000
- Improved consumer protection measures for people taking out reverse equity loans
- additional support for Grandparent Carers

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Meetings & Spotlight

National Policy Council Meeting Canberra 17-18 June 2010

The National Policy Council had a busy meeting as there have been developments in a number of the key policy areas since the last meeting. The report from CE, Ian Yates, on national policy issues covered aged care, employment, health, housing, energy, financial services and consumer law and showed that COAT has been active in all of these over the six months.

The reports from the State and Territory COTAs reinforced this with all having been involved in Budget submissions, policy developments at the State level and also participating in a number of national issues. The issues they have been working on include elder abuse, concessions (especially for energy), workers' compensation age limits, state based health and aged care issues, cultural diversity and grandparents as carers. One of the emerging issues is around energy, with price increases, changes to the retailing of energy and the possible introduction of time of use tariffs which have the potential to have a disproportionately high impact on older people. The NPC adopted a policy position on the introduction of smart meters and will monitor their roll out and the introduction of time of use tariffs.

NPC also adopted policy positions calling for the adoption of universal housing design and age friendly urban design principles. They also agreed that at the next NPC meeting there would be a discussion around how COTA can work on ageing issues for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population.

The discussion around the upcoming federal election identified four key areas for campaigning for the upcoming election; these were ageism and age discrimination, aged care reform, health and employment.

Whilst it was agreed that there is unfinished business around retirement incomes, particularly around the age pension the meeting agreed to work through the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition to advance this issue.

COTA is revisiting its representation on a number of key groups. In doing this it has become apparent that we are being asked to participate in a growing number of groups across an ever increasing number of policy areas. This is an acknowledgement of the effectiveness of our representation to date and we would like to acknowledge the work many members put into representing COTA and so representing older people so well.

Policy Spotlight

National Policy Forum on Ageism and Age Discrimination

16 June 2010

COTA runs a national policy forum each year to throw the spotlight on issues of particular importance and help us develop our thinking around them. We use these opportunities to bring together a broad group of stakeholders and COTA members and staff to reflect and challenge our thinking on the issue at hand.

The National Policy Council decided on this year's topic when we were looking at mature aged employment. NPC concluded that we are unlikely to make significant gains in that area without a change in community attitudes to older workers.

This lead us to look at ageism and age discrimination across other areas of activity and to the realisation that ageism is "alive and well" in Australia.

The forum heard Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick talking about age discrimination and ageism in the workplace and highlighting the need for strengthening the legislation and encouraging people to identify and take action when they are being

discriminated against. Professor Diane Gibson talked about ageism in health service delivery, how it influences diagnosis and what health interventions are offered.

Associate Professor David Mellor presented on the findings of a survey into respect for older people that he had undertaken in Victoria. Mr Chris Overland gave the results of a survey in South Australia which asked older people to look at their own experience of ageism, respect and negative attitudes. The last presentation from Dr Kate O'Loughlin from the University of Sydney looked at baby boomers experience of ageism in the workplace.

The Forum participants identified the following key elements for an action plan to combat ageism:

- Involving the whole community to take responsibility for the issue through broad well funded awareness campaigns.
- Educating older people about their rights and how to protect them.
- Naming and praising through awards people and organisations that are taking positive steps to combat ageism and promoting older people in a positive way.
- Strengthening domestic anti-discrimination legislation and appointing commissioner or similar to protect the rights of older people, in the way we have a sex and disability discrimination commissioners.
- Joining the discussion around and helping promote the development of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older People.
- Introducing a senior Minister for Older People whose responsibilities were across government.
- Introduction of older people's impact statements as part of the policy development process for government.



- An affirmative action program for employment of older people, starting in the Australian Public Service so government becomes the leader and role model.
- Development and dissemination of a glossary of appropriate language to use when writing and speaking about older people.

COTA will take these ideas and develop up an action plan to put to Government and to put to all political parties as part of the federal election campaign.

The presentations are available at www.cotaaustralia.org.au

Policy Updates

Health

In April the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reached agreement, with the exception of Western Australia, on the National Health and Hospitals Network reform package. The Commonwealth has committed to an additional \$7.3 billion over four years for health as it moves to implement the NHHN and address specific workforce issues, expand sub acute, improve after hours general practice and invest in prevention measures aimed predominantly at reducing smoking. We have welcomed the reform package and look forward to working with Government on its implementation.

There are two important gaps in the health reform package to date. The first is the failure to address oral and dental health care and we will continue to advocate for a nationally funded dental health

scheme. The second was the lack of a plan for major reforms for mental health services although there was some additional investment which is targeted towards younger Australians.

