

COUNCIL ON THE AGEING

**COTA**

victoria

the voice  
of older victorians



Annual Report 2004-2005

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## Council on the Ageing Victoria

The Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is the peak body representing the wide-ranging needs and interests of older people in the Victorian community.

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation that advocates rigorously to government at all levels, to the media and to the broader community. We tackle the issues of real importance to seniors – issues such as housing, retirement income, transport, recreation and health services.

### ***Our Funding and Governance***

Although we are part funded by government, we also rely on the membership contributions of thousands of Victorians who enjoy the benefits of being a part of the COTA Victoria community.

We are governed by an elected Board and dedicated staff and volunteers who continually strive to ensure that the contributions of older people are proudly recognised and acknowledged within our community.

The Council on the Ageing Victoria has four main roles:

Advocacy and Policy Development	Ensuring policy makers in government, the media and the general community are aware of the issues affecting older people and how these might be addressed with suitable policy responses.
Education and Leisure Activities	Managing a range of educational and leisure activities, including the successful <i>Living Longer Living Stronger™</i> program and our popular <i>Need to Know</i> monthly information sessions.
Information and Confidential Advice	Providing a wide range of information and confidential advice to older people through our shopfront at Seniors Information Victoria in Flinders Lane, Melbourne.
Research and Innovative Approaches	Gathering the latest research on issues affecting older people, including research on aspects of health and positive ageing.

**“We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation that advocates rigorously to government at all levels, to the media and to the broader community on matters important to older people.”**





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## President's Report

The last year has been a time of exciting developments, consolidation and expanding opportunities. COTA Victoria is increasingly being seen as one of the pivotal organisations representing the interests of older Victorians.

More than ever, older Victorians need a strong representative voice with government and institutions making decisions that affect them. The record of COTA Victoria over the last year clearly demonstrates its key position and strength in the development of sound policy, social action and service delivery that impacts on older Victorians. (COTA Victoria is represented on over 30 government advisory bodies and review committees.)

COTA Victoria greatly appreciates the strong working relationship it has with the State Government, various Departments and the Minister for Aged Care, the Hon. Gavin Jennings, in particular. His openness and willingness to consider our issues is greatly appreciated.

The one major disappointment for the year was the failure of the previously announced proposed amalgamation of the national COTA network and National Seniors at the state level.

COTA Victoria along with "Councils on the Ageing" in Tasmania, New South Wales and Western Australia withdrew from negotiations when it became clear that the interests of our constituencies would not be appropriately protected in such an amalgamation. Subsequent to the withdrawal, a national policy alliance has been established between the four COTA's and ARPA Over 50s Association, which will enable a continuation of a national voice on public policy issues.

The COTA Over 50s Alliance was launched in Canberra by the Federal Minister for Aged Care Julie Bishop in October 2005.

A key focus in the last year has been to further improve the structure and planning guidelines needed to cope with the organisation's expanding role in the sector. The Board has adopted a new Strategic Plan and associated organisational plans to strengthen our role in research, policy, consultation, advocacy, education and information services. Part of the plan is to reach out to our members and more broadly to all older Victorians to listen to their ideas and concerns for the present and future.

COTA Victoria is a community-based consumer driven organisation working in the interests of older people to bring about positive change. The mission of the organisation, which has been in existence for over 50 years, is to mobilise older people and those who work with them, to ensure all can maximise their capacity to age well.

Annual Report 2004-2005





## President's Report (Cont'd)

It is our strongly held belief that we need to work in partnership with other kindred agencies and organisations to advance the interests and well being of older Victorians.

This year has seen the consolidation of many organisational relationships including the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Carers Victoria, U3A, CWA, the Municipal Association of Victoria and members of the Community Care Coalition.

An organisation like COTA Victoria is reliant on the participation of many people. It is important and a privilege to acknowledge and thank the many unsung participants that work tirelessly supporting the organisation throughout Victoria. To the people who participate through roles as peer educators, volunteers, representatives on committees and advisory bodies, undertake research, information gathering and participate in working groups - we say thank you.

Our organisation is also extremely fortunate to have highly competent and enthusiastic membership on its two key organisational Committees, namely the Board and Policy Council. Both have worked tirelessly to provide leadership for the organisation throughout the year. To the individual members and collective I say thank you. In particular I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of Vivian McCutcheon, former President who retires from the Board (but not COTA Victoria) at the Annual General Meeting.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to the work of the staff of COTA Victoria who have implemented the policies and plans set by the Board and Policy Council. Their commitment and energy underwrites and ensures the continuing success and relevance of the organisation.

In particular I and the rest of the Board of COTA Victoria would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution made by our Executive Director, Sue Hendy. I'm certain that no one would know the full extent of the effort, commitment and energy she puts into her role day to day.

The importance of her leadership both within COTA and the sector is willingly recognized and appreciated.

