

**COUNCIL  
ON THE AGEING  
(VICTORIA)**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2002**

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ABN Number 81 960 500 420

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

## **COTA NATIONAL SENIORS PARTNERSHIP**

Plans are well advanced for the establishment of a formal partnership with National Seniors Association to bring about a stronger voice for seniors in areas of government decision-making and with commercial firms. An exciting part of the partnership will be the Policy Councils involving up to thirty members from both organisations in the development of our positions and actions to achieve them.

## **POLICY REPRESENTATION**

COTA's well-established position of representing the interests of older people in Victoria, particularly those who are least able to represent their own interests, continued to inform all our negotiations with government particularly a comprehensive pre-election submission. Policy Priorities for the year were Mental Health and Access to Health Services

## **LIVING LONGER LIVING STRONGER**

During the year we celebrated the achievement 85 sites around Victoria from the fitness and health industries working to provide affordable, high quality, enjoyable strength training programs for 3,000 participants. The program was launched in Tasmania in August.

## **EDUCATION COURSES**

Peer Educators continue our exciting and innovative courses in a range of locations.

## **SENIORS ACCESS TO INFORMATION NETWORKS (SATIN)**

Run entirely by members working in an honorary capacity since 1997, SATIN again added to its impressive tally of learners, facilitators and hours of access for seniors.

## **SENIORS INFORMATION VICTORIA**

The range and number of enquiries continue to grow reaching over 9000 for the year. We were thoroughly reviewed by an external consultant employed by the Department of Human Services. As a result we have again received government financial support for this important initiative.

## **SENIORS' CLUBS *CELEBRATION OF IDEAS***

The inaugural gathering of club representatives was a lively event with people sharing their good ideas to invigorate their clubs

The success of COTA, in these and other areas documented in this Annual Report, depends upon its people and its policies. As Executive Director it is my privilege to coordinate the work of a committed, experienced and skilled team of people including the Board of Management, staff and honorary workers who have developed, implemented and reported upon our activities. The COTA team also appreciates the support of many "friends of COTA" who have worked with us to make this year a success.

**Patricia Reeve**

Executive Director





# BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

## Officers

President: Vivienne McCutcheon  
Vice Presidents: Greta Christie,  
Ian Russell

Treasurer: John Wise

## Individual Members (6 positions)

Mrs Vivienne McCutcheon  
Ms Greta Christie  
Mr Patrick Moore  
Mr Ian Russell  
Mrs Delys Sargeant AM

## Service Providers (2 positions)

Ms Rosemary Nicholas  
Mr John Wise

## Seniors Organisations (2 positions)

Ms Alison Carlson

## Local Government (1 position)

Ms Derryn Wilson

# STAFF

**Executive Director:** Patricia Reeve

**Policy:** Jill Thompson

**Education:** Sue Hendy

**Member Development:** Jan Sparke\*\*

**Assistant to Ex Director:** Jill Bodnar\*

**Book keeper:** Giny Chang\*

## Seniors' Information Victoria:

Kris Spark, Debbie Brennan,  
Beth Stevenson\* Bronwyn Ritchie\*

## Specific Project Staff:

Kate Sieh, Judy Addison\*  
Karen Byrush\* Liz Laing\*  
Karen Ivanka\* (from August)

\* Part time position

\*\*Until July

# COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

COTA continues to be represented on a wide range of committees and advisory bodies in its role of representing the interests of the older consumer/service user. In 2002 these included:

## Aged Care Standards Agency

Victorian Liaison Committee

National Education Working Party

## Aged Services Network

Chair of Committee

Discharge planning Working Group

Community Transport Working Group

HACC regional priorities

## Department of Human Services

Accident and Injury Prevention Primary

Care Partnerships, Consumer and Carers

Reference Group

HACC services, 5-year strategic plan

(Eastern & Western Regions)

Ministerial Advisory Committee on HACC

Ministerial Advisory Committee on

Nursing Home Regulations

HACC Resource Equity Formula Review

Project Steering Committee: Recruitment

& Retention of Direct Care Staff

## Department of Health and Aged Care

Aged Care Planning

Aged Care Liaison

(continued next page)

## HONORARY WORKERS – MEMBERS IN ACTION

In addition to governance and decision-making roles which are carried out by elected members the day-to day work of COTA continues to rely on the action of members. Unpaid work is a vital component of the building interdependence and social capital among people in strong cohesive societies. COTA is an organisation run by and for older people. The members listed below all make valuable contributions of knowledge and skills to extend the number and type of activities we are able to undertake. On behalf of all members we recognize and value the critical importance of this work within the organisation and to the achievement of our collective visions of a society in which older people are recognized as full participants without age discrimination based on negative stereotypes.

