

2022 STATE ELECTION PLATFORM



WHO IS COTA SA?

COTA SA is an older people's movement representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 630,000 South Australians aged 50 years and over. COTA SA reflects the diversity of modern ageing and connects with thousands of older people each year throughout SA. Our policy and advocacy are informed by the COTA SA Policy Council made up of older South Australians from diverse backgrounds, along with a number of advisory groups. COTA SA's social enterprise, The Plug-in conducts regular research and gathers insights into the lived experience of older South Australians in addition to its work facilitating access to older people for organisations, researchers and service providers. COTA SA is part of the COTA Federation with independent COTAs in each state and territory along with COTA Australia.

Acknowledgement of Country

COTA SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land of South Australia. We honour Aboriginal peoples' continuing connection to Country and recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.



STANDING WITH OLDER SOUTH AUSTRALIANS

SNAPSHOT OF OLDER SOUTH AUSTRALIANS



More than 633,000 South Australians are aged 50+



26% of older South Australians live in country SA



About 1% of South Australians aged 50+ are Aboriginal



About 11% of Australians, including older South Australians, identify as LGBTI+



14% of older South Australians are migrants from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds



Life expectancy has increased by about 14 years over the last 60 years

73% of older Australians rate their quality of life highly. This has declined over the last two years



More than half of older people say the rising cost of living is leaving them behind



About 1/3 of older workers have experienced age discrimination resulting in unemployment or underemployment



25% of Jobseeker recipients are aged 55 years and over



Almost 10,000 older South Australians are experiencing housing stress



More than half of older people undertake unpaid work



1 in 5 people aged 50+ live in single person households



58% of South Australians aged 50+ engage in the recommended amount of exercise per week, but it declines as we age



80% of people aged 65+ find it difficult to keep up with tech changes

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Our consultations with older people identified the following priorities for the 2022 State Election.

AGEING IN COUNTRY SA

Supporting older people to age well in regional towns

Recommendation 1	That the incoming State Government immediately commissions the development of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy, working with older people, local councils, businesses, government agencies and community groups to identify best practice examples and initiatives in response to critical issues in regional areas including housing, employment, digital inclusion, transport and health.
Recommendation 2	That the incoming State Government funds COTA SA to establish a Country Engagement Program to work with older people and stakeholders in country areas to promote ageing well, build local capacity and support options for people to remain in their community as they age. Estimated cost \$160,000 per annum.
Recommendation 3	That the incoming State Government maps, plans and sets targets for optimal levels of health and aged care staffing and services in country SA and then reports regularly against the achievements of those targets.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Including older people in the digital world

Recommendation 4	That the incoming State Government researches and funds innovative, evidence-based, best practice programs that identify and target older people at risk of digital exclusion to help them to use the online world.
Recommendation 5	That the incoming State Government maintains non-online systems for access to information, support and all government and government funded services.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

AGEISM

Challenging age discrimination

Recommendation 6	<p>That the incoming State Government funds COTA SA to lead key stakeholders in a multi-year, targeted media and awareness campaign that confronts and addresses ageism.</p> <p>Estimated cost \$500,000 per annum.</p>
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EMPLOYMENT

Supporting older people find employment

Recommendation 7	<p>That the incoming State Government funds a pilot project in regional South Australia to engage older workers and employers to trial new opportunities for mature employment and enterprise in country areas. This project should also investigate the work required to support upskilling, reskilling and workplace flexibility to create proactive employment opportunities for older people with a focus on older women.</p>
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HOUSING

Preventing homelessness for older people

Recommendation 8	<p>That the incoming State Government increases the quantity of public and social housing available for older people by at least 100 homes per year.</p>
Recommendation 9	<p>That the incoming State Government uses age as a criterion of priority for housing for disadvantaged older people.</p>
Recommendation 10	<p>That the incoming State Government establishes a specialised advocacy and housing service that assists vulnerable older people living in housing stress to secure ongoing accommodation.</p>

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Supporting older people to be healthy and well