John Wise  
President







## Treasurer's Report

Peter Sexton of Hayes Knight Melbourne again audited the Council's financial affairs for the year ended 30 June 2005.

### **Key Results**

	2004-05	2003-04
<b>Ordinary Activities</b>		
Revenue	\$1,508,925	\$999,612
Expenses	\$1,301,095	\$927,129
Net	\$ 207,830	\$ 72,483
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Reserves	\$512,610	\$304,780
Cash	\$464,944	\$267,381
Fixed	\$ 47,666	\$ 37,399
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$1,035,214	\$ 846,994
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	\$ 522,604	\$ 542,214

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, Financial Performance and Cash Flows.

This year has been another successful year in many ways and is reflected in our financial results where our net income of \$207,830 compares with last year's \$72,483.

We have commenced a number of new important initiatives, which contribute to the attainment of our mission especially on issues of ageism and policy development. In addition, we have strengthened other projects by securing more or longer term funding. These are all important aspects for our financial security. Our overall income increased again this year due to additional project funding and a significant reimbursement of \$91,344 from the de-merger with COTA National Seniors.



## Treasurer's Report (Cont'd)

Over the past year we have been working in partnership with Broadmeadows Health Service to develop an experiential learning program to enable staff of acute and sub acute health settings to become more in-tune with the needs of older health service users and the impact of health staff work practice and attitudes. The Department of Human Services has funded this project for a three year period so it can be expanded across Victoria.

We have again worked in partnership with the Office of Senior Victorians to coordinate activities for the International Day of Older Persons and to expand the involvement of senior Victorians in strength training through the Living Longer Living Stronger™ program. VicHealth also supported a workforce development project to reach out to rural and older people from non-English speaking backgrounds so that they can be trained as fitness Instructors.

Balwyn Rotary has again supported OM:NI and we have been successful in gaining financial support from Department of Veterans Affairs to expand the work into RSL's. In addition, we have been selected to manage a project for Industrial Relations Victoria to examine issues of work family balance with an emphasis on older parents/family care needs in addition to child care needs.

During this financial year we formed an Audit Committee that has held a number of meetings and is establishing a process to assist the Board in ensuring COTA's long term growth and financial health.

Eddie Paulsen  
Treasurer





## Executive Director's Report

I am pleased to report that the past twelve months have been very successful for COTA Victoria.

Following the decision not to merge with COTA National Seniors, the organisation has reviewed and refocused its directions. The outcome of this process had been very positive and has laid a strong foundation for a more influential and effective organisation representing the voice of older Victorians.

Individual and organisational membership continues to grow. We have also been successful in attracting additional funds from State Government and philanthropic trusts to fund the expansion of our activities. This report provides a brief overview of the diversity of our activities that we have successfully achieved over the past 12 months through the dedication of the Board, staff, members and volunteers.

### ***Organisational Development***

The Policy Council has been re-established and plays an important role as a forum for members' views and setting the organisation's policy agenda. A new strategic plan has been adopted by the Board and our business plan is currently being finalized.

### ***Informing Older People***

A key focus over the past 12 months has been on providing timely and accurate information to older Victorians. COTA Victoria is seeking to broaden the range of information provided to seniors. A communication strategy has been developed and is being implemented progressively. In February, Seniors Information Victoria, our information and referral service, moved to a new shop front location in Flinders Lane. This has proven to be very popular with seniors. In August we re-launched COTA News in its broadsheet format and we continue to explore other ways to extend this work.

### ***Policy and Advocacy***

Our work in documenting the concerns of seniors and advocating these issues to politicians and bureaucrats at the State, Local and Commonwealth Government levels has been reaffirmed by the Board as a major priority for the organisation. Issues that we have campaigned strongly on this year include improved access to the multi-purpose taxis, elder abuse, accessible housing, transport and improving health services for older people. These form part of our broader agenda on ageing and well-being. Staff resources in this area have been increased.



## Executive Director's Report (Cont'd)

On October 1, the United Nations declared International Day for Older People, COTA Victoria lodged our submission to the State government on what we believe to be the expenditure priorities in the 2006-2007 State budget. Board and staff members are currently in the process of meeting with Ministers and Departments to present our views on key budget and program initiatives for government investment.

An exciting new program, "Have Your Say", has been developed to ensure the voices of senior Victorians are heard by COTA Victoria and, through our representation, decision making and publicity, to the broader Victorian community. "Have Your Say" will involve a series of meetings in rural and metropolitan areas over the next 12 months. COTA Victoria has been invited to participate on key advisory committees, projects and groups as a result of the recognition of our contribution to issues affecting older people.

### ***Project Work***

Our involvement in leading-edge activities continues through a range of projects that cover education, consumer rights, changing attitudes of service providers in health care, strength training and active ageing. This work is supported by our network of peer educators, who do a great job not only on their projects but in raising the profile of COTA Victoria within the community.

