

FEEDBACK ON SENIORS CONFERENCE ACTION PROPOSALS JANUARY 2012

INTRODUCTION

Seniors' Conference 2011 is an important part of COTA's policy setting process. This event let people have their say on issues that matter to them. At the conference, there were seventeen sessions generated by everyone. This document summarises the discussion and outcomes from these sessions. COTA Vic's Policy Council has made recommendations based on the *potential policy issues for COTA*.

The following sessions from conference are summarised with recommendations:

1. Working Better with Local Councils: **That COTA supports the issues on housing, local transport and greater involvement in local council processes. There is limited capacity on developing policy priorities in local housing & local transport initiatives. Continue partnership work with COTA Australia on housing.**
2. Discrimination & Digital Technology: **That Policy Council consider whether the place of seniors and equity of access in the National Broadband Network could be a future policy area for 2012-2013 if there was an adequate window of opportunity for this to occur.**
3. Dental Health for Older Australians: **Given the current political context the strategy to seek improvements to the CDM program is not supported. COTA National has a long history of action on dental health. It will continue to lobby for this in the current Budget process. No further action is recommended at this stage. If the program continues we could reconsider these issues for recommendation to COTA Australia.**
4. Elder Financial Abuse: **COTA will monitor the situation once the government has handed down its final report and recommendations are in place in relation to Powers of Attorney & Guardianship. Depending on the extent of these recommendations, this is an area that could warrant future action.**
5. Poverty of Older Women: **COTA supports the issue and has capacity for limited action on the housing initiative. Limited further development could be undertaken to prepare documentation for consideration as a policy priority for 2012/13. COTA has no capacity to take up the issues of federal/state funding for local initiatives but will refer this to work on Age Friendly initiatives and continue to partner with other organisations.**
6. Aged Pension: **Great idea – support *Hop On Board* event. No further actions on superannuation or work cover at this stage.**
7. Long Term Accommodation: **No new policy action. COTA Vic to continue to monitor issues that can be fed to COTA Aust. in terms of housing and people ageing with a disability**

Long Term Accommodation Analysis of Seniors Conference

Action proposals

What is the issue?

Accessible and affordable long-term accommodation for ageing population specifically people with physical disabilities who have no mental impairment and those with Acquired Brain Injury.

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

Three issues are canvassed here: accessible & affordable accommodation with care services; disabilities; aged care. They are interrelated.

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Housing continues to be a high policy priority in COTA and is consistent with redressing disadvantage and discrimination.

Current priorities/capacities,

Housing is a key item in COTA's state and national budget recommendations. A recent submission to Family and Community Development Committee (2010); and COTA's input at national and state levels into the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, released its second report 2 November 2011 in which housing is a key priority. COTA maintains that its most effective strategy on housing is to work with COTA national and other state organisations that have housing as their priority such as AHURI & HAAG.

Consumer Directed Care and an increase in aged care packages to provide higher levels of care in a person's own home are priority issues at national and state level

However the issue of housing and people ageing with disabilities becomes more complicated. Once a person turns 65 they shift from disabilities to the aged care sector. There are issues between how people are treated within these sectors. For this issue, it is prudent that COTA Vic work closely with COTA Aust as it is a national issue that will effect any change at the Commonwealth level. Local issues in this area are addressed through National Policy.

Future potential etc

It is important that COTA Vic work with COTA Aust to identify good models of retirement housing options to promote nationally. This is especially relevant to good practice in aged care accommodation in which a holistic approach is taken for residential units & services.

It was suggested to create a database to see what is available for residential care. Data Bases already exist for residential care – DPS, SIV etc

Recommendations to Policy Council

No new policy action. COTA Vic to continue to monitor issues that can be fed to COTA Aust. in terms of housing and people ageing with a disability.

Poverty of Older Women: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action Proposals

What is the issue?