Recommendation 11	<p>That the incoming State Government provides funding to enable the Strength for Life program to continue to meet the needs of older South Australians including in regional and low-SEIFA areas, with dedicated funding to develop a next generation model targeting CALD and First Nation Elders and the roll out of online access for isolated and regional South Australians.</p> <p>Estimated cost \$290,000 per annum.</p>
Recommendation 12	<p>That the incoming State Government prioritises and accelerates strategies to improve health outcomes and measures to reduce ambulance ramping for older people.</p>
Recommendation 13	<p>That the incoming State Government makes ambulance travel free for all Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders.</p>
Recommendation 14	<p>That the incoming State Government, with the Australian Government, addresses access to oral health care services for older South Australians, with an absolute priority on older people on low incomes.</p>

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Connecting older people to their community

Recommendation 15	<p>That the incoming State Government funds the COTA SA Rainbow Hub to safeguard its current footprint and expand its reach to LGBTI elders living outside metropolitan Adelaide.</p> <p>Estimated cost \$140,000 per annum.</p>
Recommendation 16	<p>That the incoming State Government funds the extension of transport concessions beyond off-peak times.</p>
Recommendation 17	<p>That the incoming State Government reviews transport options in regional South Australia as part of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy.</p>
Recommendation 18	<p>That the incoming State Government reinvests in COTA SA to provide peer to peer road safety awareness and education initiatives for older people.</p> <p>Estimated cost \$150,000 per annum.</p>

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PRIORITIES

Ageing in Country SA

Supporting older people to age well in regional SA

The ageing of our regions is the most significant demographic change of the last 30 years[1] with 165,000 South Australians (26%) aged over 50 already living in country SA. The Australian population is ageing such that by 2040, the proportion of people aged over 65 will increase from 14% to 20%[2]. Many parts of regional South Australia are well ahead of this curve having already arrived at the 2040 age demographic projections.

As COTA SA's regular engagement across country SA has shown, most older people living in our regions regard themselves as lucky to be living in country SA with a strong commitment and loyalty to their community. Country towns benefit from older residents who contribute to their community through volunteer work such as staffing ambulances, tourism, conservation and managing clubs that provide social connection and health benefits. However, country SA is facing a unique set of challenges as its population ages. These include housing shortages, workforce gaps, local transport problems, inadequate health and aged care services and digital exclusion.

Many would support the view that South Australia can lead the nation in building strong and cohesive communities in regional South Australia. However to be successful in this ambition we need a practical response to the challenges and the possibilities that face our increasingly older regions.

Fundamental to this practical response is an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy. The strategy would be the first of its kind and would feature regional best practice examples and place-based initiatives to support and enable older people, while simultaneously strengthening communities.

While some regional businesses, councils and Regional Development South Australia have collaborated to develop strategies, the effectiveness of such projects to engage broadly and deliver positively is limited by constrained resources, competing areas of focus, a lack of local capacity and, importantly, a lack of priority from many metropolitan based business and government head offices.

The strategy would connect older people, local councils, business, government agencies and community groups

to assess and plan according to priorities agreed on a region by region basis such as:

- » **Housing** – Mapping and developing innovative, sustainable responses to the acute housing shortage throughout country SA for both older people and for required workforces;
- » **Employment** - Advancing employment and enterprise including through trialling workforce and business development initiatives that promote opportunities for older people to continue in work and business and which tackle the barriers to workforce participation for older workers;
- » **Transport** - Reviewing the options available for older people (and other transport disadvantaged people) in regional areas and creating solutions that enable people living in these areas to travel within and between local communities safely, with autonomy and as part of any consolidation of services;
- » **Digital inclusion** - Identifying best practice programs that help older people access, use and keep up with digital technology to stay connected to services, social engagements, family and friends; and that support non-digital access options;
- » **Environment** – Creating plans for engagement in nature-based tourism, conservation, recreation and volunteering, protecting green spaces and promoting environmental projects;
- » **Health and aged care** – Canvassing best practice and future models of health and aged care services; promoting and supporting good health and well-being; attracting a skilled workforce; promoting the use and mastery of technology;
- » **Community Connections** - Creating inclusive communities including by addressing cost of living pressures; achieving equitable levels of digital inclusion and fostering projects that promote and enable the ongoing participation of older residents; promoting and enabling diverse participation and engagement.

[1] Regional Australia Institute, Oct 2019

[2] [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3222.0Media%20Release12012%20\(base\)%20to%202101](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3222.0Media%20Release12012%20(base)%20to%202101)

Recommendation 1

That the incoming State Government immediately commissions the development of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy, working with older people, local councils, businesses, government agencies and community groups to identify best practice examples and initiatives in response to critical issues in regional areas including housing, employment, digital inclusion, transport and health.