### ***Collaborating in Change***

Our work is strengthened through a range of strong working relationships that have been formed with academia, local government, consumer organisations and service providers. These collaborations enable us to progress issues of ageing and ageism and to further extend the research agenda on key matters. I have been appointed to the Board of National Ageing Research Institute and we are linked with the University of Canberra, Victorian University and the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well.

I am confident that COTA Victoria is well placed to continue to grow and become a stronger voice for older Victorians. I am proud to lead a great team of people who contribute to the success of the organisation.

Finally I would like to sincerely thank our dedicated Board, staff, volunteers and members for your support throughout the year. Also, the pro bono work of Williams Winter and Herbert, Geer & Rundle lawyers is greatly appreciated.

Sue Hendy  
Executive Director







## Board of Management

President:	John Wise
Treasurer:	Eddie Paulsen
Executive Director (Ex Officio)	Sue Hendy
Policy Council Chair	Delys Sargeant

Judy Dunster

Anne O'Shaughnessy

Patrick Moore

Ian Russell

Vivienne McCutcheon

## Policy Council

Judy Dunster	Anne O'Shaughnessy
Darlene Eckersell	Patrick Moore
Betty Knight	Ian Russell
Vivienne McCutcheon	Delys Sargeant
Lola McHarg	Anne Shraeder
Jaya Manchikanti	Dot Ward
Rosemary Nicholas	John Wise



## Volunteers

COTA Victoria has an active volunteer program with many interesting and diverse roles available to volunteers.

The aim of the volunteer program is to enable members of COTA Victoria to take an active part in their organisation and assist with our continued development.

The program is designed to have a dual role. It seeks to use the talents, combined experience and skills of its membership base. And it provides opportunities for volunteers to engage in tasks where they can develop new or existing skills and actively contribute to their organisation.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognise the significant contribution that our volunteers have made and continue to make to the organisation and thank all our volunteers for their tireless work throughout the year.



## Bequests and Donations

Donations of \$2 and over to support the work of COTA Victoria are allowable deductions for income tax purposes because of our Deductible Gift Recipient status under Australian taxation law.

In the past COTA Victoria has been fortunate to receive funds through the generosity of people who have remembered COTA Victoria in their wills.

The support that we receive through bequests and donations will ensure that the voice of older Victorians will continue to be heard for many years into the future.



## Advocacy and Policy Development

COTA Victoria's policy and advocacy work is directed by its elected Policy Council, which sets strategic directions and informs the detailed work of staff. This work aims to change government policies, community attitudes and services for older people.

### ***Budget Submission***

As one of the peak organisations representing older Victorians, COTA Victoria is requested by the Victorian Government to submit its priorities for older Victorians in the upcoming budget.

Our response was forwarded to all Members of Parliament and we have recently been invited to meet with the Treasurer, the Hon John Brumby to discuss our recommendations. COTA Victoria continues to make representations to other key Ministers and Departmental personnel. This year we presented four strategic priorities that reflect some of our work during the past year, viz,

- Improving the health status and fitness of older people
- Providing funds to implement the recommendations of the Elder Abuse Prevention Project and its Advisory Committee
- Increasing the focus on person and family-centred care in the delivery of services
- Improving transport services and physical planning to enable older Victorians to move around the community.

### ***Ageing and Ageism***

Our communities significantly influence our lives and our capacity to age well. COTA Victoria has worked with the Cities of Maribymong, Melton and Brimbank to develop Ageing Well strategies and we recently joined with MAV and OSV on an exciting project that aims to provide leadership in promoting "Age Friendly" communities, which create opportunities for senior Victorians to live engaged and fulfilling lives. This project has funded seven Local Government demonstration projects and will soon fund additional initiatives within the broad themes of Physical, Social or Economic Environments.

The key principles underpinning this project are:

- Ensuring equity and access
- Acknowledging cultural diversity



## Advocacy and Policy Development (Cont'd)

- Fostering non-discriminatory attitudes
- Promoting positive images of ageing
- Recognising and assisting those with disabilities and
- Building partnerships and alliances with other relevant organisations.

### ***Elder Abuse***

The issue of elder abuse re-emerged on the public agenda with a coalition policy announcement, a major COTA Victoria seminar and a Government Review of policy and practice. COTA Victoria has made a major contribution to reform on elder abuse through:

- undertaking research
- representing seniors on the Elder Abuse Advisory Committee
- assisting Office of Senior Victorians and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria with consultations
- preparing a submission to the State Government review on elder abuse.

COTA Victoria's recommendations for change are based on its advocacy of principles that recognise the rights and autonomy of older people.

Given the importance of change in this area, COTA Victoria will maintain its work on this issue. We will monitor Government actions and we are seeking funds to undertake further research into the financial exploitation and the appropriate interventions that older people find valuable.

