

Media release

27 May 2019

For immediate release

Fairer Energy but minimal offerings for vulnerable older Victorians

The 2019-2020 Victorian State Budget makes small offerings and fails to deliver on budget priorities for older Victorians experiencing elder abuse and needing equipment and community transport.

Whilst the Andrew's Government recognises that 1.25 million older Victorians help make our state and nation strong and prosperous, the state budget has failed to deliver on critical community services and programs for people as they age.

According to Council of the Ageing (COTA) Victoria's CEO, Ronda Held, "Our state's proud record in establishing and regulating human rights is at risk if we do not adequately fund services that work with and on behalf of older people experiencing elder abuse. The state government's commitment to family violence prevention must also recognise the demand on advocacy and support services responding to elder abuse particularly in regional areas in Victoria.

COTA Victoria commends the Andrews' state budget commitment to make energy fairer and strengthen much-needed protections for vulnerable energy consumers. Energy retailers using predatory and dodgy practices will now face a new Energy Commissioner with teeth. COTA Victoria urges the state government prioritise financial counselling, energy brokerage services and outreach information services to support and advocate on behalf of vulnerable consumers.

In the area of health, COTA Victoria is pleased to see the government fund an additional 500,000 specialist appointments in regional Victoria. Ms Held says, "We also welcome and commend the announcement of \$81 million investment in upgrading public residential care in Wantirna and upgrades for culturally specific aged care facilities. This is a recognition of the diversity of our ageing population. Acknowledging that many older people are carers for family members, we are pleased to see significant health announcements such as the \$49.5 million for an additional 100,000 hours of respite services and carer support initiatives."

"We also know social isolation is a concern of this government, yet this budget has not delivered on supporting people to age in place and be connected to accessible services and opportunities". Older people requiring aids and equipment but who not eligible for the NDIS will continue to face delays as inadequate funding and barriers to access impact on their quality of life. Current funding levels are completely inadequate."

“We are dismayed and perplexed to see Victoria’s fragmented and poorly-funded community transport miss out yet again. If we want to address the health impacts of social isolation and poor access to services, the ongoing viability of community transport in Victoria has to be urgently addressed.”

“More than ever, Victoria needs a whole of government state-wide ageing plan to meet the needs of our ageing population across disability, transport, community service infrastructure, rural and regional services, elder abuse and health prevention.” Ms Held adds.

“We look forward future opportunities to work with government on planning initiatives to meet the needs of our ageing population.”

Ends

www. <https://www.cotavic.org.au/>

Interview opportunities

Ronda Held – CEO COTA Victoria

Peter Willcocks – Ageing and Disability Commentator

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