

COTA AUSTRALIA POLICY ALERT

April 2012 No. 7



GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY PANEL ON THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF SENIOR AUSTRALIANS

The Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians presented its final report to the Treasurer on Monday 12 December 2011.

That report made 36 recommendations across seven key areas of activity:

- An ageing agenda (Recommendations 1-5)
- Housing (Recommendations 6- 12)
- Workforce participation (Recommendations 13- 19)
- Lifelong learning (Recommendations 20- 23)
- Active aging (Recommendations 24-29)
- Volunteering and philanthropy (Recommendations 30-32)
- Age discrimination (Recommendations 33-36).

The Government's response to these recommendations was released on Wednesday 18 April 2012.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The responses fall into three categories:

1. actions already taken that address some of the recommendations
2. a package of new or expanded initiatives that announced in the response to the Panel, and
3. areas that are flagged as needing more consideration by the expanded Advisory Panel

The last category also includes those areas that the Government thinks are adequately covered by existing programs and mechanisms.

Actions already taken

- Appointment of Mark Butler as Cabinet Minister for Ageing (R1)
- Strategic review of NHMRC underway including work on an ageing well research agenda (R4)
- Appointment of Brendan O'Connor as Cabinet Minister for Housing and Homelessness (R6)
- Establishment of Liveable Housing Australia and Liveable Housing Design Initiative (R8)
- "Workability and Ageing in APS" project is underway and age diversity reporting is in APS Statistical Bulletin (R14)
- Safework Australia working with all stakeholders to review age limits on workers compensation (R18)
- New Practice Nurse Incentive Program from 1 January 2012 supports expanded and enhanced role for nurses working in general practice (R29)
- Insurance Reform Advisory Group has been established by Minister for Financial Services which is looking at travel and income protection insurance for older Australians (R30 and 31)

For further information please contact:

Ian Yates AM Chief Executive

Pat Sparrow Director, Aged Care Reform Engagement

iyates@cotaaustralia.org.au

psparrow@cotaaustralia.org.au

ph 08 8232 0422

ph 03 9655 2127

- ALRC Inquiry into barriers to mature age participation commenced 31 March 2012 to report by March 2013 (R33)
- Consolidation of Anti-Discrimination legislation is underway with draft legislation expected in mid 2012 (R34)

New and expanded initiatives

- Develop a 10 year Action Plan on Positive Ageing with a dedicated website (R1, 5 and 24)
- Establish a new and expanded Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing to run for two years to help drive the ageing agenda (R2)
- Provide an additional \$15.6m to expand the Corporate Champions initiative to include national seminars and produce educational materials for employers and mature aged workers (R13 and 17)
- Provide a \$1,000 jobs bonus for employers who employ and retain mature aged workers over 50 years (R13 and 17)
- Establish the Productive Ageing through Community Education grants (R20)
- Develop the Investing in Experience program building on the More Help for Mature Aged Workers initiative (R16 and 23)
- Government to review laws providing liability protection for volunteers (R30)
- Additional \$2.5 m for Age Discrimination Commissioner to undertake research on ageism (R35 and 36)

More consideration/already addressed

- Already scope for collaboration through COAG on positive ageing. Advisory Panel to advise on future opportunities (R3).
- Minister for Housing in collaboration with the Advisory Panel will work with State and Territory Housing Ministers on housing issues for older people (R7 and 10).
- Advisory Panel to look at future development in NRAS and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (R9).
- HACC Program reforms underway which could include home modifications (R12).
- Discussions are underway on expanding flexible working arrangements under Fair Work Act to include people over 55 who are caring for older people, people with a long term disability, or children under 16 (R15).
- Government still considering recommendations from Australia's Future Tax System review around income support payments and retirement incomes. (R17 and 19).
- National Urban Policy already looking at challenges of an ageing population. Advisory Panel to monitor progress (R25).

- ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing research already exists and can feed into work of Advisory Panel (R26).
- Australian National Preventive Health Agency takes a lifespan approach and so actions include needs of older people. Advisory Panel will liaise with the Agency on future development (R27)
- Government considering a re-ablement approach in its Aged Care Reforms (R28)
- The Government is considering dental services in 2012-13 Budget context (R29)
- Advisory Panel to provide advice on better promotion of philanthropy (R32)

COTA COMMENTS

COTA supported the package of recommendations in the Advisory Panel's Final Report and welcomes this package as the first stage in its development of a comprehensive Positive Ageing plan.

The extension and expansion of the Advisory Panel and its key role in helping to shape the proposed 10 year Plan on Positive Ageing is welcome. COTA is hopeful that it will be included on the new Advisory Panel and will use the COTA network and membership to help pursue the Panel's mandate to consult broadly on issue of importance to older people.

The 10 year Positive Ageing Plan is the most important aspect of this package as it provides an opportunity to develop a comprehensive approach across all aspects of economic and social life to ensure older people are able to participate fully as citizens and members of society. The implementation and monitoring of initiatives will be critical to the success of such a Plan and COTA will be advocating that the Office of an Ageing Australia is properly resourced to undertake this task.

The additional funding for the Age Discrimination Commissioner to start to combat ageism is something COTA has advocated for some time. Without a change in community attitudes the other initiatives are less likely to have long term success.

The employment initiatives are welcome and our expectation is that if they are seen to work, further investment will be made in this area. In addition we would like to see more intensive support for longer term unemployed older people as has been trialled with some other special groups with very positive results.

The COTA National Policy Forum in May is on promoting wellbeing and this will provide a launching pad for a broader discussion about how we can promote Active Ageing that we can take forward into further discussions with the Government and other key stakeholders.