### ***Transport***

Older peoples' capacity to participate in their communities is strongly dependent upon transport. This year our advocacy has focused on the Multi Purpose Taxi program, implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act targets, improvements to public transport and the case for flexible transport options. COTA Victoria has worked collaboratively with VCOSS, RACV, MAV, and Brotherhood of St Laurence in this work.



## Advocacy and Policy Development (Cont'd)

We have made significant contributions to the work of two government committees – Maintaining Mobility: Transition from Driving and the Public Transport Users Access Committee. The State Government has recently announced that it will table a major public transport statement prior to the 2007 budget.

### ***Multi Purpose Taxi Campaign***

Following a vigorous campaign by COTA and VCOSS, the State Government agreed to modify some of the unwelcome changes to the popular Multi Purpose Taxi Program. As a result of this campaign, we managed to have the annual cap subsidies increased and indexed for inflation.

### ***Retirement Villages***

The implementation of the Retirement Villages Act, in three stages across 2005-06, has continued to engage COTA Victoria.

COTA has undertaken work on the details of the model contracts to be implemented from early 2006. Additionally, a number of legislated changes due to be implemented in September are now being opposed by provider groups. We will continue to work with residents to have these changes implemented in full as decided by Parliament to protect the interests of residents. As reported later in this Report, COTA Victoria has commenced a project to establish a Residents Association.

### ***Accessible Buildings***

COTA Victoria continues to contribute to initiatives designed to ensure that houses and public buildings are accessible to people with a wide range of mobility impairments.

This year we have worked with various organisations to persuade local governments and the State and Federal Governments to mandate accessibility standards for all new buildings. The State Government has recently asked COTA Victoria to be a member of the Accessible Housing Taskforce and advise the Minister for Planning on this issue.



## Advocacy and Policy Development (Cont'd)

### *Improving Care for Older People*

There has been a strong focus on improving the ways that acute and sub-acute health services meet the needs of older people. COTA Victoria has contributed to the State Government strategy on 'Improving Services for Older People' through a variety of ways.

We have developed awareness workshops for all staff of "Centres Promoting Health Independence" in partnership with Broadmeadows Health. This initiative has been funded by DHS as a 3 year initiative to shift attitudes and processes of health services towards older person-centred care.

COTA Victoria has participated in Reference Groups and Steering Committees on person-centred care research projects of the National Ageing Research Institute and the Department of Human Services.

We have contributed to the evaluation of the Well for Life Project and presented a number of papers to staff of the funded projects.

We have contributed to the development and review of materials for older people on physical activity and nutrition for DHS.

COTA Victoria has also participated as a member of the multi-disciplinary advisory group for the development of "Best Practice Approaches" to minimising functional decline in the older person across the acute, sub-acute and residential aged care settings.

We have also participated as a member of the Community Care Coalition in advocating for improvements to the availability and responsiveness of community care services.





## Living Longer Living Stronger™

This year has seen the Living Longer Living Stronger™ scheme remain the leader in strength training for older people throughout Victoria.

The continued success of Living Longer Living Stronger™ is the result of COTA Victoria's ability to successfully advocate and promote the benefits of strength training and raise its profile within the Fitness, Community Health and Aged Care sectors and with older people.

We have achieved this by continuing to address the issues associated with the safe and appropriate delivery of strength training, the qualifications and education requirements of instructors and the promotion of strength training across industry sectors.

**Progressive resistance strength training provided through the Living Longer Living Stronger™ program is a cost effective intervention because it can prevent or ameliorate a wide range of health conditions including sarcopenia, falls-related injuries, arthritis, osteoporosis, hypertension, depression, diabetes and poor body image.**

### ***Endorsement Scheme***

The Living Longer Living Stronger™ Endorsement Scheme has continued to expand with a total of 117 Endorsed Partners, which comprise:

#### **Metropolitan**

- 51 Fitness Centres
- 8 Community Health Centres
- 8 Community/Neighbourhood Centres
- 5 Rehabilitation Centres

#### **Rural**

- 20 Fitness Centres
- 15 Community Health Centres
- 4 Bush Nursing Hospitals
- 5 Community/Neighbourhood Centres
- 1 Physiotherapist Centre

**It is estimated that around 6,000 people over 50 are now participating in a Living Longer Living Stronger™ endorsed strength training program.**



## Living Longer Living Stronger™ (Cont'd)

To help build the knowledge base of the industry, we conducted a conference and seminar series throughout the year. *Strength Training in an Ageing Australia. The Myths, Models and Management Conference* held in November 2004 presented world-renowned speakers, research and strength training models from throughout Victoria. The keynote speaker, Prof. Maria Fiatarone Singh, from the University of Sydney, discussed how high intensity strength training could reduce depression by 50% in the community.

Prof. Rob Newton, Edith Cowan University, WA presented how resistance exercise had the potential to prevent and treat a range of chronic diseases.