Helping older people to age well in their community

In our Country Listening Posts in 2019 and 2021, we heard directly from older people that they love where they live and wish to remain in their community as they grow older. By doing so, they maintain their connection to place and people, and can continue to participate, contribute, receive services, care or otherwise, that is trusted and comfortable.

Such an aspiration requires strategic consideration and long-term investment to foster strong relationships with local government and services and to build sustainable supports and connections that allow people to be well in all stages of their ageing.

To facilitate this, COTA SA proposes a Country Engagement Program with capacity to work with local government and services, which in turn will support older people in country SA to access

information, education, support and advice. Such a resource will allow us to identify and co-design new opportunities to support ageing well while supporting local capacity building.

The Country Engagement Program will build on the COTA SA work already underway in the Fleurieu and Yorke Peninsulas while expanding into other regional areas. While based in Adelaide, the program would have an active presence in the regions throughout the year, including through curating ageing well events to prepare and equip older people to stay fit and active, prevent and reverse frailty, problem solve barriers to ageing well, prepare for end of life and increase access to digital technology.

Recommendation 2

That the incoming State Government funds COTA SA to establish a Country Engagement Program to work with older people and stakeholders in country areas to promote ageing well, build local capacity and support options for people to remain in their community as they age.

Estimated cost \$160,000 per annum.

Providing health and care services in Country SA

The bedrock of strong country communities is timely access to local health and care services and an opportunity to receive specialist services as required. It is an overwhelming priority that people can access local health services that are trusted and available.

A critical shortage of medical practitioners in country SA is nearing crisis point in many regions, including the Yorke Peninsula which has one of the highest proportions of older people in SA. Emergency departments that are left without doctors for days^[3], and the closure of regional clinics due to doctors retiring, resigning or reducing their hours means older residents are at risk of not receiving adequate health care. COTA SA urges the incoming State Government address this crisis with sustainable strategies to entice and support health care professionals to take up residence in regional areas, and to look for opportunities to upskill or reskill mature-age workers to work in healthcare.

Specialist services are also important to older people in country SA, however preference varies whether to access those services in regional centres or in Adelaide. Regardless of this preference, accessing timely and trusted specialist services in country SA has proved to be difficult for older people. It relies heavily on the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS)

which continues to be criticised as being inflexible, inadequate and disrespectful of client choice and control.

Access to mental health support is also difficult, inclusive of both acute services but also primary and preventative support. A shortfall of integrated services in regional SA, particularly amongst older people, has been identified in the Mental Health Services Plan 2020-2025. Further investigations, which commenced in August 2021, to understand the issues pertaining to these services are fully supported to protect the mental health of older people living in country SA.

There is mounting concern about the availability of an aged care workforce of sufficient quantity and quality to support older people to live in their communities throughout their lives whether receiving care at home or in an aged care home. The lack of staffing is compromising the quality of care and increasingly being cited as causing aged care closures. The State Government is both an important provider of aged care in country SA and a significant employer. It is a high priority for regional providers, and the state and federal governments, to address the growing crisis in the aged care workforce.

[3] Union slams 'dereliction of duty' as hospital left without doctor for two days - ABC News

Recommendation 3

That the incoming State Government maps, plans and sets targets for optimal levels of health and aged care staffing and services in country SA and then reports regularly against the achievements of those targets.

PRIORITIES

Digital Inclusion

Including older people in the digital world

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced thousands of older South Australians to increase their use of technology, if not by choice, through necessity. Smart phones that might previously have been used by older people only for calls and text messages, are now required to scan QR codes to check-in, to make video calls to stay connected with loved ones and to access services.

While for many this has accelerated their learning, for others it has pushed them further into disconnect and isolation because they don't use technology.

The causes are many and varied including not being able to afford it, not knowing how to use it, not having anyone to coach its use and simply not keeping up with the rapid changes of it.

The 2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII)[4] found that people aged 55 years and over have less digital ability than the national average, with those aged 65-74 and 75+ yielding a Digital Ability score of 22.6 and 37.2 points below the national average respectively. South Australia is one of the least digitally included states with its overall ADII at 2.1 points below the national average and some of our oldest country regions, in terms of the average age of its residents, lag behind by more than 10 points. For these regional areas, access to technology and devices and having the ability to use them is fundamental to digital inclusion.