Poverty of Older Women (particular focus on women aged 70-80 leaving marriages with few/no assets)

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

1. Increased social/public housing
2. Grants/loans to enable re-location of women leaving households
3. Federal/state funding for local initiatives organised through local government to focus on education/information for empowerment
4. Volunteer recognition and re-imburement of costs

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles/

Proposals 1 & 4 (above) are consistent with principle as and are existing policy
2 & 3 are compatible with policy principles and require further policy development

Current priorities/

Housing is a recurrent interest of Policy Council –this would be a new area for policy development that focuses on a specific sub-group/need within more general housing activities. In last few years most of COTA housing work has been through membership of broader initiatives and with COTA Australia

In the 2011-2012 federal budget submission COTA Australia states that: Housing is becoming a critical issue and needs a comprehensive national approach that addresses the need for an increase in the supply of affordable and appropriate housing for older people.

Funding to local government for local initiatives – has been part of the MAV/COTA Positive Ageing project – nothing specific on this issues

Capacities

Limited action on housing possible

- Raise idea as part of our contribution to existing alliances
- Policy council/Unit watching brief people do preliminary research on scope/current activity other organisations and/or new partnerships e.g. Salvation Army is working on this issue

The issue of the need for local action could be included in our Age Friendly work without further policy work.

Future potential

Adoption older women and poverty as a priority proactive issue for 2012/13 as stand alone issue or include housing aspects as part of a housing priority

Other

The Salvation Army has released research on the needs of older women and housing

http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/salvwr/assets/main/lib90185/no_home_at_the_end_of_the_road_2011.pdf

Recommendations to Policy Council

COTA supports the issue and has capacity for limited action on the housing initiative. Limited further development could be undertaken to prepare documentation for consideration as a policy priority for 2012/13

COTA has no capacity to take up the issues of federal/state funding for local initiatives but will refer this to work on Age Friendly initiatives and continue to partner with other organisations on

Creativity & Campaigning: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action Proposals

What is the issue?

Creating Change through expressing your own creativity

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

To encourage others to express their creativity in campaign activities.

How does it relate to COTA policy principles?

Promoting positive views of ageing.

Recommendations decisions includes

Great idea

There are no new policy implications. It is important to recognise and encourage the diverse skills of people running campaigns. Allowing outlets for creative ways of contributing is vital to the group. This important idea would be spread through all of COTA's programs and encouraged through modelling such activity in campaigns.

Dental Health for Older Australians: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

Dental Health for Older Australians & Medicare Funding

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

Improved funding of, and information about Medicare funding available for dental services as part of the Chronic Disease Management Program (CDM).

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Consistent with policy principles. Dental Health has been a long standing national COTA policy on Medicare funding for comprehensive dental scheme

Current priorities/capacities

Dental issues included in COTA's National Budget submission for 2012/13

Future potential

Other

The Federal Government has decided to stop funding this program at the end of 2011 because it regards it as too expensive and poorly targeted. It sought to repeal the program completely so that it could fund its alternative policy of increased funding for public dental services. The parliament has refused to pass this legislation on a number of occasions. The Greens negotiated an expert advisory committee as part of its agreement to support the Labour Government. This committee will report by December 2011 and may recommend retaining the program but with tighter means testing or tighter targeting. Labor rejected a proposal from National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission for a \$4 billion Denticare scheme funded by a 0.75 per cent increase in the Medicare levy, but is expected to offer an alternative in the next budget under the Greens deal.

Recommendations to Policy Council

Given the current political context the strategy to seek improvements to the CDM program is not supported.

COTA National has a long history of action on dental health. It will continue to lobby for this in the current Budget process. No further action is recommended at this stage. If the program continues we could reconsider these issues for recommendation to COTA Australia.

Discrimination & Digital Technology: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

Discrimination effected by the age of technology: seniors at risk of and discriminated by digital technology.

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

1. **Advocate and promote:** local & state governments' implementation of on-going funding to resource and educate from utterly basic instruction for familiarity & security awareness for senior citizens or access to computer instruction.
2. Advocate through media: while 'the system' gives us encouragement & the chance to catch-up without discriminating/penalising older Australians we need to bridge the gap.

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

The issue of equity of access to internet and cyber safety for seniors has been acknowledged and taken up by COTA Vic and COTA National for over a decade.

Current priorities

Computer education has been an initiative of COTA in the late 1990s. At present COTA has undertaken preliminary research on seniors' use of computers at the recent Seniors Festival 2011. COTA Vic is working with COTA Australia to keep senior's access and equity issues uppermost in the National Broadband Network.

