



COTA Victoria Annual Report 2013 – 2014

www.cotavic.org.au

President's and CEO's Report

The year was one of consolidation and renewed commitment to engaging with rural communities with COTA events held in major country centres and reaching out to those we have not engaged with for a while, including older prisoners and newly-arrived refugees and migrants.

All of COTA's work is focused on creating age friendly communities and this reaches into every aspect of our extensive program. COTA Victoria has worked with our peer facilitators to connect with many seniors' organisations, local councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to bring about an age friendly Victoria.

We are known for our Peer Education work, with some 17 topics in our education offerings. We developed a new area of interest that has received great interest in the "Dying to Know sessions". Our physical activity programs have again had a successful year; Living Longer Living Stronger endorses 120 partners across the state, COTA Cyclists meet weekly for a ride; Active Ageing Network continues to promote the benefits of exercise as we age

For over 60 years we have provided information to senior Victorians. With changes in technology, our telephone information service continues and we have placed emphasis on the wider use of social media and outreach activities. COTA Facebook and Twitter followers continue to grow. Our series of sessions on demystifying

social media has been of great use to many older Victorians.

In our advocacy work we supported the COTA national agenda and the campaign to safeguard the age pension. Greater effort was put into reaching out to older people so that we understood their issues and concerns and this informed our policy agenda.

We continue to expand our partnership work with governments, community organisations, universities and research bodies doing important work on ageing matters.

Our media presence has expanded to the extent that we are the major spokesperson on issues affecting older people.

We thank our funders and our many partner organisations for ensuring our work continues. Their generosity to us is very much appreciated.



Ian Jungwirth, President



Sue Hendy, CEO

The COTA Victoria Board of Management :

Ian Jungwirth (President)
Lynette Moore (Deputy President)
Gary Henry (Treasurer)
Cathy Mead (Chair, Policy Council)
Robert Barron
Patrick Moore
Regina Perton
Robert Yung
Mike Lescai

We would like to thank the following government and philanthropic organisations for their funding and organisations for their support and partnering of COTA Victoria's work throughout the period covered by this report. Our activities and achievements could not have happened without this significant financial support.

- Beyond Blue
- Department of Health
- Department of Social Services
- Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation
- State Trustees
- Sport and Recreation Victoria
- Southern Memorial Cemeteries Trust
- Victorian Legal Services Board

We would like to thank the following supporters and partners:

- Alzheimers Australia Victoria
- Carers Victoria
- Country Women's Association
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- Epilepsy Victoria
- Fifty Plus News
- Life Activities Clubs Victoria
- The Senior Newspaper
- Golden Days Radio
- Minter Ellisons
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Palliative Care Victoria
- University of the Third Age
- Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission



Volunteers at Government House

COTA volunteers celebrating at Government House during the Senior of the Year Awards.



Minister for Health Volunteer Awards

Basil Theophilos, COTA volunteer with Sally Cockburn alias 3AW's Dr Feelgood who was MC at the Minister for Health Volunteers Awards. Basil received recognition for the many hours he puts in at COTA assisting people with their mobile phones.



Launch of first Working Paper

COTA's Anne Pate, author of the working paper on Social Isolation and its impact on the mental health and wellbeing of older Victorians with Dr Cathy Mead, Chair of COTA Victoria's Policy Council at the launch of the first Working Paper in March 2014.



Valuable work of volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of COTA. Edith Chen, volunteer and peer educator with COTA Victoria CEO Sue Hendy discussing strategies. COTA Victoria has 135 active volunteers engaged in all aspects of COTA's work.

Dying to Talk seminars

Dr Ranjana Srivastava the keynote speaker at the May 2014 seminar on Dying to Talk organised by COTA Victoria and Palliative Care Victoria. This was the first in a series of seminars on death and dying.



Meeting the new Minister in a new government

With the change of Government at the end of 2013, the Ageing portfolio became part of the Department of Social Services. Above left: Sue Hendy, CEO COTA Victoria; Maree McCabe, Victorian CEO Alzheimer's Australia, Hon. Kevin Andrews, Minister for Social Services, and Caroline Mulcahy, CEO Carers Victoria.



Camp COTA

The Archery competition held at CAMP COTA, Falls Creek in May 2014 attended by 24 older people.