Being on the wrong side of the digital divide impacts quality of life, causing mounting isolation and a sense of being on the outside. It takes away connections with community at a time when more older people than ever live alone with fewer opportunities for social contact as part of daily routines, and it presents a barrier to get information, access services and participate in social engagement opportunities. Further, older people tell us they are often met with impatience and even derision if they can't master technology. This in turn impacts self-worth, and makes older people feel excluded and reluctant to keep trying.

We need proactive action to close the digital divide – for older people and for others. Non-online systems must be maintained, and structured support is required on an ongoing basis to help people learn and then stay up to date. The prohibitive costs and unreliable internet connections that undermine equitable access must also be addressed.

[4] [Home - Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#)

Recommendation 4

That the incoming State Government researches and funds innovative, evidence-based, best practice programs that identify and target older people at risk of digital exclusion to help them to use the online world.

Recommendation 5

That the incoming State Government maintains non-online systems for access to information, support and all government and government funded services.

PRIORITIES

Ageism

Challenging age discrimination

Ageism is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely upon age[5]. It is often unwitting and subconscious, is escalating and is profoundly harmful, affecting the wellbeing of people every day and across every aspect of life in South Australia[6].

Ageism:

- » is a prerequisite and enabler of elder abuse
- » overlooks low standards in aged care
- » threatens equitable access to health services
- » prematurely ends careers
- » is a precursor to homelessness and poverty
- » is a direct contributor to isolation and loneliness.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality’s commissioned research found that – “Negative perceptions are seen by many as contributing to older people being overlooked or ‘invisible’ within our society... The wider population are seen by some as affording older people less respect and value than given to previous generations.”[7]

South Australia’s Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 acknowledges that tackling ageism and shifting the “dominant, negative narrative of ageing and older people” is critical for ageing well in South Australia[8].

Yet—despite universal acknowledgement that ageism pervades the attitudes and beliefs of media, institutions, services and other aspects of everyday life—there is little serious recognition of it, and no systematic strategy to address it. Ageism will not disappear on its own. Fighting ageism cannot be left to chance: we have learned from racism and sexism, incremental or incidental strategies will not be enough. An integrated, systematic and targeted approach is needed now.

[5] Reframing Ageing in Australia, EveryAGE Counts campaign cloudfront.net/benevolent/pages/393/attachments/original/1609982063/EveryAge_Counts_Re-Framing_Ageing_Onepage.pdf?1609982063

[6] The Drivers of Ageism, Benevolent Society 2019, pp 9

[7] *They look after you, you look after them, community attitudes to ageing and aged care*, Ipsos July 2020, Research Paper No 5, The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, pp 7

[8] South Australia’s *Plan for Ageing Well 2020-25* pp 41



Recommendation 6

That the incoming State Government funds COTA SA to lead key stakeholders in a multi-year, targeted media and awareness campaign that confronts and addresses ageism.

Estimated cost \$500,000 per annum.

PRIORITIES

Employment

Supporting older people find employment

The impacts of ageism are felt in many areas of life for older people, including in employment. It is a fact that many employers are reluctant or unwilling to hire anyone over the age of 50[9] and employer myths about older workers abound[10]. At a time when job security is no longer a given, in part due to casualisation of the workforce, the rise of the gig economy, industry restructures and off-shoring staff, workers aged 55+ are overrepresented in both long term unemployment and underemployment. In 2020, more workers aged 55-64 received JobSeeker than any other age group, and older workers were unemployed for longer than any other age group[11]. The rate of underemployment of older people in Australia is 15.3%[12].

With the nature of work changing rapidly there is no current focus on older workers in South Australia. This is evident through the discontinuation of DOME, a specialist employment service to older workers which lost its funding in April 2020[13].

The adverse effects of unemployment and underemployment for older South Australians are many and well known. They include increased social exclusion, financial insecurity, lower self-esteem and, for some, increased risk of poverty and homelessness. These impacts are acutely experienced by a growing number of older women who are also susceptible to other forms of discrimination. Lower lifetime earnings see an increasing number of women without housing, savings or superannuation as they age. The 2020 State Government budget stimulus, the public sector traineeship program and apprenticeship incentives (unless deliberate work with older cohorts is part of implementation) and the

Australian Government's JobMaker program (with its targeted support for the employment of people aged under 35) will exacerbate the disadvantage of older women looking for work. It is critical that there are strategies to support older women to find pathways back to work.