The Senate Inquiry into Suicide brought down its report "The Hidden Toll: Suicide in Australia" on 24 June. It was disappointing to see that the Committee made no recommendations around targeted interventions for older men despite the evidence being clear that they have one of the highest rates of suicide in Australia. However older people should benefit from many of the other recommendations and so we have to wait to see what the Government's response is and whether there will be additional resources.

Aged Care

Aged care continues to be a key area for policy attention. As part of the National Health and Hospitals Network package the Government announced a suite of initiatives to build a national aged care system. These were discussed in detail in the COTA Policy Alert.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry commenced in late April with the Issues Paper released in May. Ian Yates and Jo Root met with the Commissioners in late April to have an initial discussion around what COTA saw as the key areas for reform. The Commission published its Issues Paper which outlines the main areas that the Commission sees as needing to be addressed. Initial submissions in response to the Issues paper are due by 31 July 2010. As reported earlier in the NPC report there was an initial

discussion of the key issue at that meeting and most of the State and Territory policy councils are also going to discuss this to feed into the COTA submission.

Housing

The research into Independent Living Units funded by FaHCSIA is about to get underway. The initial stage will give a more complete picture of the state of play of ILUs with some limited information about the residents also being collected. The second stage of this project will look more at future developments for ILUs. In addition Laura Davy a researcher at the City Futures Research Centre at University of New South Wales is doing a survey of resident satisfaction with social housing and is including residents of ILUs in that survey.

There has been substantial movement on the issue of universal housing design. COTA is on the Universal Design Roundtable, which brings the construction industry, aged care providers, consumers and government officials. They are working towards a voluntary code for universal design for new residential buildings.

Employment

The Productive Ageing package of measure announced in February commenced implementation on 1 July 2010. These included a suite of career renewal measures aimed at assisting people to stay with the same employer as well as more intensive assistance for people to change employers or moving to a new career.

The number of places is initially quite small but there has been discussion about increasing these once there is

National Policy Council Updates

highlighting work in
our key policy areas



some evidence that people want to use such services and that they work. The Productive Ageing Package includes funding to conduct research into the barriers to employment facing mature age people. There will be primary research into the attitudes and experiences of mature age people, employers and the community which are relevant to mature age employment participation. The results will inform strategies to effect the necessary attitudinal change toward the recruitment and retention of mature age people. (www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/Jobwise/Pages/ProductiveAgeingPackage).

Retirement Incomes

COTA continues to support the National Fair Go For Pensioners Coalition with its campaign to raise the single pension to 35 per cent of average total earnings.

There are still some concerns around the pension reforms, especially with the annualisation of earned income. COTA is currently discussing this with the Minister and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

COTA welcomed all the announcements in the Government's Tax Policy statement around changes to superannuation which will, if implemented, improve future retirement incomes for many older Australians. However we will still campaign for the abolition of the upper age limits on the Superannuation guarantee payments and personal contributions to superannuation as these are seen as barriers to further mature age participation in the workforce.

The final report of the Review into the Governance, Efficiency, Structure and Operation of Australia's Superannuation System (the Cooper review) was handed to the Government on 30 June 2010. Information about this review is available at www.supersystems.gov.au. The Government will now consider the report and decide what its response will be to the recommendations.

Essential Services

The price of energy and water is becoming a significant issue and COTA is active at both the National and State/Territory level in working to ensure older people are able to afford these essential services. All of the COTAs have been active in campaigning for concessions on energy to be increased with variable success. This is an issue that COTA along with many other groups will continue to monitor at both national and state levels.

At the national level the Australian Energy Regulator has a Consumer Consultative Group that COTA is represented on. In addition they have put out a number of issues papers and held stakeholder forums on some of the key issues around the implementation of the new National Energy Customer framework. For more details go to www.aer.gov.au.

SUBMISSIONS

COTA Australia has been active in highlighting older people's issues in response to a number of inquiries and other policy development process as listed below

- Submission to the Senate

Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability

- Submission in response to the Australian Energy Regulator's Issues Paper on Retail Pricing Guidelines
- Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in response to Australia Post's 2010 price notification.

All COTA Australia Submissions can be found at www.cotaaustralia.org.au

COMING UP/TO WATCH

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians. The first round of submissions closed on 31 July with the Commission receiving over 450 submissions, including one from COTA. The draft report is due in December. For more information go to www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/aged-care.

ACSA 2010 National conference 'Explore the Possibilities' 19-22 September, Hobart. COTA will run a Consumer Forum.

Senate Inquiry into Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability delivered its report on 2 September. To see the report go to www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/planning_options_people_ageing_with_disability.

COTA Australia National Policy Council meeting 9-10 November Canberra.

43rd Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference, 'Islands of Ageing – building bridges for people, policy and practice' 17 – 19 November 2010 Hobart.

Fair Go For Pensioners National Conference 24 November, Canberra