



## **NEWS RELEASE**

15 August 2010

### **ELECTION POLICIES FOR SENIORS STILL FALL SHORT**

Australia's peak organisation of older Australians, COTA Australia (Council on the Ageing), has called for further commitments to senior Australians from both government and opposition.

COTA, which represents more than 500,000 older Australians, says after analysing the government and opposition's policy announcements up to this weekend, it believes both parties have made some important and substantial promises but have fallen short of fully addressing the growing impact of an ageing population.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said the number of issues on which there was "Nothing Announced" or "Not in policy announcement" was both disappointing and indicative of the very issues of ageism that COTA sought to have addressed.

"On the government side we especially welcome the promise of a full time Age Discrimination Commissioner; the reform of the Work Bonus arrangements for pensioners which will greatly benefit all pensioners who continue to work part-time and will grow their numbers substantively over the next few years; and Labor's approach to long term aged care reform," he said.

"On the Coalition side we especially welcome the commitment to negotiated aged care agreements - provided they explicitly include COTA involvement as the only independent aged care consumer representative and advocate. We also welcome the promise of additional short term funding for residential care (unfortunately not community care); and the complete lifting of the age limit on super contributions.

"We are disappointed that neither party has committed to the degree of reform of aged care that older people want - to commit to more community care and consumer choice.

"Both parties have recognised mature employment is a key issue, but neither have been bold in their policies. Cash bonuses alone are unlikely to deliver sustainable results. There is no commitment to a major effort to transform workplaces and working conditions to make them "age friendly".

"We call on the parties to catch up with the needs of an ageing Australia and a growing aged population with further and major announcements in the last week of the campaign, Mr Yates said.

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**Comparative policies table attached.  
For further information and comment contact:**

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## POLICY ALERT

## FEDERAL ELECTION 2010

## FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

### COTA ELECTION PLATFORM

### COALITION

### ALP

#### AGEISM AND AGE DISCRIMINATION

Cabinet Minister for Older Australians

Yes , but not in Cabinet

Nothing announced

Age Discrimination Commissioner

No

Yes

Abolition of discriminatory laws such as age restrictions on superannuation contributions

Abolish age limits on superannuation

Age limit lifted from 70 to 75 years

#### AGED CARE

Commitment to Substantive Reform

Will introduce negotiated Aged Care provider Agreements. Consumers will be involved but unclear what influence.

Initiated and committed to Productivity Commission Inquiry

Will consider Productivity Commission recommendations

Putting individuals at the centre of the system and giving them an entitlement

Not in policy announcement

Pre-election aged care package announced 1200 community directed care packages

Giving individuals more choice and control

Not in policy

Ditto

Greater emphasis on community care.

Policy talks about appropriate balance between residential and community

Policy unclear, aged care package included conversion of beds to packages

A sustainable funding approach

Several short-term initiatives including extension of CAP but no long term solutions - have to await response to Productivity Commission

Several short term initiatives in aged care package but not CAP. Longer term dependent on Productivity Commission

## HEALTH

National dental and oral health scheme

Nothing announced

Nothing announced

Mental health reform and additional funding

\$1.5 billion overall with main focus on youth. Older people will hopefully also benefit.

\$276.9 million for suicide in line with Senate Inquiry report. Nothing specific for older people.

Additional investment in dementia research and support for preventative health measures.

Nothing announced

Nothing announced

Health promotion and preventative health for older people

Nothing announced

Nothing announced

## EMPLOYMENT

Removal of all existing age barriers for both the Superannuation Guarantee contributions and personal contributions

Yes for Superannuation Guarantee

Age limit lifted from 70 to 75 years

Establishment of an Older Workers' Advisory Service

Nothing announced

Nothing announced

Funding for a consultancy service to small and medium sized enterprises to assist with job redesign for older workers.

Nothing announced

Nothing announced

## ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS

### SENIORS' POLICIES

Both the ALP and the Coalition have put out Seniors' Policy Statements which contain initiatives that were not included in COTA's election platform, although most reflected our policies and lobbying we had done over the last couple of years. These are summarised below.

#### ALP Delivering for Seniors

- Pensioners able to annualise income and all of first \$250 p/f now does not effect pension, rather than half of up to \$500. Maximum result is \$6,500 improved Work Bonus for age pensioners who choose to do part time work. Affects 30,000 now but more will now use provisions
- \$4,000 worth of training and assessment to support 7,500 mature age workers.
- New peer support for grandparent carers.
- New
- Regulations for reverse mortgages to protect seniors.