At the *Strong Bodies Strong Hearts Seminar Series* conducted in Melbourne, Geelong and Wodonga, keynote speaker Dr Miriam Nelson, Tufts University USA, presented her latest research on diet, strength training and weight loss as key strategies in the prevention and reversal of heart disease. Dr David Cameron-Smith, Deakin University Melbourne discussed the role of strength training in preventing and managing cardiac failure, whilst Nutritionist Karen Inge provided how food helps to keep your heart healthy and body strong.

### ***Strength Training Qualification Working Group***

Following an Office of Senior Victorians review of Strength Training for Older Adults in Victoria that raised a number of concerns regarding the qualifications required to deliver and prescribe strength training, COTA Victoria established the Strength Training Qualifications Working Group.

The Group is currently producing a set of *Strength Training Guidelines* and implementation strategies that will be used by the State Government, the Fitness and Community Health sectors to ensure that people over 50 years receive the safest and most appropriate regime of strength training.

### ***Forever Strong Awards***

To recognise and celebrate the achievements of Living Longer Living Stronger™ Instructors, Participants and Partner Organisations, the *Forever Strong Awards* were presented by the Hon Gavin Jennings Minister for Aged Care at Parliament House on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

The 2005 winners were Elizabeth Brown from Deakin University who won the Participants Award, Tania Ormond, Hawthorn Aquatic & Leisure Centre, who won the Instructors Award and the Broadmeadows Leisure Centre who won the Partners Award. To commemorate the event a Forever Strong Booklet was produced which documented the nominee's stories.



## Living Longer Living Stronger™ (Cont'd)

### ***Seeding Grants***

To help improve the accessibility of the Scheme within CALD and regional communities, COTA successfully obtained a grant from VicHealth to provide seeding grants, up to \$400, for people over 50 from non-English speaking backgrounds and older people living in rural and regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne to undertake an accredited strength training qualification.

A total of 49 people received the seeding grant, 26 from rural and regional Victoria and 23 from Metropolitan Melbourne. Five recipients were from non-English speaking backgrounds - Greek, Italian, German and Cantonese.

### ***Get Stronger, Live Longer Video***

COTA Victoria in conjunction with the Department of Veteran Affairs, Fran Haarsma Productions and Ideas That Work, has produced a strength training promotional video and kit entitled "Get Stronger, Live Longer".

The video has been developed to promote the benefits of strength training through the stories of individual participants who have a range of chronic illness and varying levels of function. The video will be launched and distributed to all Living Longer Living Stronger™ partners in December 2005.

### ***Promotion***

We continued to promote new partners, seminars and the benefits of strength training for older people through local papers, radio, magazines and journals. In addition COTA Victoria has published a number of articles in state government, seniors and fitness magazines promoting the program, the latest strength training research and the benefits for people over 50.

Another effective method for promoting Living Longer Living Stronger™ has been through 17 presentations made to senior's community groups and service providers and the fitness industry. Living Longer Living Stronger™ has also presented at 6 Forums and Conferences across Victoria and interstate.

### ***Acknowledgement***

To support our important work in this area we are appreciative of funding received from Sport and Recreation Victoria, the Office of Senior Victorians, VicHealth, Department of Veteran Affairs and the Australian Barbell Company.





## Education and Leisure

### *Reaching Out*

COTA Victoria continues to reach out to the community in diverse locations as part of its commitment to members and older people in regional and metropolitan areas.

Venues for the "Age - A State of Mind", "Creative Transitions through Retirement" and "Challenging Ageing" seminar series included the City of Casey at Hampton Park Warren, Darebin Community Health Centres at PANCH and East Preston and the Block Arcade (City). In 2006, Geelong will become a focus for our education series.

**COTA Victoria, through our information, education and advocacy roles, is committed to challenging the negative stereotypes and myths surrounding ageing. Physical function, independence and psychological well being can all improve with positive perceptions of the ageing process.**

### *Partnerships*

Working in partnership with other organisations has been a successful, continuing strategy. The addition of financial support from partnership members has enhanced promotion for events and improved administrative support for the courses. This year a partnership with DoCare in Geelong is developing.

**The partnership with City of Darebin staff in the Leisure and Aged Service areas led to promoting and delivering courses in community venues. Working with a Planned Activity Group at PANCH, COTA Victoria was able to reach a group of socially isolated older adults. Later in the year a variety of participants from the many Self Help Groups that function as part of Darebin Community Health participated in a course.**

### *Focus on Impending Retirement*

Increasingly COTA Victoria is being asked to facilitate workshops for older adults still in paid work, but close to retirement age. The focus of these workshops is about life beyond the current work scenario, with an emphasis on identifying transferable skills for new paid or unpaid (volunteer) work.