Walking the Walk

COTA walkers from left: Sauro Barsanti, Maria Rocca Bonacci, Gino Ianazzo, Nuccia Arena, Vic Guarino at the launch of Senior Victorians and Walking Report, a COTA Project with Victoria Walks.



Participation of Older Victorians

There are a number of ways older Victorians participate in the work of COTA. First there is the significant contribution made by volunteers and second, the involvement of many thousands in COTA programs.

Important role of volunteers

For over 60 years, COTA Victoria has relied on the work of dedicated volunteers and they are the back bone of the organisation. They are our Board and Policy Council members, peer educators and administration who deliver our information and education programs.

This year we had a record 135 active volunteers and they come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them a wealth of skills, knowledge and expertise.

Volunteers work in all our areas such as administration and reception, at Expos and special events and seminars, promotions and communications, as hosts at Need to Know sessions, as presenters with Be Active Your Way programmes throughout the state. They also delivered over 150 talks to a variety of community groups on topics such as *Managing your Medicines*, *Combatting Depression* and *Creating Age Friendly communities*.

Seniors Conference 2014

An important way for older Victorians to participate in COTA Victoria is attendance at the Annual State Conference. This year it was held on April 28 and attended by 150 people from across Victoria. The overall theme was on age friendly communities and the key note international speaker was Grace Chan, Asia/Pacific Regional Vice President of the International Federation on Ageing and Chief Officer of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. Grace gave an illuminating speech on how older people are leading the way in creating age friendly communities.

At the conference, COTA launched a survey to identify major concerns of older Victorians.

An innovation this year was the holding of two workshops in Mandarin and Cantonese for the growing numbers of the Chinese community. The workshops received extensive media coverage in Australia and in China by Chinese television.

Peer education sessions

Peer Educators are trained to present health and well-being topics to groups of older Victorians. This year 30 peer educators presented over 250 presentations to over 6,000 people on the following: *Be Active Your Way*, *Beyond Maturity Blues*, *Age Friendly Victoria*, *Managing Your Medicines*, *Memory*, *Men's Health*, *Positive Ageing and Transitions to Retirement*.

Sessions were delivered in many languages including Arabic, Cambodian, Greek, Italian, Chinese, Polish, Russian and Vietnamese.

Expo volunteers



Seniors Conference volunteers



Fair go for Pensioners

FGFP is a coalition of community-based organisations advocating for social justice for pensioners. COTA Victoria and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria together with retired trade union members established the Coalition in 2008 with the aim of drawing attention to the plight of pensioners who are doing it tough and to lobby for an increase in pensions and concessions.

Sally Stabback a COTA Victoria Policy Council member represents COTA on the FGFP Board as does Brendan O'Dwyer, COTA's Media and Communications person.

This year after the Federal Budget there was much anxiety about proposed changes to the pension and COTA organised a nation-wide campaign, 'Hands Off the Pension' in response to the unprecedented level of feedback COTA received from older people deeply worried about the impact of the Federal Budget on their pensions.

OM:NI

Ten years ago COTA Victoria became aware that there were men living in social isolation so to help combat this, COTA began the men's discussion groups called 'Older Men New Ideas' or OM:NI. There are now 25 groups in Victoria. Men join OM:NI so that they can engage with each other and learn from their experiences. The meetings are informal and the emphasis is on mateship and belonging – all important for health and well-being. OM:NI is staffed entirely by COTA volunteers and is run by men for men.

In 2013, OM:NI won the Minister for Health's Volunteer Award for Outstanding Team Achievement.

Green Sages

COTA Green Sages meet regularly and hold activities to draw attention to the environment and the need for climate change. They are COTA members working for a sustainable and caring community.

Green Sages meet regularly and this year organised a workshop at state conference on alternative sustainable and low cost housing options for older people, organised sessions on alternative housing models with Banyule Housing Cooperative and presented a major event using art and creative writing techniques entitled *The Weather Report*.



Seniors Information Victoria

For over half a century, COTA Victoria has provided an information service with support from the Victorian Government. Thousands of older people have been provided with information. New forms of outreach were pioneered particularly amongst disadvantaged groups.

Highlights

- 11,005 phone call requests. Key issues and concerns were housing, particularly affordable, low cost for pensioners renting in the private market, concessions, eligibility for aged pension, health care and aged care facilities.
- 20 per cent increase in requests through digital media including COTA Facebook, website and COTA CONNECTS e newsletter.