Future potential

In terms of the place of seniors and equity of access in the National Broadband Network, this could be a future policy area for 2012-2013.

There is scope for further research into barriers to seniors' access to the internet and getting online. This research would best be taken up by COTA in partnership with other seniors' peak agencies and tertiary research

The issue of the need for action at local government levels to provide online equity of access has been largely addressed through the Commonwealth government's scheme described below.

Other information

There is a nationally funded government program directed at getting more seniors on line. The Australian Government has committed \$15 million over three years (2008-2011) for the provision of 2000 internet kiosks to organisations that support seniors and want to host a Broadband for Seniors Kiosk and participate in this project. The project provides seniors with free access to Broadband for Seniors Kiosks, help them gain confidence using

computer technology, and to build community participation and social inclusion amongst older Australians.

See <http://www.necseniors.net.au/>

Recommendations

Policy Council to consider whether the place of seniors and equity of access in the National Broadband Network could be a future policy area for 2012-2013 if there was an adequate window of opportunity for this to occur.

Elder Financial Abuse: Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

Elder Financial Abuse:

The use of Professionals rather than families as Power of Attorney
Access to and use of “Elder Law” specialist solicitors when possible

What’s proposed in terms of this issue?

1. Publicise availability of Public Trustee and Guardianship and promote the use of professionals rather than families as POA
2. The statement of the power of attorney must include criteria which protect the senior: there are too many holes in current
3. Seniors need protection through good policies and reliable support (financial, legal, mental) as they become weaker physically, in memory and mentally.

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Overall, Financial Abuse fits with COTA’s current policy priorities on Elder Abuse of Human Rights. This work is mainly conducted through SRV.

Proposal 1 above is consistent with SIV & SRV as an information gateway however COTA’s position is to **not** recommend professionals over families. COTA recognises that there have been problems with some state appointed persons. Instead, COTA advises on using a trusted person. This appointment is dependent on a case-by-case situation and is more determined by whether a potential appointee, the trusted person, knows intimately the person whom they would represent.

Proposals 2 & 3 have been prioritised in a COTA submission POA (2008) & Guardianship & Administration (2010). COTA Vic has completed a recent submission to the Vic Law Reform Commission (2010). It is expected that recommendations will be released by government late December 2011.

Current priorities/capacities

COTA will continue to build its awareness raising activities on Elder Financial Abuse through Senior Rights Victoria (SRV)’s community education campaign and specialist support services.

Future potential

At this point, it is not prudent to collect new information on potential gaps and holes in policies. Depending on the recommendations from government, these policies on POA and Guardianship may change. COTA will monitor this situation once the government has released its final report and changes to current legislation are in place.

Other

At present, all calls received by Seniors Information Victoria about potential financial abuse would get a referral depending on the situation. For example, if the call was in connection with a person in a position of trust (i.e. family member or friend, then an appointment with SRV would be organised. If it

was a matter connected to a consumer issue, the caller would be referred to CALC Consumer Action legal Centre. If it was about a nursing home issue, then ERA Elder Rights Advocacy; if a Power of Attorney issue then Office of the Public Advocate.

If SIV receives calls related to suspected abuse, including financial, they refer onto SRV. SRV must have the person who is subject to abuse come in for an interview. SRV have their own solicitors that are specialists in elder law. There is limited access to current listings of elder law specialists and referral process to these lawyers through LIV (Law Institute Victoria).

Recommendations to Policy Council

COTA will monitor the situation once the government has handed down its final report and recommendations are in place in relation to Powers of Attorney & Guardianship. Depending on the extent of these recommendations, this is an area that could warrant future action.

Employment for Older People

What is the issue?

Employment for older people, insurance, employers' rejection of older workers.

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

Proposals

1. Change laws around overseas pensions. If the Australian Government only pays a top up why do they dictate how much older people can earn when back in the UK pensioners can still work?
2. Amend all other laws that have age limits e.g. superannuation, life insurance.
3. Employers could be given a tax incentive to employ older workers
4. Seek more transition programs from employment to retirement

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Proposal 2: above relates directly to COTA's principles of maximising the economic participation of older Australians, promoting positive views of ageing, redressing disadvantage and discrimination and extending services and programs that are used and valued by older people.