## Education and Leisure (Cont'd)

Late last year this was provided for the Sandhurst Diocese Annual Staff Conference and Luther College Staff Professional Development Conference. This year COTA Victoria will be included in the City of Casey's Positive Ageing Program.

### ***Peer Education Model***

All the courses involve the team of Peer Educators in a multitude of ways. Their commitment to the program, ongoing training, program review and skill development has contributed to the diversity and success of courses.

In February a three-day training course for new Peer Educators was held as part of the ongoing process of recruiting new leaders. Not all who participate in the training join the COTA team but often they take their new skills into other groups, which this year has included a Hungarian Seniors Group.

New leaders have emerged to join the team. It is exciting to be able to utilize the wealth of skills and experience leaders bring to the program. Peer Educators meetings are now held monthly with an emphasis on enhancing skill development and knowledge. Tapping into the variety and depth of resources within the group and COTA staff has provided stimulating material.

### ***Workers in Health Services***

A new initiative this year is a series of workshops for Workers in Health Services. The new program called "Enhancing Practice – Improving Care for Older Adults" has a focus on providing services to older adults and fits within the Department of Human Services initiatives of Person Centred Care and Centres Promoting Health Independence.

The workshops are a collaboration of Northern Health Service and COTA Victoria. The original program was developed with Broadmeadows Health Service using COTA Victoria's knowledge and expertise in dealing with ageist attitudes. The voice of consumers, older adults, is an integral feature of the program.

So far, workshops have been delivered at Broadmeadows Health Service and Bundoora Extended Care Centre. Statewide, a majority of the Health Services that received funding for establishing Centres Promoting Health Independence has expressed an interest in participating in the program. A timetable of delivery is being negotiated with each of these Health Services.





## Education and Leisure (Cont'd)

### ***Financial Planning for Women***

COTA Victoria has undertaken project management of a series of community workshops that have been designed by women, specifically for women who want to learn more about how to create a financially secure retirement.

A total of 8 workshops are planned in metropolitan and rural areas seek to address the low levels of financial literacy of Victoria's older women. The main objective is to raise women's financial awareness and literacy so they are better equipped to navigate the maze of financial products and information available in the market place.

The long-term goal is to build sustainable capacity into the diverse communities of older women across Victoria and to motivate women to improve their financial literacy by providing accessible, unbiased information and education at a local level.

Once again COTA Victoria will be utilizing the Peer Educator model to convey information on this project to our constituents and the community at large.

### ***Seniors Access to Information Networks (SATIN)***

During 2004-05 SATIN celebrated its 9<sup>th</sup> year of operation. From its inception SATIN has provided user-friendly low cost instruction to over 2200 older Victorians on Internet use.

At the beginning, SATIN offered basic tuition primarily on a one to one basis but as people's needs, knowledge and competencies have changed the content and method of instruction have changed accordingly.

Today, in addition to basic tuition on how to get started with the internet, SATIN is able to offer more advanced courses.

**COTA continues to support and fund all SATIN activities because we believe that it is vital that older people are given equitable access to the opportunities provided through the internet.**

### ***Speakers Bureau***

Throughout the year, COTA Victoria responded to over 500 requests to provide speakers on a broad range of topics to community organisations, service clubs and other interested parties. Topics ranged from "Ageing Well", "Housing Options" and "Elder Abuse".







## Seniors Information Victoria

Seniors Information Victoria has continued to provide Victorians with accurate and comprehensive information and advice on a vast range of issues.

Following the move to our new shopfront location in Flinders Lane in February 2005, the number of in-person enquiries has increased dramatically from 10% to 36% of contact with SIV.

As hoped, the new shopfront has attracted diverse patronage with many younger people now making inquiries or collecting information for relatives or older friends.

The availability of two computers offering free internet-access for people over 50 has also added to contact with SIV. Our computer service is well utilised by a large pool of individuals who enjoy the opportunity to drop in and take advantage of this valuable resource.

The continued importance and success of SIV is evidenced by the 15,000 plus people who have used the service over the past 12 months.

As part of our commitment to continually respond to the diverse needs of senior Victorians, SIV is currently developing an information partnership with the ALSO Foundation to promote SIV's services to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender seniors.

Our *Need to Know* information sessions have continued to be successful with many sessions fully subscribed. 15 sessions were organised throughout the year, ranging from Reverse Mortgages to Navigating the Aged Care System. All topics chosen were based on consumer inquiries received by SIV.

We have been able to continue to provide high levels of customer service thanks, not only to our dedicated staff, but also our volunteers who assist with welcoming visitors and data management.

SIV has been expanding its role in resourcing other agencies to respond to the diverse information needs of older Victorians.

In addition, we have been an active participant at many events throughout the year including the Seniors Festival in Bendigo, Footscray, and City of Whitehorse and expo's and information events in Ararat, Boroondara, Bonnie Doon, Seymour, Willauna, Lake Bolac, Lakes Entrance, RSL State Conference in Melbourne and retirement sessions throughout Greater Bendigo, Knox, Maroondah, Mulgrave. SIV also participated in expo's in Geelong, Melbourne, Whitehorse and Ashburton.

