



Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

December 2007, Canberra

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As the year draws to a close COTA Over 50s sends sincere wishes for a very Happy Christmas and successful New Year to all our readers. The articles contained in this Newsletter highlight activities for a very busy year for COTA Over 50s.

The formalisation of the re-joining of all State and Territory COTAs together with the National Organisation ARPA Over 50s has strengthened the work of this organisation and, through individual members and our Organisational members, COTA Over 50s represents almost half a million older Australians. We can therefore justifiably claim to be "The Voice of Older Australians".

We congratulate Mr Rudd on his win in the recent Federal Election and we look forward to working with his team in the future. As is evidenced by the Video of the Launch of our Pre-Election Document the work of COTA Over 50s is appreciated by both sides of Government and we will work to build on relationships already established and building new ones with new Ministers and Shadow Ministers.



Bettine Heathcote, Chair, National Policy Council

Report from the Executive Director



COTA Over 50s has undertaken an extensive consultation process with our members, government and the broader community in the development of policy priorities. Examples of highlights of 2007 include:

Elder abuse in community and in residential aged care: Input to ACAC and Senate Community Affairs Inquiry.

Adequacy of the Age Pension (particularly for single pensioners): *Living on the Edge: Older People and Poverty* paper by COTA Over 50s was adopted as the theme for Annual Forum 2007 and policy development 2007 – 2009.

Dental Care - In September 2007, an independent economic analysis of dental healthcare with funding partners was conducted on behalf of COTA Over 50s and Australian Dental Industry Association. A proposal and recommendations to the Federal Government followed. (refer to the article [Dental Care](#))

Transport and Health Services – COTA Over 50s took leadership in the National Aged Care Alliance working group, Transport and Health, which produced a NACA Position Paper, April 2007, seeking efficient and safe access to transport for older people.

Aged Care - Submission to *Review of Subsidies and Services in Australian Government funded Aged Care Services*

Age Discrimination: Discussion with Attorney-General and other Federal Ministers with regard to ongoing widespread problems associated with age discrimination (ageism).

Indigenous Australians – Active involvement in health issues in older Indigenous Australians and the appropriate delivery of aged care services. (Refer to the article in this issue).

Older People and the Law report assisted the House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in considering the adequacy of current legislation in addressing the needs of older citizens. 48 recommendations followed.

Where to in 2008? The 2007 initiatives were evaluated against our 2007 Federal Election Policies document, with the following policy priorities being identified for 2008:

- Sufficient income for all seniors
- Affordable & appropriate housing for all older people, including people who rent
- Commonwealth HACC Funding increased in real terms, matched by States & Territories
- National approach to end of life planning
- Constant push to combat age discrimination
- Comprehensive program for active ageing
- Staffing of medical facilities



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Where to in 2008?



In addition to stated priorities, COTA Over 50s will be following up on its 2007 initiatives. These are:

- **Pensions. COTA Over 50s will call for:**
 - An increase in single aged pension to 65% of the couple rate
 - An urgent review of the aged pension with an immediate interim increase of \$1,000 per annum to continue until the review outcomes are implemented.
- **Older People and the Law.** COTA Over 50s will be making representation to the Attorney General who is in receipt of the 48 recommendations made by the House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs with a view to translating the recommendations into legislation.
- **Dental healthcare.** In the short term COTA Over 50s, with support from the Australian Dental Industry Association, will apply pressure to the Australian Dental Association, to free up control over dental hygienists and therapists in order to delivery on site periodontal care to older people in aged care facilities. In the longer term, COTA Over 50s will apply pressure on the Government to adopt the recommendations of the report to provide the same dental healthcare benefits to pensioners as are currently available to veterans.
- **COTA Over 50s is involved in exploring strategies best supporting the interests of the elderly in Indigenous communities.**

The aged pension

"A single pensioner cannot exist on \$269 per week, particularly if they are paying rent" says Dr Bird, Executive Director of COTA Over 50s. "It is more expensive to live alone than with another person, so why do single pensioners continue to be disadvantaged"?

COTA Over 50s is calling for an urgent review of the adequacy of the aged pension with an immediate interim offer of \$1,000 per annum to continue until the review outcomes are implemented.

eVOICE publication of the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc (CPSA) identifies four issues of particular importance to retirees on low incomes.

- It's the **pension**, particularly if you are a single pensioner with little or no additional income.
- It's public **dentistry**. How many pensioners are there with untreated tooth decay and with dentures held together with Araldite?
- It's **aged care**. It's not just the state of Australian nursing homes (see Letters in this issue of THE VOICE) that should worry you. It's also the fact that there are so few services in between needing a bit of help around the house and going into a nursing home.
- It's **housing**. The majority of age pensioners and those on veteran pensions own their own home. But some don't and many disability support pensioners and their careers don't. The private rental market is ill-affordable at the best of times. Public housing stock is shrinking. (eVoice, 2007-11-05)



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Dental healthcare proposal by COTA Over 50s

On 19th October 2007, COTA Over 50s submitted a proposal regarding a National Dental Health Program for Older Australians to a number of key Federal Members of Parliament.

The Proposal emerged as a result of a Report commissioned by COTA Over 50s, in conjunction with the Australia Dental Industry Association, titled, ***Economic Analysis of Dental Health for Older Australians***. The report noted that periodontal (gum) disease is linked to a range of serious health conditions. It also identified dental hygienists and therapists as key providers of preventive dental care.