Current priorities/capacities

Employment rights of older people are on the agenda of COTA Australia.

Future potential

Proposals 3 & 4 would need further discussion and development within a broad strategy for increasing participation of older people in the workforce.

Other: Current activities in Australia related to these issues

Superannuation reforms are being taken up by COTA Australia:

Early November, The Federal government tabled major superannuation reforms. This has been warmly welcomed and applauded by COTA Australia, the peak body for older Australians. COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said the lift in the Superannuation Guarantee Levy from 9% to 12% was strongly supported by COTA. The government had committed to lift the maximum age from 70 to 75 years but COTA and other seniors groups argued for the complete abolition of this discriminatory provision.

Age Discrimination

The recently appointed first full time Age Discrimination Commissioner Susan Ryan AO spoke at COTA Vic's 2011 AGM. She highlighted the importance of issues connected to equity with insurance for older people in terms of employment and travel. The Commissioner, **Susan Ryan urged all older people who believe they have been discriminated against in employment settings, among others, to have their situations reviewed by the Commission.**

One of the projects for this commission is exposing the hidden barrier for mature age workers. The commissioner urges older people to have their cases assessed by her department. While there has been a significant rise (66%) in the number of complaints, this is by no means capturing the extent of discrimination that occurs.

See contact details

<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/age/index.html>

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Complaints Infoline:1300 656 419

General enquiries and publications:1300 369 711

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Recommendations to Policy Council

That COTA Vic not start a parallel campaign with respect to proposals on insurance reform and equity employment but feed in to COTA Australia's campaign.

COTA Vic's role can be to encourage more people's stories to be documented and cases to be assessed by the Commission.

Proposals 3 &4 Tax incentives to employers & transition programs to retirement require further discussion to asses whether they are feasible to develop.

Linking with Local Councils: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

Connecting older people with their community locally to address loneliness and isolation through linking with Local Councils.

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

1. Identify and scope problem at local level: who what where are the blockages?
2. Create awareness and communicate to local groups and support services including Primary Care Partnerships.
3. Encourage local groups to be inclusive of older people and reach out to them.
4. Encourage isolated older people to reach out to the community and help them overcome what is stopping them reaching out.
5. Make people aware as they grow older they need to maintain their linkages in the community
6. Consider using technology for some to link them to virtual communities

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles/

The proposals in 1-6 are consistent with COTA's broad Age Friendly policy position. Many of the above proposals (2, 3, 4, 5) are local based program initiatives and therefore outside the scope of policy.

Future potential

Proposal 1 is a research initiative that would be beyond the current scope of COTA's capacity. However, researching isolation of older people by LGA in Victoria is a worthwhile idea that would be best taken up in partnership with a research-based organisation.

There is much scope and value in older people lobbying their local councils with isolated older people to advocate for greater inclusiveness. This is a project that COTA would not have current capacity to do.

Recommendations to Policy Council

There are no new policy issues here for Policy Council to consider.

Mentoring: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action Proposals

What is the issue?

Provision of knowledge & mentoring utilising senior people

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

- To provide a knowledge and skills exchange
- A subgroup formed to develop the opportunity (under the umbrella of COTA) to link with Councils
- That COTA provide a service and central point of contact
- Form a sub-group under COTA to identify needs, research liabilities and source the proposal

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy Principles

Consistent with maximising the participation of older people and challenging ageism, promoting positive views of ageing and promoting interdependence and consciousness across generations.

Recommendations

There are no new policy implications in this issue; it is more a potential program.

Older people as mentors would not be treated as a stand alone program for COTA. Instead, all COTA's programs activities, such as Green Sages, Peer Education programs and Living Longer Living Stronger are opportunities where older people adopt leadership roles in the community and then act as mentors by their example. This approach models leadership roles rather than taking on direct role of a mentor.

Great idea

- **COTA has no capacity at present to take up**
- **Potential for a project to determine the age-friendliness of current mentoring programs**

There are a number of mentoring programs currently available in Victoria (see list below). However, it is not known how many of these programs are age friendly or age-appropriate for older people. COTA sees the potential for further investigation of:

- Current Victorian mentoring programs that are age-friendly
- Mentoring Programs that could become more age-friendly.