The nature of the work undertaken by members and the time involved varies according to the interests and availability of those involved and the demands of the specific programs. The quality of service and the wide application of abilities in all areas of the volunteer activity are fully appreciated by both the Staff and Board.

Phyl Alderson	Joan Jubb	Mary Quirk
Bob Barron	George Karoly	Shirley Ramsay
Janet Bennett	Betty Knight	Tom Redpath
Alison Carlson	Charlie Leighton	Ann Riggs
Greta Christie	Betty Leishman	Bill Roem
Jack Cook	Janina Macuilis	Eric Rosario
Norene Crowther	Audrey MacRae	Ian Russell
Poss Dunn	Vivienne McCutcheon	Elaine Rutherford
Judy Dunster	Brenda McIntosh	Sonja Rutherford
Don Ellard	Alice Meares	Delys Sargeant
Joan Frecker	Helen Miller	Jenny Shannon
Glen Grigg	Eric Mitchell	Eric Simondson
Rona Halliwell	Erica Mohoric	Myrtle Spottiswood
David Harrison	Patrick Moore	Joanne Stevens
Shirley Horne	Pat Mutimer	Ian Teague
Lucy Houben	Rosemary Nicholas	Emily Thompson
Kathy Houghton	Janet Oppy	Dorothy Trezise
Isabelle Jarvis	Anne O'Shaughnessy	Evelyn Westbury
Tom Jarvis	Neil Plueckhahn	Val White
Maree Jeffs	Lorraine Poole	John Wise
		Jackie Young

### COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION (Continued)

<b>Dental Health Services Victoria</b>	Ageing Well in Australia
Oral Health for Older People project	<b>Lincoln Gerontology Centre</b>
Oral Health of non-English Speaking	Healthy Retirement Project
Background Older People	<b>Metropolitan Strategy</b>
<b>Equal Opportunity Commission</b>	<b>Women's Health East and Royal</b>
Working for Ages: Strategies for a	<b>Women's Hospital</b>
productive workforce steering committee	Older Women's Health Project
<b>Victoria University</b>	<b>VCOSS</b>
School curriculum project	Peak Organisations Reference Group



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

On behalf of the Board, I have pleasure in reporting on our activities over the past year. Successful projects have continued; Challenging Ageing and SATIN largely lead by peer educators, Living Longer Living Stronger with its emphasis on enrolling gyms in a commitment to providing strength training programs to older people, the health in the West network coordination and Seniors Information, Victoria.

The Board has worked hard to address important policy issues identified at the beginning of the year as significant for older people. These are detailed elsewhere in this report, but I believe two items should be mentioned here. Submissions to state government were made to the Inquiry into Older Road Users and to the Review of the Retirement Villages Act. Both were the result of consultations with members, forum discussions and discussion by the policy standing committee of the Board. Other issues canvassed through our public seminar series included examination of the increasing demands on health services and the ethical and political imperatives at work in our society. We also looked at factors in mental health and how to generate greater social connectedness.

Liaison with government and non-government organizations is an important part of COTA's business. We are frequently asked to sit on reference groups and committees. This year I again represented the views and concerns of older people in the deliberations for the *Metroplan Strategy* and for the CASA (Centre Against Sexual Assault) research on abuse of older women. Our participation on issues of ageing at other levels occurs through the wide representation of our board members in community life. One important link is with the Ministerial Advisory Committee of Senior Victorians.

Our policy role of is under constant discussion and development as COTA strives to consult and represent the views of its members and to encourage them to be vocal. We have held numerous seminars in central city locations and introduced interactive workshops in three regions, one provincial and two outer suburban, so that ideas, concerns and possible initiatives can be shared and acted on.

Last year we strengthened our support to clubs and smaller organisations of older people with two consultative forums, *Celebration of Ideas*. We provided information and technical support in the form of FACTS sheets about insurance for clubs and other groups, and about management responsibilities.