Focussing on employment for older people will reap benefits for South Australia well beyond wellbeing outcomes, with research showing that a 5% increase in the workforce participation of people over 55 would add \$48 billion dollars to the Australian economy[14].

This can be achieved in two-ways; through the retention of older workers in the workforce and by supporting older South Australians to re-enter the workforce after a period of leave. Fundamental to achieving this is to tackle age discrimination in the workplace[15] and to facilitate proactive access to reskilling and upskilling.

As part of a broader, multi-faceted anti-ageism campaign, the incoming State Government must make ageism in employment an early and urgent priority, particularly for older women.

The confluence of a shortage of a workforce across many regional South Australian areas, including in health and aged care, and an interest among some older people to move to regional areas provides an outstanding opportunity for the incoming State Government to fund a pilot project in regional South Australia to create proactive opportunities for mature employment. This project should also investigate the work required to support the upskilling, reskilling and workplace flexibility to sustain these employment opportunities for older people.

- [9] humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRI_AHRC_EmployingOlderWorkers_Report_2018.pdf
- [10] theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/apr/20/age-discrimination-older-australian-workers-viewed-as-slow-to-learn
- [11] nationalseniors.com.au/news/latest/older-australians-pushed-into-poverty-by-newstart
- [12] abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release
- [13] thesenior.com.au/story/6844241/no-job-no-money-no-hope-financial-disaster-ahead-for-australian-seniors/
- [14] humanrights.gov.au/our-work/7-economic-and-social-costs-employment-discrimination-against-older-australians
- [15] 7 Economic and social costs of employment discrimination against older Australians | Australian Human Rights Commission

Recommendation 7

That the incoming State Government funds a pilot project in regional South Australia to engage older workers and employers to trial new opportunities for mature employment and enterprise in country areas. This project should also investigate the work required to support upskilling, reskilling and workplace flexibility to create proactive employment opportunities for older people with a focus on older women.



PRIORITIES

Housing

Preventing homelessness for older people

Older people are the fastest growing cohort for housing stress, increasing at a rate of about 8% per annum. The situation is compounded by ageism, poor health and long periods of underemployment prior to age pension eligibility. Single older women^[16] are increasingly at risk of homelessness as a result of a lifetime of discrimination, lower wages and minimal superannuation, and this problem is escalating^[17]. LGBTI elders advise that access to housing as they age puts them at particular risk of homelessness^[18].

Housing is something of a perfect storm in 2021. Secure housing is central to ageing well but a variety of factors mean that it is rapidly moving out of reach for an increasing number of older people on low incomes.

While the majority of older people (55+) own their own dwelling, the rate of older households (55+) still paying off a mortgage has tripled between 1995-96 and 2015-2016, going from 7% to 21%^[19]. Rates of home ownership by people entering retirement are dropping rapidly, undermining wellbeing in later life^[20].

As home ownership and access to public housing decreases, an increasing number (7% currently) of older South Australians will rely upon private rental housing^[21]. Private rental housing is less and less viable as people age because of issues relating to affordability, accessibility, stability of tenure and access to amenities.

For older South Australians on a low income, access to public and social housing is their only affordable and stable option. However with greater

demand than supply for public housing and its priority for people in crisis, many older people are at increasing and real risk of homelessness. As many as 10,000 South Australians aged over 65 are already in “housing stress”, paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs, restricting spending on essentials such as food and health^[22]. With borrowers who deferred mortgage payments during 2020 now needing to resume, we anticipate that older people will be among those who will have difficulty servicing a mortgage.

Federal housing policy is having a cruel impact on older South Australians including as the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) concludes in 2026^[23] and funding for the Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) program only secure until mid-2022. Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to assist older people to access and afford private rental properties is in desperate need of an increase to overcome the barriers associated with private rental housing.

Older South Australians consistently tell us that finding housing that is affordable, appropriate and accessible is difficult, particularly if income is low and fixed^[24] ^[25]. During our Country Listening Posts, we met many older people whose move to a regional area was prompted by the need to find stable and affordable housing. While rents were often lower, many encountered new issues relating to isolation and support.

Clear targets for new housing are needed. Disadvantaged older South Australians must be identified as a priority group for increased public and social housing.