## International Day of Older People

Senior Victorians were called upon to “share their passion” for physical activity and social interaction to mark the United Nations’ International Day of Older People on 1 October 2004.

COTA Victoria together with the Department for Victorian Communities coordinated celebrations that the Minister for Senior Victorians, Gavin Jennings, described as one of the most significant events on the seniors’ calendar.

The major objective of the campaign was to encourage older people to get together to involve other seniors, friends and family to share the benefits of positive ageing.

More than 300 separate activities involving around 12,000 participants were registered by Victorian clubs, seniors organisations and aged care providers with activities ranging from walking, tai chi, scrabble and educational pursuits.

The celebrations culminated in an extravaganza event at the City Square in Melbourne where older Victorians took the opportunity to try new activities that included strength training, tai chi, line dancing and fitness exercise.



**“COTA Victoria coordinated celebrations for the International Day of Older People that involved 12,000 participants across the State.”**



## Community Quality Use of Medicines

The Quality Use of Medicines Program is a national program established to help consumers learn about medicines and their proper use. The program is in partnership with the National Prescribing Service, which is currently funding the project through to the end of December 2005. Under the Program, COTA Victoria offers tailored, interactive information sessions to seniors clubs and community groups.

Over the past year, 33 Peer Educators have been trained through the program to run medicine information sessions at no charge for seniors groups. The groups have included a variety of organisations including senior citizen clubs, chronic illness support groups, local council services, activity clubs, migrant resource centres, retirement villages and day programs.

The program has been conducted in 36 municipalities across regional and metropolitan areas and has been presented in 16 languages other than English, including one session in sign language. To date we have completed over 300 sessions and are on target to complete Victoria's objective of 325 sessions by the end of the 2005 calendar year.

In February and May, Victoria assisted COTA Tasmania to commence their CQUM Program in Hobart, through training peer educators and providing support resources. COTA Tasmania is now operating independently to meet targets for the year.

The success of the CQUM program can be attributed to the continued commitment of our team of peer educators who have supported the program through their time, enthusiasm, professionalism and the value they place on taking this important message into the community.



**Community Quality Use of Medicines Program has been conducted in 36 municipalities, presented in 16 languages and we are on target to complete 325 sessions by the end of 2005.**





## Older Men: New Ideas

Over the past decade there has been a significant focus on women's health and the determinants of ill health for women. In contrast, there has been little attention given to men's health issues.

The Australian Medical Association has recently identified men's health as a priority concern. Research is indicating that men have lower life expectancy, increased cardiovascular mortality, increased rates of injury and poisoning. Men 75 years and above have the highest rate of suicide in our community. A significant percentage of men in this age group are undertaking caring responsibilities.

The Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) initiative of COTA and the Older Men's Health Project are important steps to establishing men's health on the policy agenda. The model allows men to talk to other men about issues affecting their lives.

Since its inception, three OM:NI groups have been established in Boroondara, Stonnington and Croydon Hills. We have also launched a number of local forums, including, 'Older Men Celebrating Life Forum' in Canterbury.

We have successfully applied for funding with the Department of Veteran Affairs to partner with RSLs in the development of new OM:NI groups in 2005-06, while we continue to receive invaluable support from Balwyn Rotary.

To help spread the important health messages associated with the program we have recently published the OM:NI Victoria Newsletter and we have participated in the planning for the 6<sup>th</sup> Men's Health Conference in Melbourne October 2005. We have also promoted OM:NI at Seniors Week Festival ('Keeping Your Dreams Alive' talk); through radio 3RPH, local newspapers and presentations to community groups.

### ***The Future***

It is envisaged that over the next 12 months 6 new OM:NI groups will be established, 2 of which will be from regional Victoria.

We will also continue to highlight and increase awareness of older men's health issues and push for a comprehensive men's health strategy to be developed at both State and Federal levels of government.

**"OM:NI and the Older Men's Health Project are important steps to establishing men's health on the policy agenda."**





## Retirement Villages Residents Association

COTA Victoria is currently establishing a Retirement Villages Residents Association. Such associations exist in other states and provide a collective voice on the issues, needs and problems affecting the residents of retirement villages.

There are currently over 400 retirement villages in Victoria housing 25,000 residents, with demand for places expected to rise dramatically in the future as the population ages.

The Association will be a members' organisation that is run by, and for residents and will contribute to the development of government policy, provide general information to residents on retirement village matters and will promote the rights and obligations of residents.

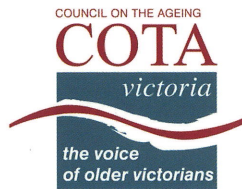
In July and August residents were informed through direct mail and seniors newspapers that the project had commenced and expressions of interest were sought for positions on the interim committee of the association.