Continuing projects. Seniors Information Victoria (SIV) has met an increasing demand for advice and information about every aspect of people's lives. The shop front service has obviously been appropriate and accessible and it is with some disappointment that we announce that it must move back within the premises of COTA's offices, following the decision of CAE to sell its prime building on Flinders Street where the SIV was located. It will continue to operate, giving Victorians advice, information and support and collecting data about the concerns of older people.

Challenging Ageing courses have been offered in the city and suburban locations enabling members and other people to develop their own understanding of ageing, and of prejudices which undermine later years as a positive and happy experience. For the first time this course and a workshop on memory have been run in Tasmania by leaders from Victoria.

At this point I should particularly mention the valuable contribution of our volunteers



who provide the essential backup to several of our programs. The SATIN program remains popular and continues to run from within the office, despite any specific funding, under the leadership of Don Ellard. I must refer too, to Delys Sargeant whose contribution after leaving the presidency of has not diminished. We have particularly benefited through her running of memory workshops and the donation of royalties from her book (jointly written with Ann Unkenstein) and her important role as a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee of Senior Victorians.

More and more gymnasiums and health centres are embracing Living Longer Living Stronger (LLLS) and its likely spread into other states demonstrates its contribution to the health, independence and wellbeing of older people. I congratulate the staff on the success of the project and its effectiveness as a preventative program, made accessible to many people of both genders. Tasmania is the first state outside Victoria to introduce LLLS but others are anxiously waiting new funding to extend it.

The move at a national level to form a partnership between COTA and NSA has required an enormous effort from staff and Boards of each state COTA and Victoria is no exception. The benefit will be that our membership will grow considerably while we will maintain the best of our structure and processes. In particular the proposed Policy Councils will be an important initiative, with its equal numbers from the two organisations enhancing our decision-making. The Board held a special meeting of all members to modify the constitution to enable the partnership to occur while recognising that a transition period was necessary before a fully amalgamated board of COTA and NSA members would be put in place. I remind you that the effect of the modification meant that one category of organisational member was to be removed from the new Board i.e. the service provider organisation category. Service Provider

members will continue to contribute to our understanding of issues through a specific forum and representation on the Policy council.

At the time of reporting to you the partnership process has been unexpectedly delayed. Consequently, past COTA Board members have found themselves called back to continue with the governance of the organisation. I thank them for their generosity in continuing in the role.

The Board coopted its previous treasurer back into the role and requested of its accountant improved explanatory notes to the monthly financial statements that expand on changes in the status of budget items. This enlarged style of reporting has assisted the Treasurer and Executive Director, increased the understanding among Board members, and has ensured greater transparency of COTA's activities and decision-making.

The staff has worked tirelessly and generously to carry out the work of COTAVic and we thank them. It always amazes me that we can manage with such a tiny band of full and part time people. Skill, clear thinking and high energy match their dedication. The four senior staff provides real leadership inspired by Patricia Reeve as Executive Director. Her leadership has been extraordinary over this last year when the complexities of attempting a change of the magnitude already described for our organisation requires a sharp mind, vision and enthusiasm to see it achieved. She has been able to keep the ongoing work of COTAVic in focus as well as resource the staff and Board with their deliberations every inch of the way.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is a vital and important organisation to belong to and I dedicate its activities to you all.

**Vivienne McCutcheon.**

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Sexton of Hayes Knight again audited the Council's financial affairs for the year ended 30 June 2002.

### KEY RESULTS

	2001/02	2000/01
<b>Ordinary Activities</b>		
Revenue	\$851,729	\$1,094,120
Expenses	\$905,503	\$1,103,599
Net	(\$53,774)	(\$9,479)
<b>Net Assets</b>		
<b>Reserves</b>	\$189,459	\$243,233
Cash	\$124,163	\$154,268
Fixed	\$65,296	\$88,965
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$557,256	\$617,338
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	\$367,797	\$374,105

The full auditor's report and audited financial statements are included as an insert to this report and are available to members on request.

The financial statements contain the Statement by the Committee, and Statements of Financial Position (previously called the Balance Sheet), Financial Performance and Cash Flows.

The Board has maintained prudent reserves as a result of continued support from members including subscriptions, donations and royalties from trading operations which together totalled over \$140,000.

The board decided to invest some of the accumulated reserves in continuing Living Longer Living Stronger for one more year but will not be able to continue this without additional revenue. We have a range of continuing and new projects supported with special purpose funds which must be expended for those purposes. This enables us to carry out many more activities than we could from our own resources.