Presentation of:

- 265 *Need to Know* talks, expos and events organised across Victoria to over 6,000 people.
- 100 one on one sessions provided by volunteer Basil Theophilos on a fortnightly basis to assist people with their mobile phones.
- 78 *Beyond maturity blues* sessions on combatting depression provided to seniors groups including Greek, Italian and Chinese groups in their languages.
- 25 Information Sessions throughout the state on how to make your community age friendly.
- 15 *Planning Your Medicines* sessions given by volunteers.
- 10 sessions on *Demystifying Social Media*.

Community outreach development:

- Partnerships with Victorian Aboriginal elders and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD). Work with new arrival groups e.g Sudanese, Somali and Eritrean elders.
- Outreach to older prisoners at Langi Kal Kal and developing a pre-release information kit.
- Special workshops on age friendly communities in Mandarin and Cantonese at the 2014 Seniors Conference.
- Partnerships developed with Country Women's Association, University of the Third Age and Life Activities Clubs to promote COTA Victoria's information service on their websites and in their newsletters.

Living Longer Living Stronger participants



Active Ageing

COTA Victoria works with state and local governments to increase access for older people to local physical activity programs. Partnerships are formed with organisations promoting good health, wellbeing and physical activity for older people.

Highlights

- 95 information sessions on physical activities were provided to 2000 older people in the *Be Active Your Way* program.
- 10,000 older people are enrolled in *Living Longer Living Stronger* programs across the state in 120 venues including leisure centres, YMCAs, Community Health Centres and with personal trainers.
- **COTA CYCLING** has gone from strength to strength and rides are held weekly using Melbourne's network of cycle paths.
- The first **CAMP COTA** was held in Falls Creek with the Australian Camps Association and YMCA and attended by 24 older people. Great results and a prototype for the future.
- **Victoria Walks** with COTA contracted Dr Jan Garrard to study the barriers and enablers for seniors' walking. Over 1200 responses were received. For 77 per cent of older people walking was the most common physical activity. Key barriers were dogs, poorly maintained footpaths, poor lighting and cyclists sharing walking and cycling paths.
- COTA delivered eight training programs for the fitness industry across Victoria raising their level of awareness of health and exercise issues for older people.
- COTA worked with Department of Health to increase awareness of physical activities on the Seniors Online website.



The Victorian Parliament lit purple for World Elder Abuse Day June 15.

Senior Rights Victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria now in its seventh year provides information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and responds to people experiencing elder abuse.

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as family or friends.

Services include a helpline, specialist legal services, short-term support and advocacy for individuals and community and professional development.

Highlights

- Received 2,236 telephone calls on our Helpline, up from 1,835 last year. Of these calls, 1,206 related to issues of elder abuse, with some callers reporting more than one type of abuse.
- Provided 4,423 instances of information, 627 advices (legal and advocacy) and 371 secondary consultations to 220 organisations.
- Commenced strategic litigation in three different jurisdictions.
- Obtained successful outcomes for clients in cases involving misuse of Power of Attorney and failure to repay a loan.
- Delivered 108 community presentations to a total of 3,772 people with an extremely high satisfaction rate. Of the presentations, 28 were to CALD groups with 1,008 attending.
- Delivered 66 professional education presentations to 1,748 people with a reported satisfaction rating of 100 per cent. Of these, five were presentations to CALD organisations.
- Delivered a video seminar on Assets for Care to ten regional locations.
- Worked in partnership with Domestic Violence Victoria to raise awareness of elder abuse in nine regional forums and provided training to the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Centre.
- Led several events for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, including the Human Rights Are Ageless forum.
- Presented at several key forums and conferences, including the National Association of Community Legal Centres and Second International Age Friendly Cities Conference.
- Actively collaborated with more than 40 organisations.
- Held a new men's forum, Legal Matters for Older Fellas which other councils have expressed interest in replicating.
- Partnered with the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria resulting in facilitated discussions for older people considering moving in with family members and exchanging assets for care.
- Developed four new help sheets, as well as pamphlets for the Gunditjmara Aboriginal Health Cooperative and Filipino and Macedonian communities.
- Developed and promoted an Online Toolkit for Service Providers (www.seniorsrights.org.au/toolkit)
- Designed, with Infoxchange, the Elder Abuse Case Conferencing Site (EACCS) which allows Eastern Elder Abuse Network members to collaborate on de-identified elder abuse cases.
- Developed Terms of Reference for the new Seniors Rights Victoria Council, which have been approved by the COTA Board.