An excellent response was received resulting in the formation of the RVRA interim committee in early October 2005. The interim committee will guide and steer the development of the association until a member elected committee is formed in 2006.

### ***The Future***

Over the next few months the Association will become an independent incorporated entity with a primary focus on supporting residents to form committees and taking a lead role in providing information to the Victorian community on entering, living in and leaving retirement villages.

The Association will also continue to develop relationships with key stakeholders such as the retirement village industry and government.



## Better Work Family Balance

Flexible work practices that assist employees with family responsibilities can increase productivity and reduce costs as employers' interests and employees' responsibilities are matched.

It's is becoming increasingly recognised that employees often need to deal with their personal and care responsibilities.

As part of the Better Work and Family Balance Program established by Industrial Relations Victoria in 2003, COTA has received funding to manage a twelve month project that looks specifically at 'needs assessment'.

Commencing in August 2005, the project involves co-coordinating ten organizations and providing support in education, assessment and development of work-family policies and procedures. A major focus of the project is to engage as many participants from each site as possible and to develop a strong foundation for future strategic planning in this important area.

### ***Partner Organisations***

Broadmeadows Employment  
Project  
Broadmeadows Disability Services  
Centacare - Ballarat  
Diversitat - Geelong  
Dutchcare - Frankston

Financial Industry Complaints  
Service - Melbourne  
Glastonbury - Geelong  
Open Family - South Melbourne  
South Central Migrant Resource  
Centre - Oakleigh

### **Cycling with COTA Victoria**

**COTA Victoria has continued to run a highly successful Cycling Group under the enthusiastic management of Janet Bennett.**

**Once again the group has explored new territory in and around Melbourne with a combination of short and longer rides to accommodate the preferences of the 40 strong cyclists who participate in the weekly program.**







## Aged Services Network (ASN) Western Region

COTA Victoria auspices the Aged Services Network, Western Region (ASN), which represents all aged service providers in the Region, including those that receive funding from the Federal and State governments.

The Network includes HACC-funded and other agencies that provide services to people with disabilities, representatives from government, the Western Region's Ethnic Services and Carer, PCP and Disability networks. The ASN Committee is chaired by COTA Victoria, ensuring that the consumer perspective informs the work of service providers through the partnership.

The Network aims to ensure that improved, more flexible aged care can be delivered in culturally appropriate, coordinated and efficient ways.

This year the ASN Committee undertook a Strategic Planning process resulting in the development of a three year framework for 2005 –2008.

The Plan has identified the following priorities:

- Advocacy, with an emphasis on issues related to consumers and aged care, particularly older carers, family carers, non-traditional carers, older people with disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Facilitate planning for aged care service providers in the Western Region to ensure quality of care to the target group
- Service system development including the collection of hard data or evidence on the adequacy of resources in the Western Region

### ***Consultation of Regional HACC Plan: Annual Growth Funds Distribution***

In 2005, the ASN again worked with the North & Western Metropolitan Regions of the Department for Human Services to support an effective consultation process for the regional HACC plan. Regional HACC planning coordinates funding distribution for HACC across the new North and West Metropolitan Region (NWMR) of Melbourne. The ASN will be engaged with DHS to facilitate changes to joint planning processes in 2005 for the following triennium.

## **Aged Services Network (ASN) Western Region** (Cont'd)

### ***ASN HACC Training***

A substantial budget increase this year has resulted in a welcome expansion of training opportunities for HACC service providers in the West. By the end of this year 50 training calendar events will have been delivered for up to 1000 staff and volunteers from the full range of HACC services.

Additionally, the HACC Regional Training Advisory Committee has taken the opportunity to explore other methods to meet regional learning and development needs. A number of new projects have been initiated including:

- Conducting a mentoring project to assist coordinators of social support programs to develop the skills to write policies and procedures
- Establishing a professional development group for HACC managers

The committee has also actively sought out partnerships to ensure that HACC staff and volunteers have access to a wide range of training opportunities including:

- Mental health training provided as part of the Beyond Blue Program
- Autism Training provided as part of the DHS Autism Consultation and Training Strategy
- Communication training provided by the North Western Metropolitan Communication Services
- Culturally specific training delivered by member organisations of the Ethnic Services Network.

### ***Western Region CALD Aged Care Strategic Plan 2003-2008***

COTA Victoria and ASN are represented on the Advisory Committee for this project, which is auspiced by the Western Region's Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs). In 2005, the Advisory Committee reviewed the CALD Strategic Plan to guide continued work for 2006-2008. The work undertaken in the West was the catalyst for the State Government's Culturally Equitable Gateways Strategy (CEGS) initiative. Significant funding has been provided to the West, including support for several CEGS Outreach Officers and the CALD Program Coordinator auspiced by COTA Victoria.





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