Income for our core activities remains very restricted. Recurrent support from the Department of Human Services which enables us to represent the interests of older people on critical issues affecting their well-being is appreciated as is the extension for another year of funding for Seniors Information Victoria and other specific purpose funds.

**John Wise** Treasurer

### BEQUEST AND DONATIONS

Donations of \$2 and over to support the work of COTA are allowable deductions for Income Tax purposes as COTA has Deductible Gift Recipient Status under the new Taxation arrangements. On a number of occasions COTA has been fortunate to receive substantial funds from the generosity of people who have remembered COTA in their wills. Should you wish to support COTA in this way the appropriate wording is "I give, devise and bequeath to the Council on the Ageing (Victoria) Inc". Legacies and bequests to COTA are exempt from any government duties or Taxes.

# 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

The COTA Board of Directors is pleased to present this annual report to the public. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's activities, achievements, and financial performance over the past year.

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For more information, please contact:

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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# POLICY AND REPRESENTATION

## REPRESENTATION

COTA (Victoria) has continued in 2002 to participate in a wide range of consultative processes with both the state government, and the Victorian offices of the Commonwealth. Key involvements included the Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy, the HACC Departmental Advisory Committee, the Residential Aged Care Advisory Committee and a range of state government funded projects, including Retention of staff in HACC programs, the Older Drivers Advisory Committee to Monash University Accident Research Centre and the research and promotion of employment opportunities for older people with the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria.

## POLICY PRIORITIES

Access to health care is an ongoing issue, and mental health and older people have been major pro-active policy areas.

The formation of the Office for Senior Victorians, under Minister Christine Campbell, offers an opportunity for policy issues not directly related to service provision, to become more mainstream within the state government, and COTA has been working closely with the Office.

## PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

This activity falls due prior to Christmas or early in January each year. Policy issues reflected COTA's well established position on major issues and encompassed advocacy for those older people who are least able to represent their own interests.

### *Recommendations included:*

- The reinstatement of the value of concessions in rates, electricity, gas and water which has eroded over the years
- Increased funding to sub-acute health services including

rehabilitation

- Development of services to meet the needs of older men with depression
- A range of strategies to address the shortages in public dental care
- The development of a policy focus and planning responsibility for community transport
- Integration of timetables of public transport modes
- Maintenance of Victoria's non-compulsory older driver testing regime
- Strategies to reduce the chronic shortages in community based care services
- Improvements in numbers and standards for staff in residential care facilities
- A cross-departmental, pro-active government position on positive ageing in Victoria.

## MAJOR POLICY ISSUES

### *Intergenerational report*

The Federal Government's Intergenerational Report released in May in conjunction with the Federal Budget will have impacts on the environment in which both federal and state governments view policy and ageing into the future.

COTA believes this report takes a very limited view of the implications of an ageing population, and proposes only one solution to projected cost increases – higher co-payments. This was the basis of discussion at a seminar in the second half of 2002.

## PUBLIC DENTAL SERVICES

While the government expresses a wish to reduce waiting times and increase the capacity of the public dental service to meet non-emergency demand, figures indicate that waiting times are lengthening, and non-emergency care figures are going down.



COTA has challenged the government to explain why there appears to be a withdrawal of funds from direct dental care to management and research, thus potentially exacerbating this trend.

### **OLDER DRIVERS**

The Victorian Parliamentary Committee on Road Safety issued its Discussion Paper in November 2001, for response in February 2002.

This has been a COTA issue over many years, with pressure from time to time to test older drivers on a compulsory basis according to age. COTA argued in the submission that mandatory testing does not produce positive results in terms of older driver accidents. Statistics in other States show that mandatory testing leads to a peak in voluntary relinquishment of licences by older drivers as the test becomes due. This has an unnecessary and harsh effect on the lifestyles of many older people who may well have been able to continue driving. On the other hand, government could play a very positive role by subsidising the costs incurred by drivers voluntarily testing their driving, and implement an education program to raise awareness of issues which do face older drivers.

COTA has worked with the Monash University Accident Research Centre for several years, and is confident that this influential body understands and agrees with COTA's stance on older drivers. The Inquiry is due to report back to Parliament in the spring 2002 session.