#### COALITION Real Action to Support Senior Australians

- Seniors Employment Incentive Payment of \$250 a fortnight paid to employers who hire a jobseeker aged 50 years or older for up to 6 months.
- Indexation of the eligibility income thresholds for the Commonwealth Senior's Health Card (CSHC).
- \$7.5 million in grants for local councils to establish the Safer Seniors Programme.

### COTA COMMENT

All of the measures In the ALP package are in line with COTA policy positions that we have been putting to the Government over the last 12 months. The changes to the Work Bonus are particularly welcome as they have been a priority issue for COTA. The extra training places for mature workers are welcome but the other measures we recommend are still required. The reverse mortgage protections will be important going forward.

In the Coalition package the Seniors Employment incentive payment is in line with the COTA position on mature aged employment but will

not be sufficient in itself. More support is required in line with our proposals.. The indexation of the income thresholds for the Commonwealth Senior's Health Card is in line with COTA's position that all concessions and entitlements should be indexed to preserve both their value and to ensure that they continue to be available to the people who need them. The establishment of the Safer Seniors program should help some older Australians continue to live at home in the community for longer. Using local councils to deliver it may ensure it meets local needs. However the funding is limited and will have only marginal impact for most older people.

## Aged Care

The Coalition released its Ageing Policy during the election. Labor is publicly relying on its Aged Care Reform Package announced in April 2010 so we have compared this with the Coalition policy.

### ALP Aged Care- National Aged Care Reform\*

The Commonwealth government will take full funding and policy responsibility for all aged care services.

- Transfer of resource for aged care component of Home and Community Care program from States/territories (except Victoria) to Commonwealth.
- \$32 million to improve access to information and assessment
- \$72 million to improve consumer focus and strengthen protections for residents of aged care:
- Additional \$300 million in Zero Real Interest Loans with extended term of loans
- \$120 million in capital funding for 286 sub-acute beds or bed-equivalents in Multi-Purpose Services
- 1200 Consumer Directed Care packages
- 10 million in additional funding to improve the viability of community care providers in rural and remote areas
- Major reference of comprehensive aged care reform to Productivity Commission to report by April 2011.

\*Announced as part of April COAG reforms. Reaffirmed as a campaign announcement.

### COALITION Real Action Plan For Ageing

- Negotiate an Aged Care Provider Agreement
- Establish an Aged Care Bed Incentive Programme with \$90 million funding
- Establish Convalescent Care program with \$300 million over four years
- \$2 million for Australian Meals on Wheels to celebrate 2012 as the Year of Meals on Wheels
- \$50 million to expand Dementia program to include other degenerative neurological conditions
- \$20 million funding for respite day care
- \$14 million in grants program for Pet Therapy in Aged Care Facilities
- \$12 million funding for a Companionship program for grants to community organisations

## **COTA COMMENT**

COTA supported all the Labor Government measure when they were announced in April. They respond to a number of COTA concerns and policy positions. However they failed to address short term financial pressures in aged care for much of the industry.

The Coalition's additional funding for respite care, extending the dementia program to other neurological conditions, pet therapy and companionship programs is consistent with COTA's policy positions around carers, dementia and the need to improve the quality of life of older people and reduce social isolation. However these initiatives are marginal in terms of the overall challenges facing aged care.

The Convalescent Care initiative is welcomed on the basis, which we have verbal commitment on from the Shadow Minister, that the already operational Transition Care program beds are to be continued, and that potentially both programs may be rolled together and integrated.

The development of Aged Care Agreements is welcomed provided that they also include consumer representatives as both participants and signatories to ensure the voice of the users of services has equal weight with the different interests of government and providers .

COTA is disappointed that that the Coalition policy contained no additional investment in community care and no commitment to more consumer choice and control. We also would like to know whether or not the Coalition is going to take over full responsibility for aged care and what will happen to the Home and Community Care program.

We are disappointed that there is no major commitment on either side to improve and grow community care and whilst we acknowledge that substantive reform should now await the Productivity Commission report we would like to see some additional investment in community care now and we have made constructive suggestions as to how that can happen.

Ian Yates AM  
**Chief Executive**

**14 October 2010**