We also need a specialised service for older people that provides support, advocacy and pathways to ongoing housing. Secure housing transforms lives. COTA SA urges the incoming State Government to intervene with older people who are experiencing housing stress well before the threat of homelessness looms. The evidence is clear that if we support older people with appropriate housing solutions early, we only need to serve them once

and we will not need to continue supporting the range of other issues that are associated with unstable, inaccessible, unaffordable and disconnected housing[26].

[16] oldertenants.org.au/publications/finding-suitable-home-older-people-risk-homelessness-south-australia

[17] indaily.com.au/opinion/2018/06/22/older-single-sa-women-facing-homelessness-and-housing-stress/

[18] LGBTIQ People Ageing Well Final Report July 2018, COTA SA and SARAA, pp 15

[19] South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025, pp 28.

[20] theconversation.com/fall-in-ageing-australians-home-ownership-rates-looms-as-seismic-shock-for-housing-policy-120651

[21] South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025, SA Government, 2020, pp 10

[22] ahuri.edu.au/research/ahuri-briefs/3040-indicator

[23] dss.gov.au/housing-support-programs-services-housing-national-rental-affordability-scheme/about-the-national-rental-affordability-scheme-nras

[24] cotasa.org.au/policy/equal_citizens/housing.aspx

[25] cota.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/COTA-State-of-the-Older-Nation-Report-2018-FINAL-Online.pdf

[26] Evaluation of the Housing at Last program, HAAG

Recommendation 8

That the incoming State Government increases the quantity of public and social housing available for older people by at least 100 homes per year.

Recommendation 9

That the incoming State Government uses age as a criterion of priority for housing for disadvantaged older people.

Recommendation 10

That the incoming State Government establishes a specialised advocacy and housing service that assists vulnerable older people living in housing stress to secure ongoing accommodation.



PRIORITIES

Health & Wellbeing

Supporting older people to be healthy and well

Health is a high priority for older South Australians. There is growing awareness among older people that they need to take direct action to promote their wellbeing through a range of physical activity and good health initiatives. Such activities not only have a positive impact on wellness, they also provide opportunities to connect with others in their communities, decreasing social isolation. Just as important is access to timely and quality health and care services to receive the advice, care and treatment they need to address their health concerns and prolong their wellbeing.

Continuing COTA SA's Strength for Life program

Strength For Life is COTA SA's own participant-centred, progressive strength training program that enables older people to be physically active, remain independent, reduces the risk of falling and broadens social connections. Established in 2004, Strength for Life is a proven, evidence-based strength, balance and cardiovascular training designed for older participants and is informed through research partnerships with universities and industry peak bodies, and co-designed with older people.

Almost 20,000 older South Australians have benefited from attending a Strength for Life session, currently offered at more than 100 locations across the State with providers ranging from grassroots community groups to multi-site gyms and fitness centres. Diversifying the Strength for Life program, through more providers delivering in languages other than English, including with culturally appropriate adjusted programs, and across regional areas, will increase its reach to more older people.

During the pandemic, we provided an adjusted program content online, free of charge, to around 10,000 people. We aspire to an expanded online program that can help even more older people build their strength and fitness, even when they are house-bound, or live in regional and remote areas not served by a Strength for Life provider.



Funding support for the current program finishes in June 2022.

As South Australia's ageing population continues to grow and diversify, so does the need to adequately promote and resource the Strength for Life program, to ensure that it can continue to be accessible and affordable and benefit all South Australians over 50 whatever their background, and wherever they live. Strength for Life requires annual funding support to:

- » Continue to expand participation in the Strength for Life program, including into regional and low SEIFA communities
Cost \$120,000 per annum
- » Dedicate essential resources to partner with First Nations and CALD communities to increase participation in Strength for Life and provide tailored program delivery solutions
Cost \$120,000 per annum
- » Establish Strength for Life Online, offering online classes, training and resources for participants and providers.
Cost - \$50,000 per annum



Recommendation 11

That the incoming State Government provides funding to enable the Strength for Life program to continue to meet the needs of older South Australians including in regional and low-SEIFA areas, with dedicated funding to develop a next generation model targeting CALD and First Nation Elders and the roll out of online access for isolated and regional South Australians.

Estimated cost \$290,000 per annum.