### **REVIEW OF THE RETIREMENT VILLAGES ACT 1986**

Work continued during 2002 with members and others, including the Seniors Information Centre, to gather information on issues facing residents in retirement villages. A discussion paper was circulated in July 2002 and COTA has responded to this. Some key issues were

- Contracts and deferred management fees

- Day to day management
- Financial management
- Change of ownership
- Lack of an external complaints mechanism

### **STATE ELECTION**

Although any election cannot be held until the end of November 2002, COTA has planned a series of consultations with members on policy issues. These took place in the second part of the year, and formed the basis of a pre-election document which has been circulated to all Parliamentarians, and party candidates.

### **GREEN SAGES**

The Green Sages continued to meet to discuss and lobby on environmental issues.

In 2002 the major areas have been around water, and water catchments, culminating in a submission in response to the State Government's Water Strategy Directions Report 21<sup>st</sup> Century Melbourne: a WaterSmart City. The group is also examining local government environmental policies. It would welcome new members with an interest in environmental issues.

## **SEMINARS – 2002**

COTA Victoria continued with the seminars introduced in the Jubilee Year of 2001, holding two seminars in the second half of the year.

The topics were

- The future of our health services
- Mental health – Vitality of mind, spirit and body

Speakers are experts in their field and the seminars address "cutting edge" issues. The 'debate' format allows a panel of speakers to talk about different aspects of a topic and there is an emphasis on those attending having an opportunity to participate and raise questions.

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

A number of projects have continued to be developed within this area throughout the year.

- The Sport & Recreation Victoria, funded Physical Activity Project for people from non-English speaking backgrounds, led to the establishment of Exercise for Life programs through VicHealth funding in the City of Greater Dandenong. These programs included a Mauritian group participating in a weekly exercise circuit program at a local gym; a Hungarian group joining aqua aerobics; and a Cambodian group undertaking a low impact aerobic class on a weekly basis as well as joining aqua aerobics. These programs concluded with presentation days to award participation certificates and negotiations for an on-going commitment to their activities.
- A Leadership Training Program was developed to support these groups and other participants from multi-cultural backgrounds, in continuing their commitment to physical activities in their communities. Through this training Vicfit provided assistance to establish Walk 'n Talk groups that were immediately accessible to these groups. A sub-committee to support the development of physical activities in the City of Greater Dandenong was also established.
- In further developing this model at a local level, the Dance for Life program was established through a grant from the City of Maribyrnong, taking the physical activity project to the West. This program involved the establishment of a working group at a local community centre to run a series of dances that encouraged the participation of older people from a diverse range of multi cultural backgrounds. It is anticipated that these dances will continue to operate in an on-going basis.

- Celebration of Ideas was significant in creating an opportunity for representatives from clubs to come together to share their successes and ideas. These events were held in April and November and will continue in the next year.

## SENIORS ACCESS TO INFORMATION NETWORKS (SATIN)

With our obligations to Skills.net almost completed SATIN faced the year 2002 as one in which we might have to introduce charges for the tuition provided. Thanks to the continuing support of COTA and the loyalty of the Access Facilitators we have been able not only to carry on, but also to increase the service provided to older people, enabling more of them to join the computer and Internet world.

Access to Internet connected computers for practice has always been seen as part of the learning process and we have continued to make this available. Responding to a perceived need for some Learners to receive additional support we have introduced Assisted Access sessions, where we guarantee that there will be a Facilitator to provide that support.

SATIN has always offered tuition for learners to register and use free web-based e-mail services. Mid year our preferred service collapsed and we were forced to research the available services and choose a new one. The exercise proved valuable in that we now have a better service and have revised and improved the tuition offered, making e-mail registration and usage a separate course offered to SATIN learners. In the latter part of the year we received further Skills.net funding to support these extensions of service that will also include small group courses for learners who are going further in their application of computers. Pilot courses have already been held and we expect these courses to be part of our SATIN programme in 2003.



# EDUCATION

## **LIVING LONGER LIVING STRONGER**

During 2002, Living Longer Living Stronger has continued to challenge and enhance the knowledge, skill and awareness of the Fitness, Community Health and Community Recreation sectors. Whilst successfully implementing the Living Longer Living Stronger Endorsement Scheme and promoting, encouraging and supporting older people to participate in strength training programs through out Victoria. Continued funding for Sport and Recreation Victoria and Australian Barbell Company has greatly assisted in these developments.