In its proposal regarding a ***National Dental Health Program for Older Australians***, COTA Over 50s requested widening of the scope of practice for Hygienists and Therapists as a means of addressing the increasing demand for dental services. This would involve training and professional development of dental auxiliaries which, in turn, would help to broaden their skills and to transfer or widen their duties. COTA Over 50s urged Federal MPs to support this proposal which would allow dental hygienists and therapists to offer direct and more immediate access to care for patients, while still working as part of a dental team.

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Would you like to send us your own contribution to our Newsletter or comment on our stories or policy issues?

Find our *Interactive Newsletter* online:

yourspace.cotaove50s.org.au

COTA (NT) keeps a close watch on intervention in Western Arnhem land

Because of the trust Denise Goodfellow (COTA NT, Vice President) has been able to build, local senior Aboriginal people were happy to share their concerns about the Commonwealth intervention with her, and invited COTA (NT) to visit to discuss these concerns.

On Tuesday, October 30, a delegation from COTA (NT) visited **Mamadewerre Outstation**, approximately 100 kilometres from Oenpelli, to discuss issues relating to the current intervention in Aboriginal communities.

At Mamadewerre COTA (NT) met with traditional owner and elder Isiaah and explained the role COTA (NT) plays and our interest in ensuring we adequately represent Aboriginal people living in remote areas. Isiaah advised us that his major concern is being relocated from his traditional land as a result of the current intervention. He indicated that the advantages of remaining on his outstation with his people included:



Denise Goodfellow, Isiaah & Brian Hilder (President, COTA NT)

- **Ensuring his people remain healthy** and are not affected by alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse by maintaining a strong policy of prohibition.
- **Providing protection for women and children** through maintaining a "dry" community.
- **Facilitating the maintenance of culture** and dreaming through elders educating children on-site.
- **Managing the surrounding environment** to protect local plants and animals.
- **Protecting sacred sites.**

Isiaah informed us he strongly supported the banning of alcohol from communities, and believed that other elders in the 13 or so surrounding outstations would also strongly agree with this policy. We were informed that any community member who violates the strict rules on alcohol and other substance abuse is expelled from the outstation. Isiaah also supports working for income and opposes the provision of "sit-down" money. He advised us that he supports the transition from CDEP to real jobs. Isiaah had previously taken part in a tourism project that Denise had run with elders, including Isiaah's mother, and had been a strong supporter. Since returning from the visit, COTA (NT) has held discussions with staff in the offices of both the Member for Solomon, David Tollner, and former Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, drawing their attention to the issues raised at Mamadewerre and also seeking clarification of the Federal Government's intentions with respect to any relocation of people from outstations into larger centres.

COTA (NT) will continue to seek input from Aboriginal elders to ensure we include their needs in the development of policies for Northern Territory seniors.

(submitted by Dr. Graeme Suckling, ED, COTA NT)



yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au

yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au is part of the innovative electronic infrastructure of COTA Over 50s. It is an ongoing project developed with a view to enhancing communication of COTA Over 50s with older Australians, their families and friends.

The main features of the website include:

cotaover50s.org.au

- **National Website**
- **Updated daily**
- **No 1 resource for over 50s**

- **Australia's Families: A video and photo Gallery (Family Vignettes).**

Families in Australia are invited to submit picture albums or videos illustrating the history of their families. The process is simple and straightforward. An online help-file is also available. The site is moderated — all video files are first submitted to the site administrator before they become available online.



- **Music, educational and other youtube videos, free online educational games to play with children**, all thematically organised and safely presented.



- **An interactive Newsletter by COTA Over 50s.** The newsletter allows for close communication between COTA Over 50s, its member organisations and the community of the over 50s. All comments and contributions are moderated by the National COTA Over 50s Office before publishing.

- **Over 50s – Links.** This aspect needs development. Here the objective is to collect as many links as possible to provide information and resources enabling older Australians to make informed decisions about a number of aspects of life, including retirement. Everyone is welcome to send to yourspace suggestions of such valuable links. Thank you.



yourspace provides older Australians with tips and graphic instruction for using internet technology.

Send us a question and we will try our best to put our answers online for everyone to share.

yourspace.cotaover50s.org.au

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

- **ARPA Over 50s Association** provide a wide range of opportunities for the over 50s to explore all aspects of 3rd age living (www.over50sonline.com.au).
- **COTA ACT** *Your Home and Security Handbook* (available through www.cota-act.org.au) is a response of the Council on the Ageing (ACT) to safety and security concerns of older people in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).
- **COTA NSW** is calling for interest in its National Grand-parenting Forum, 7-8 April 2008, Sydney. For more information, please visit www.cotansw.com.au).
- **COTA NT** : Where to after retirement? For an interesting statistics on issues relating to retirement, please visit http://web.aanet.com.au/cotant/Seniors_Survey_Report_2006March_2007GS.pdf
- **COTA QLD** website provides the over 50s with most valuable links relevant to seniors in Qld and in Australia in general (www.cotaq.org.au). These include financial, legal matters, housing, health, aged care and more.
- **COTA SA** again hosted this year the Every Generation Festival. Those who participated in it, loved it. Others can find information about its events on <http://www.cotasa.org.au/>
- **COTA TAS** runs programs in the following areas (www.cotatas.org): TALENT, (Third Age Learning Network of Tasmania) BODY BIZ with its Seated Exercise program
- **COTA VIC** The highlight for 2007-2008 is the Telstra project aiming to assist Australia's elderly with the use of technology (www.cotavic.org.au)
- **COTA WA** are strong drivers of the *Living Longer Living Stronger* program (www.cotawa.asn.au).

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