COTA Age Friendly Victoria: Creating great places to live.

COTA Victoria was delighted to receive a two year funding grant from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation. With this generous support COTA launched 'COTA Age Friendly Victoria' to enable older people in communities across Victoria to come together to create great places to live.

All of COTA's work is about creating age friendly communities and this reaches into every aspect of our extensive program. COTA Victoria has worked with many seniors organisations, local councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

COTA is using the *World Health Organisation's Global Age Friendly Cities and Rural Communities Guide* where the emphasis is on older people doing the auditing, consulting and reporting on what makes or prevents their community from being age friendly.

In 2002, the World Health Organization released its *Active Ageing Policy Framework* to provide leadership in policy and services to improve the health and wellbeing of older people. Active ageing is 'the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, security and life-long learning in order to enhance quality of life as people age.' This underpins all of COTA's work.

Our age friendly work makes concrete the WHO Active Ageing Policy Framework. It guides local communities to find new ways to engage older people in decision making and in ways to design policies, services and infrastructure while also adapting housing, transport, health services, and recreation to ensure older people can contribute and enjoy a good quality of life.

Through COTA's Age Friendly Victoria initiative, older people are encouraged and supported to be involved in creating communities for all ages.

Communicating our messages

COTA Victoria promotes its work and shares essential information through many media channels – the written word, radio, television and social media.

This year saw a major emphasis on developing the pathways of social media such as Facebook and Twitter more effectively. Training on using social media was provided to staff, volunteers and members as part of this strategy.

People now have the option of being connected to COTA through our website, the popular ONE COTA magazine and our fortnightly e newsletter, COTA CONNECTS as well as our fast growing Twitter and Facebook activities which are updated daily with news about upcoming events, links to news stories and opinion pieces.

An important information vehicle is the specialist media, through radio, online and seniors' newspapers. The major monthly newspapers, Fifty Plus and The Senior continue to showcase COTA. Our policies and views continue to be sought by radio stations and television current affairs programs. There was increased coverage this year by regional media reflecting our activities across Victoria.

The COTA radio program on Melbourne's Golden Days Radio continues to be broadcast each Wednesday and Friday.

This work supports our strong belief that timely and accurate information is important to people in making good decisions.



Janet Wood and David Brant at the conference Twitter table.

COTA Research

COTA Victoria Policy Council held a Research Forum in April, 2014 and explored opportunities for research on ageing issues in partnership with Victorian universities, think tanks and community organisations. Over 40 attendees represented most universities and major non-government agencies with research strengths. This will inform our policy work.

Key research topics were mapped and recommendations for further collaboration were made. Key domains were: respect and social inclusion; presenting positive images of ageing, civic participation and engaging community support.

COTA was seen to have an important role in determining the research agenda, setting the questions that need to be asked and being a co-designer of research.

COTA's local, national and international connections are viewed highly by academics. COTA also has a pre-eminent role in the recruitment of research participants and researchers described their difficulty in sourcing participants particularly from non-English speaking backgrounds and those living in vulnerable circumstances.

COTA Victoria was involved with a number of research projects:

- *Norma's Project – Preventing Sexual Assault of Older Women*, Australian Research Centre, La Trobe University
- *The Skin Health project* with the Royal District Nursing Service Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health.
- *Interpreting mood through physical activity project*, National Ageing Research Institute
- *WISE Medicines Care Project*, Austin Health and Monash University
- *Older LGBTI Peoples' experience of depression*, NARI
- *Epilepsy in Older Life*, Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria

COTA Victoria provided input into policy submissions at the State and Commonwealth level including:

- *The Victorian State Budget*
- *Accessible Public Transport Action Plan 2013-2017*
- *Taxi Industry Inquiry 'Customers First'*
- *Victoria's Road Safety Strategy Directions paper.*

POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Cathy Mead (Chair)

Robert Barron

Janet Wood

Patrick Moore

Terry Seedsman

Ken Parker

Margaret O'Loughlin

Penny Rawlins

David Brant

Sally Stabback

Marion Lau

Randal Harkin

Sheryl McHugh

COTA Vic representation on committees

In 2013-2014 COTA Victoria was proud to represent older people on 11 State Government committees and advisory groups. This ensures input into a wide range of policy areas relevant to older Victorians. Our work with the Consumer Affairs Victoria *Working Together Forum* - responsible for consumer rights around retirement and private rental housing - is a good example, as housing is increasingly cited by older Victorians as an area of concern.