### **Endorsement Scheme**

The Living Longer Living Stronger Endorsement Scheme has been established to develop partnerships with fitness, health and rehabilitation centre. These partners undertake to provide accessible, quality programs in environments where older people feel welcome. The implementation of the Endorsement Scheme has continued to thrive and grow. Endorsed partners now total 76 with the program being run out of 85 sites.

- 38 Metropolitan Fitness sites
- 11 Rural Fitness sites
- 10 Metropolitan Community Health sites
- 18 Rural Community Health sites
- 5 Community Recreation sites
- 3 Rural Recreation sites

Approximately 2000 older people have commenced a strength training programs in these facilities.

### **Seminars**

Through out 2002 the Living Longer Living Stronger Seminar Series has conducted 2 statewide seminars and 2 regional seminars. In March Professor Maria Fiatarone Singh, the current John Sutton Chair of Exercise & Sport Science, School of Exercise and Sport Science, Professor of Medicine, University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Science and world renowned Specialist in

Geriatric Medicine was the keynote speaker at the 'Strength For Life' seminar. Ms Joanna Shinewell a Sports and Consultant Dietitian presented 'Eating for Strength' and Professor Meg Morris, La Trobe University gave a global perspective on the benefits of strength training. In June, Dr Miriam Nelson, Associate Professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and Director of the Centre for Physical Fitness and Nutrition at Tufts University in Boston, author of the Strong Women series presented her new research and book titled Strong Women and Men Beat Arthritis. Ms Jenny Caldwell, Sports Physiotherapist discussed the benefits of stretching as part of a strength training program.

In June COTA went on the road and conducted a regional seminar in Geelong, in conjunction with the Barwon Older Adults Recreation Network, titled 'Life Begins at 50'. This was followed in September by the 'Strength to Live seminar in Morwell, in conjunction with the Central Gippsland Older Adult Recreation Network. Both seminars presented Mr Eric Rosario who discussed the benefits of strength training of people over 50 years and Dr David Dunstan who spoke about how strength training can assist in the management of Type II Diabetes.

At all of the seminars we have continued to provide testimonials by older people currently doing Living Longer Living Stronger strength training programs which continue to delight, surprise and encourage non participating older adults.

### **Curriculum and Training**

The demand for Living Longer Living Stronger In-Service Training by partners has continued to expand to the point, where we have had to train and additional 3 Instructors, Ms Karen Kent, Ms Karen Butler and Ms Sonja Rutherford to facilitate the training.

### **Promotion**

The Living Longer Living Stronger Media Officer, Ms Liz Foley, continues to promote new partners, seminars and the benefits of strength training to older people through local and daily papers, radio, magazines, journals and where possible television.

### **Research**

COTA and Physiotherapy Department of La Trobe University have entered into a partnership to research the benefits of strength training for participants in the Living Longer Living Stronger programs. La Trobe has also conducted a global literature review on strength training and older people, this information will be passed on to partners.

### **Conclusion**

The continued success of the Living Longer Living Stronger program in 2002, is the result of COTA's ability to advocate the benefits of strength training and raise the status it's status within the Fitness, Community health and Recreation sectors and with older people. It is the aim of the program to ensure that all Victorians over 50 years has access to quality strength training programs.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION COURSES**

The interest and participation in these courses continues to grow. Courses continued to draw people from far and wide and Challenging Ageing has been able to provide courses in both metropolitan and central Melbourne.

### **Challenging Ageing**

It seems that all public transport leads to the city and hence, we are most successful in recruiting enough participants for this course, when run at our city office. We did run a program in partnership with Women's

Health in the South West, Frankston, which was very enjoyable and has lead to the group continuing to meet on a monthly basis. We are exploring partnerships in Glen Waverley and Yarra Valley for next year. Our city classes were held for average of 15 people and were ably facilitated by our team of Peer Educators.

This team of Peer Educators are an essential part of the success of these courses. They have really developed their skills and offer their time generously so that other older people can benefit from these courses. Without them these courses would not run or be as successful. They are invaluable and we thank them for their work.

A high light of the year was to successfully provide the first course of Challenging Ageing in Tasmania for COTA members. We are now to train 6 of these participants as leaders, so Tasmania can continue to run courses and benefit from terrific outcomes. We will be running the Peer Educators course in the new year, which is open to all course participants.

