

Conference Outcomes and Actions

During the morning sessions, participants spoke about their experiences of what had worked well when taking action on the issues that matter to them. These included;

- Aiming to understand the foundation of people's needs and listening to other points of view.
- Connecting and building networks.
- Getting group agreement on an issue and on the best course of action.
- Connecting with those in power, including those in Local, State and Federal Government.
- Persistence and patience.
- Gathering as much knowledge as possible to support an issue.
- Raising awareness through various types of media.
- Focusing on one or two issues at a time.

Participants then talked about what had been the barriers to effective advocacy.

- Lack of information – where to go, who to talk to, what are the legal issues, what resources are available, what process to follow?
- Bureaucracy /red tape.
- Lack of funds.
- Language barriers.
- Communication technology.
- Assumptions about older people - being judged, being talked down to.
- Apathy - 'nothing ever changes.'
- Fear of being judged for speaking out.

Working in groups, participants came up with ideas on how they can advocate more effectively in the current environment.

- Form a group of likeminded people.
- Work as a team and use everyone's strengths, skills and knowledge.
- Become involved locally.
- Contact your local MP.
- Gather information and become better informed.
- Speak up.
- Use social media to get your message out.

- Use of other forms of media – radio, posters, newspapers.
- Become a member of COTA.
- Work with younger people to advocate.

During the afternoon, participants formed specialist groups and developed advocacy action plans on issues that were important to them. The sixteen issues identified for action were as follows;

1. Self-empowerment for older people and combating disempowerment.
2. Increasing ethnic group membership and connection with COTA.
3. Access to residential services for people on a low income.
4. Increase Green Sages membership for increased sustainability.
5. Dental health – making it more accessible to people on low incomes.
6. Improving mobility by improving infrastructure, public transport and activity programs.
7. Reaching socially isolated older people.
8. Taking direct action on pensions during the Seniors Festival.
9. Building a network of older people's reference groups.
10. Staff crisis in residential aged care.
11. Homelessness of older people.
12. Healthy minds, healthy brains, healthy people.
13. Grandparents and older people – impact of change in families and caring responsibilities and sandwich generation.
14. Safe access to public transport for people with disabilities.
15. Safety of vulnerable people at risk of injury by Police in the course of their actions.
16. Environmental Sustainability in retirement villages.

Groups decided what they wanted to achieve for their action item in the short and long term and identified the opportunities, resources and networks that could help them.