COTA's seat on the 'HACC DAC' (the Departmental Advisory Committee for the Home & Community Care Program), sees us participate in planning around the impending transition of State-based homecare services to the Commonwealth. COTA strongly advocates for the ongoing involvement of consumer representatives in the development and implementation of the new Commonwealth Home Support Program. Other committees include the *Seniors Online Reference Group* and *Statewide Elder Abuse Reference Group*, to name but a few.

COTA is also a partner in 20 'sector alliance' networks. These networks aim to share information and to influence decision-makers on areas of interest, such as utilities. Here, COTA works with VCOSS (Victorian Council of Social Services) on the *Victorian Utilities Group*; with *Consumer Utilities Action Centre Reference Group* and with the *Australian Energy Regulator Consumer Group*, to lobby for fairer outcomes for older energy consumers.

Our participation in such networks informs our policy development, including submissions to government inquiries and any campaigning. It also facilitates the direct participation of COTA volunteers and Policy Council members in the policy sphere and enables us to report outcomes to our members, and to COTA National Policy Council.



Anne Learmonth and Mitsuko Penberthy at Challenging Ageing reunion.

Treasurers Report

On behalf of the Board of Management I have great pleasure in presenting the Treasurer's Report for the financial year ended 30 June 2014.

The final result at 30th June 2014 was a surplus of **\$8,060**. (12-13 surplus \$17,141).

It is pleasing to note that the re-structure and review of COTA Victoria undertaken late in the 12/13 financial year, has had the desired impact and assisted the organisation to achieve this satisfying result. The implementation of the changes and the ongoing review has ensured that COTA was able to adapt and meet the challenges facing it.

The financial pressures facing COTA during the past twelve months have been considerable. This is partly due to projects reaching the end of their contract period. In addition, investment income continues to decline – in part due to low interest rates and the reduced funds available to invest.

What is pleasing however is the reliance on project funding is starting to decline with other sources of revenue now becoming the focus. For example, program fees has increased by 29% and Membership, Commission and Sales income by 26% during this period. The priority over the coming twelve months will be to consolidate and grow this revenue stream further – ensuring that COTA is protected from future instability.

Further cost savings were made during the year with salary costs closely monitored and reduced by 15% and other operational costs by 11%. This is after significant cost savings were made in the 12/13 year.

The following table has been provided to give an overview of the key income and expenditure items of COTA Victoria for the 13/14 year and a comparison with the prior year's results.

The table highlights the result from ordinary activities before depreciation. This shows a surplus of **\$27,000**, a decline on last year's result by \$29,000. The operating result after depreciation is a surplus of **\$8,000** compared to a surplus of \$17,000 last year.

Please refer to the financial statements and notes for a more detailed explanation of the financial position as summarised in the table.

At balance date, COTA's net asset position is \$824,762. In conclusion, these reserves currently provide an adequate safeguard against unexpected or significant future costs or sudden decline in income.

The vision and leadership of both Management and the Board to adapt and realign COTA to the ever changing economic environment over the past two years has ensured that COTA is now both structurally and financially ready to take advantage of new opportunities and to respond to the challenges facing the Sector over the next twelve months.

Thank you as always to the finance team for their commitment and professional approach to the important task of managing the COTA finances.

Gary Henry

Treasurer

Key Results	13/14	12/13	Variance
Income	000's	000's	000's
Grants	2,096	2,518	(422)
Investment Income	59	75	(16)
Program Fees	22	17	5
Membership, Commission & Sales Income	307	244	63
Other Income	27	73	(46)
Total Income	2,511	2,927	(416)
Expenditure			
Staff costs	1,519	1,784	265
Other Operating Costs	965	1,087	122
Total Expenditure	2,484	2,871	387
Total Ordinary Operating profit/(loss) before depreciation	27	56	(29)
Less Depreciation	(19)	(39)	20
Total Operating profit/(loss) inc Depreciation	8	17	(9)



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