### **Financial Matters**

This year we worked in partnership with Mercer Financial to provide a series of presentations on life beyond retrenchment and retirement. We also provided a presentation to 150 of their members on life's considerations in retirement, at an evening seminar.

*Finance Matters to Women* group have decided they have reached their goals and discovered the information they required, and so the group has disbanded for now. Thank you to Janet Bennet for her enthusiasm and energy in supporting this group to its successful conclusion.



# INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR SENIORS

## Seniors Information Victoria

### Need information? Ask a real person

In promoting Seniors Information Victoria to the community this year the emphasis has been on there being a 'real person' (in fact a number of real people) to answer enquiries, at the end of a phone, or by visiting the shopfront location in Flinders Street.

A common response from people who have contacted the service by phone has been pleasure that the service does not consist of recorded messages, and that there is time to discuss an issue in detail.

Enquiries continued to increase throughout the year, with a total of 9,000 for the last year of the initial three-year funding agreement, two thirds of the contact was by phone, with older people themselves accounting for seventy five per cent of the enquiries. Twenty percent of contacts were by people who had previously utilised the service.

As part of the promotional activities two main service providers that have integral contact with older people in their communities were targeted: local councils, and community health centres. The promotions have been successful, with a noticeable increase in the number of service providers referring their clients to the service, seeking information resources for distribution in their communities or utilising the service themselves on behalf of clients.

### Review of Seniors Information Victoria

One of the conditions of the funding agreement with the Victorian government was that the service be evaluated in its third year, and that ongoing funding would be subject to the evaluation. The extensive independent review commenced in January

2002 and resulted in the announcement in July of a further one year of funding at the current level.

The Review found that the service "provides a good level of service to older people, carers, families and friends" and recommended a number of enhancements that COTA, as the provider of the service and the Office of Senior Victorians, as a provider of funding, should undertake together over the next funding period. These included stronger marketing of the service, particularly in rural Victoria, further development of promotional materials plus information resources including web based information, and a more formal approach to gauging user satisfaction with the service.

In summary, the reviewer referred to research that "has suggested that personal contact is seniors preferred source of information about health, pensions and other entitlements and travel and recreational opportunities" and found the staff to be "courteous, knowledgeable, friendly and helpful" in responding to enquiries.

### Partnerships in information

An exciting development for COTA is the involvement of Seniors Information Victoria in the provision of information to older persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. The Department of Human Services (DHS) approached the service in May 2002, as part of a plan to provide an umbrella contact for the network of indigenous HACC service providers in Victoria.

The phone number for Seniors Information Victoria will be distributed via DHS brochures, and fridge magnets, as the first

point of contact for indigenous persons throughout Victoria, who want information on HACC services available to them.

Staff attended a very informative training session with HACC Aboriginal Liaison workers, discussing issues that were unique to indigenous communities, and offering ideas on how to respond to enquiries. Also, COTA is in the initial stages of being involved as an information provider, in conjunction with VICFIT, in the YWCA Mature Women's Project. This project has a focus of increasing physical activity in women aged over 50, and SIV will utilise a database provided by the project to connect enquirers to opportunities for "getting fit" or "staying active" in their community.

### **Relocation of Seniors Information Victoria**

With the sale of the Centre of Adult Education building and its redevelopment as an apartment complex COTA's tenancy of this ideal location has come to an end. A search for another well-positioned and affordable shopfront was undertaken without success. The service will be relocated to the third floor of the Block Arcade, with the 1300 number to be retained, and people are encouraged to visit the service.

There is no doubt that the visibility of a shopfront lifted the profile of the service, and promotional strategies will have to be further developed to retain our level of contacts. There is a group of regular callers who drop in for new information, publications, use the public access computer – and bring their friends.

### **Spotlight on issues**

Enquiries are diverse. Still, the most frequent request continues to be for information regarding accommodation options. Coming a close second are enquiries regarding financial issues, whether that be around pension and

concessions, independent financial advice, or options for maintaining financial independence on a fixed income.

In responding to enquiries the service hears first-hand of emerging issues that are of concern to older people in the community. The statistical and anecdotal information gathered by the service as a result of these enquiries can then be used in support of COTA's advocacy role and policy development. At all times the privacy of callers is ensured.

An example is the review of the Retirement Village Act; feedback regarding the discussion paper was provided, based on the experience of responding to enquiries regarding retirement villages over many years. Relevant comments from contacts with the service were collated by staff and utilised in the development of COTA's submission to the review by the policy officer, Jill Thompson.