Ambulance, ramping and hospital presentations

Older people are significant and growing users of acute health services. In Australia in 2016–17, 42% of hospital discharges and 48% of patient days were for people aged 65 and over. In the four years leading up to 2016-17, hospital separations for people aged 65 -74 increased by an average of 6% per year, faster than the rate of population growth for this age group[27]. In 2017-18, almost half of potentially preventable admissions to hospital involved older people[28].

Older people—whether living in their own home or in an aged care home—perceive that they are disproportionately ramped or queued in emergency departments. COTA SA has attempted to obtain data on ramping rates for older people for over 10 months in 2021 to no avail. While some ramping relates to hospital capacity, services that might better suit the circumstances of many older people who present to emergency departments are underdeveloped. Initiatives such as My Home Hospital, Extended Care Paramedics and Priority Care Centres are still in pilot mode; are not yet widely available; or get lost in the complex array of federal and state government trials. Given the prevalence of older people captured by hospital data, and the feedback we get about people wanting better control of their own health and patient journeys, we urge:

- » co-design and acceleration of the roll out of health services that avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and emergency department presentations
- » more emphasis on self-management and peer processes that will substantially reduce the cost of managing patients with long term health conditions[29]

- » increased transparency and availability of reporting relating to outcomes for older people using ambulance services and presenting to emergency departments.

With respect to ambulance transport, South Australia continues to be the only jurisdiction that does not provide free ambulance travel for people in receipt of a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. Given the increasing role that our ambulance service plays in the provision of health service in South Australia—including in triage and primary care—it is critical that this anomaly is addressed as a matter of urgency. Providing free ambulance services to South Australian holders of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card would remove the cost barrier for older people to access this vital, first response public health service.

[27] aihw.gov.au/reports/hospitals/ahs-2016-17-admitted-patient-care/contents/summary

[28] Disparities in potentially preventable hospitalisations across Australia: Exploring the data, Potentially preventable hospitalisations condition descriptions - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

[29] The Business Case for People Powered Health, Nesta, UK, April 2013



Recommendation 12

That the incoming State Government prioritises and accelerates strategies to improve health outcomes and measures to reduce ambulance ramping for older people.

Recommendation 13

That the incoming State Government makes ambulance travel free for all Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders.

Oral Health Care

Poor oral health has significant “knock on” effects that contribute to other health issues such as heart disease, poor nutrition, isolation and depression. While COTA SA contributed to the development of the South Australian Oral Health Plan 2019-2026, we have not seen concrete steps to reduce waiting lists and improve the oral health of older people. Frail older people were identified as a special interest group but measures to address periodontal disease as a common cause of preventable hospital admissions in South Australia

have not been funded, nor resources allocated[30]. Indeed, the waiting period for public dental services in Adelaide continues to be at least 18 months—and more in country areas. Older people cite cost as the major barrier to accessing private dental services. It is imperative that the incoming State Government work with the Australian Government to reduce waiting times for public dental services for older people who receive the Age Pension and focus on oral health within residential aged care.

[30] sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/6513697c-c216-417e-be20-3ee3fa1ebcd5/SOHP+Consultation+Paper+-+May+2018+-+FINAL.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-6513697c-c216-417e-be20-3ee3fa1ebcd5-mxUNmJ



Recommendation 14

That the incoming State Government, with the Australian Government, addresses access to oral health care services for older South Australians, with an absolute priority on older people on low incomes.

PRIORITIES

Social Inclusion

Connecting older people to their community

In the wake of the COVID-19 restrictions, COTA SA connected with older South Australians who live alone, including many with little or no internet access. People experienced severe disruption of their regular volunteering, pastimes and involvements which affected their wellbeing. While many people have resumed or changed their activities (including to online), for others opportunities have permanently disappeared or have moved online and out of reach.

COTA SA fully supports work currently being undertaken to understand the risks and remedies for social isolation and loneliness among older people.

Interventions must be combined with programs and services that remove the barriers to maintaining social connections such as access and use of technology, transport services and support to navigate life transitions.

Supporting LGBTI elders through COTA SA's Rainbow Hub

LGBTI elders are more likely to live alone, less likely to have children and will rely more on peers for care and support. It is acknowledged that LGBTI elders experience an additional layer of disadvantage than older persons in general, and continue to experience or fear prejudice from their peers, communities and professional services. Some share experiences of violence, bullying and criminalisation. As a result they face significant isolation and discrimination, severely impacting their wellbeing and feeling of belonging^[31].