The following sites for Mentoring opportunities for older Victorians will be forwarded to Seniors Information Victoria for circulation.

1. The Golden Gurus Program (the Program) provides Mature Age Australians (aged 50 years and over) with a range of opportunities to support community organisations and small businesses. The Golden Gurus Program commenced on 1 January 2010.

This national Program aims to recognise the valuable contribution that Mature Age people make to Australian communities and small businesses.

The Program aims to raise awareness among Mature Age people and the community of the benefits of Skilled Volunteering and Small Business Mentoring. The Program also aims to increase:

- the number of Mature Age people who participate in Skilled Volunteering and Small Business Mentoring roles
- the availability of Skilled Volunteering and Small Business Mentoring opportunities for Mature Age people.

The Golden Gurus Program is being delivered by a community of Golden Guru Member Organisations across Australia.

2. **INSTEP:** a National Seniors project, matches highly skilled senior volunteers with the needs of Indigenous communities to collaborate on projects that benefit the whole community such as building new facilities and working in local schools.

3. There are over a hundred mentoring programs listed on the Australian Youth Mentoring Network.

It is not know however, how many of these programs are ‘age friendly’ or suitable for older people as mentors.

http://www.youthmentoring.org.au/program_listings.php?selstate=6

4. In an article from the Telegraph in the UK, they described grandmentors
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/7822189/Older-people-mentor-troubled-teens-in-granny-knows-best-project.html>

5. Other sites that offer mentoring opportunities include: **Pro Bono Volunteer Match**
This site offers a matching of tasks to skills.

<http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer/search/results?keys=&tid=All&state=100>

6. Volunteering Victoria (VV)

<http://www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au/>

VV has greater capacity to act as a gateway for volunteering roles that would have a mentoring component subject to the availability of such positions.

Aged Pension: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

1. Need for high profile event in 2012 to highlight inadequacy of age pension and work of Fair Go For Pensioners' Coalition
2. Removal of age discrimination in superannuation and work cover insurance

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

Rent a Tram and a range of awareness raising activities

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Consistent with COTA's policy principles in redressing disadvantage and discrimination

Current priorities/capacities

COTA Victoria is a sponsoring organisation of Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition (FGFP) and has identified the need for on-going campaign initiatives COTA Australia actively supports the national operation of FGFP

FGFP representatives enthusiastic and already have done significant work towards achieving this action. Policy Council has approved the *Rent a Tram* initiative, now called *Hop On Board* as presented by Lorraine Wheeler (COTA representative to FGFP) at October and November Policy Council meetings.

Future potential

Part of on-going commitments and work of organisation at state and national levels

Other

Removal of age discrimination in superannuation and work cover insurance. 8 November 2011 Federal government announced abolition of age limit on contributions to superannuation. COAG is considering issues with work cover and how to get more national consistency

Recommendations to Policy Council

Great idea – support *Hop On Board* event.

No further action on superannuation or work cover at this stage.

Working Better with Local Councils: Analysis of Seniors Conference Action proposals

What is the issue?

How to work better with local councils.

What's proposed in terms of this issue?

There are a number of proposals connected with this issue. They include:

1. No results from communication with councils
2. Participate at Council Meetings
3. Pensioner concession (State) council rates should be increased with CPI
4. Services and housing for older people. Transport-council shuttle buses.

How does it relate to COTA?

Policy principles

Overall, these proposals (1-4) are covered by the broad principles of COTA's Positive Ageing & Housing strategies. These are existing policy positions. Proposal 3 is part of Fair Go For Pensioners and already part of COTA policy. Proposal 4 is part of COTA Vic and COTA Australia's in terms of increased social housing.

Current priorities/capacities

Proposals 1 & 2 are issues that have had policy focus in terms of the Municipal Association of Victoria Age Friendly Project where Local Government Areas were supported to develop Age Friendly Strategies. However not all local councils have plans. Funding for this project has finished.

Future potential

There is potential to work with selected local government areas on developing and or implementing their age-friendly strategies. However, this would require a targeted approach given COTA Vic's current capacity.

Recommendations to Policy Council

COTA supports the issues on housing, local transport and greater involvement in local council processes. There is limited capacity on developing policy priorities in local housing & local transport initiatives. Continue partnership work with COTA Australia on housing.