### **Contribution by honorary workers**

The maintenance of up to date information is crucial to the effectiveness of the service; and the contribution made by a number of honorary workers in assisting with this ongoing task has been much appreciated.

As well as invaluable assistance with maintaining our Infocom database, and other information resources, time volunteered by honorary workers in the updating and production of our independent accommodation directories was instrumental in their completion. This year we also had assistance from an honorary worker with the maintenance of COTA's web site.



## AGED SERVICES NETWORK (ASN) IN THE WESTERN REGION

The ASN is auspiced by COTA and funded by the Department of Human Services to provide a key regional consultative and planning mechanism for services to older people in the Western Metropolitan of Melbourne (WMR). It represents all aged service providers in the Region, including those that receive funding from the Commonwealth and the State. This work provides COTA with an insight into the concerns and issues of service providers in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Victoria.

This year the ASN Committee decided to take a different approach to the work Network. The Review of the Aged Services Network Western Region (December 2001) highlighted the need for the ASN to work at a strategic level rather than operational level and focus on a few key issues rather than try and address all of the concerns of members of network

In early 2002 an Issues Paper was developed for the network. The paper listed and briefly described 50 aged service issues for the region. At the planning in February, the ASN Committee considered this paper and the issues were prioritised.

Four priority issues were decided on for 2002. They are:

- Discharge planning
- Residential care
- Packages (Linkages and CACPS)
- HACC Unit Price

**Discharge planning** - continues to be an area of concern from consumer, community service provider and hospital perspectives'. Rather than undertake new work in this area a decision was made to continue to support the HACC Effective Discharge Strategy Project, a joint Western

Health/ASN project. The Project was designed to:

- Identify issues that impact upon continuity of care between hospital and community services;
- Establish a method of regular data collection relating to these issue; and
- Construct a sustainable model of communication between hospital and community organisations relating to issues affecting continuity of care.

The project is currently operating with a small number of providers who are collecting data. The intention is to secure additional funding for the project and then roll it out across the region.

**Residential Care** – a complex issue that includes a shortage of residential care places in the WMR and the inter-related and co-dependent nature of residential care with community and hospital services. After some consideration that ASN Committee believes there is a need to undertake some strategic planning in relation to residential care. A regional perspective and coordinated view with regards to the need for and the allocation of residential places is currently missing. It was agreed that the ASN would run at least one forum in this area and gauge the response and positive outcomes.

**Linkages and Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs)** – referred to jointly as packages, has been considered in relation to the purchasing power of packages. ASN members argue that the value of packages has been eroded over time and for consumers this means a lower level of service. A number of ASN members who are providers of packages have been



interviewed and this information, along with other research that has been undertaken is being collated into a position paper to be considered by the ASN Committee in terms of 'where to from here'.

*The HACC unit price* - is the final priority issue for the ASN for this year. The HACC unit price is considered to be inappropriate compared to what the services cost to provide. It is argued that the HACC unit price as set by DHS need to be increased substantially as costs have risen while the increase in unit price has only been minimal each year. This issue relates to all HACC prices for all service types, not just a specific area such as home care. Following investigation it has become evident that there is a significant amount of work that is already being undertaken by other organisations in this area. The ASN does not want to duplicate work that has or is already being undertaken in this area. For this reason they are keeping a 'watching brief' on this priority issue and if required will initiate additional work in this area.

In addition to this work the ASN has made a number of submissions including: a response to the Inner West Integrated Transport Strategy; a submission to the 2002 Aged Care Approvals Round and comments for a review of the HACC Funding Round.

## **HACC Training**

Three out of four DHS metropolitan regional offices outsource the function of Home and Community Care (HACC) Training coordination to an auspice agency.

COTA Vic, through the Aged Services Network Western Region, is the auspice for the half-time DHS WMR HACC Training Coordinator.

The Training Coordinator is advised by a HACC Training Advisory Committee, the membership of which is drawn from occupational and organisational groups across the region.

During the year 2001/2 the key outcome generated by the position was two highly sought after calendars offering training and learning opportunities for HACC direct care, management and specialist staff as well as volunteers.

In addition the position runs promotional activities and resources HACC agencies directly in order to foster a vibrant learning culture and assist agencies to meet their staff learning and development needs.