The COTA SA Rainbow Hub, established in 2018, has created a “place” and a community for LGBTI elders to be represented, seek support and have a voice in policy and service directions. It offers a range of programs and services to connect LGBTI

elders to their communities and foster a sense of belonging and support.

The Rainbow Hub is vulnerable because it does not have a dedicated and ongoing source of funding. Adequate base funding would support the growing Rainbow Hub community and allow it to extend its reach beyond the metropolitan area into regional South Australia. Importantly, securing a source of regular funding will give certainty to the LGBTI elder community that they have somewhere to go for support, advice and social connection.

The Rainbow Hub Program requires secure funding to guarantee the future of this important initiative and to develop the Rainbow Hub's expansion into regional South Australia.

[31] LGBTIQ People Ageing Well Final Report July 2018, COTA SA and SARAA, pp13

Recommendation 15

That the incoming State Government funds the COTA SA Rainbow Hub to safeguard its current footprint and expand its reach to LGBTI elders living outside metropolitan Adelaide.

Estimated cost \$140,000 per annum.

Transport and Mobility

Adequate transport in both the metropolitan area and in regional South Australia is fundamental to ageing well. It enables older people to be active in their communities and to maintain purposeful and independent lives that are connected to family, friends, services and interests.

When public transport works well, it is a valued alternative to driving and allows people to participate as active citizens. For many people in metropolitan areas, the bus service is their lifeline. A range of factors in recent years have undermined the confidence of older people to use public transport including digitisation of timetables, ticketing and information, reducing the number of bus stops and removing printed timetables at bus stops.

In the metropolitan area, the South Australia Seniors Card is a significant support for older people using public transport and is “critical for seniors’ wellbeing”. Public and community transport are crucial alternatives for older people who want to reduce or stop driving and to encourage increased take-up, restrictions on free travel before 9am and after 3pm on weekdays public transport should be lifted.

With an ageing population profile, the South Australia Public Transport Authority has a

responsibility to involve older people in planning for future public transport directions including information provision, services, how-to guides and infrastructure. Community education for potential older users, including through trained volunteer peer educators, also offers a rich opportunity to build patronage of public transport by older people.

As a growing cohort, the safety of older people as road users—irrespective of whether they are drivers, cyclists, pedestrians or passengers—must be prioritised by the government. Both fatalities and serious injuries have increased among road users aged 70+ and research suggests that, with information and education, older people self-regulate their road use.

The defunding of the Moving Right Along program in 2019 directed older people seeking road safety education to SAPOL despite feedback that older people concerned about driving were unlikely to seek help from the police. COTA SA has consistently argued for targeted road safety messaging and education for older road users and we urge that a comprehensive campaign that targets older road users is necessary, through organisations like the RAA and COTA SA rather than SAPOL.

Recommendation 16

That the incoming State Government funds the extension of transport concessions beyond off-peak times.

Recommendation 17

That the incoming State Government reviews transport options in regional South Australia as part of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy.

Recommendation 18

That the incoming State Government reinvests in COTA SA to provide peer to peer road safety awareness and education initiatives for older people.

Estimated cost \$150,00 per annum

CLIMATE IN ALL

In response to feedback from older people following the 2019-20 bushfires, COTA SA set up a Climate Change Group to explore the views of older South Australians about climate change. In 2020, we conducted a survey on climate change, released a statement of interest^[32] and arranged a webinar jointly with the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) headlined by Dr John Hewson AM^[33].

Our research with older South Australians indicates a deep commitment to reduce the impact of climate change on future generations. There is also concern about the effect of climate change on the health of vulnerable groups including older people, fall out on the cost of electricity for older people in rental accommodation, an inadequate public and community transport system and the ongoing loss of tree canopy in our suburbs and towns.

Without proceeding to specific recommendations, COTA SA urges that the incoming State Government takes a “climate in all” approach to the development and implementation of all policy and funding.

[32] <https://www.cotasa.org.au/policy/climate-change.aspx>

[33] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjE_FIM0tho&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=COTASA



COTA SA

PO BOX 7024, Hutt St SA 5000
Level 1/85 Hutt St, Adelaide SA 5000
Ph: (08) 8232 0422 | Free call: 1800 182 324
Email: cotasa@cotasa.org.au
www.cotasa.org.au

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