

COUNCIL ON THE AGEING

COTA

victoria

*the voice
of older victorians*



ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Vision

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria's vision is to contribute to a just, equitable and humane society in which older people are able to age with dignity and purpose.

Mission

COTA Victoria's mission is to mobilise older people and those who work with them to age well in a just society.

Board of Management

John Wise	President
Anne O'Shaugnessy	Chair - Policy Council
Eddie Paulsen	Treasurer
Bob Barron	
Judy Dunster	
Delys Sargeant	
Patrick Moore	
Sue Healy	

President

It is a pleasure for me as President of Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria to highlight our achievements and recognize the outstanding work accomplished by so many over the last year. COTA Victoria has in the year further consolidated its position as one of the key organizations representing the interests of older Victorians. It continues to maintain dynamism and coherence in its vision, mission and goals. Its achievements over the year are many and are listed in detail later in the report. But some stand out and should be highlighted.

COTA Victoria has continued to increase its work in developing mechanisms to hear and promote seniors voices. This has included the development of a model for "Have Your Say" consultations now held in three locations, and the development of research methods to solicit ideas, issues and responses to these, which came together into key policy and election documents. Seniors Voices has become the banner under which this work will continue and expand into the future.

We have continued to undertake projects in partnerships and in response to the strategic directions of the organisation, to deliver outcomes for all senior Victorians.

We have diversified our funding base and received funding from Trusts and departments with whom we have not had a funding relationship with before, as well as increased membership numbers in both the individual and organisational categories.

It is important and appropriate that the outstanding work of our human resources is mentioned. Volunteers are our members in action, whether it is as Policy Council members or as Facilitators or speakers out amongst older people, and as importantly assisting the organisation in its administration and computer courses. Over 80 people volunteer their skills, knowledge and time to COTA Victoria to enable the many diverse tasks to be fulfilled.

Our volunteer program is enabling us to achieve many things; but two keys aspects must be mentioned. Firstly, how important it is for the organisation to have older people at the forefront of our work, it is essential we walk the talk, and secondly the work is to be valuable for the person to do and should use and or develop their skills.

I thank all our volunteers for their contribution to our success in achieving our vision.

The leadership of the Executive Officer Sue Hendy, cannot be over stated when acknowledging our substantial achievements over the year. She has led a very committed staffing team that is always seeking to enhance performance and provide guidance in policy development, education and service delivery.

It is no coincidence that a strong organization has a Board that shows great leadership and commitment to sound governance. The tireless work of all Board members is greatly appreciated. The contributions of Judith Dunster and Ian Russell who have retired in the last year will be greatly missed.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of Gavin Jennings the Minister for Senior Victorians and the staff of his portfolio in Office of Senior Victorians and Department of Human Services. While we have not always agreed on issues, his willingness to make himself available for consultations and to consider new ideas is greatly valued.



Treasurers report

This year has again shown a pleasing strong growth in revenue brought about largely by significant increases in grants received.

However, following the demerger with COTA National seniors in the previous financial year, it was necessary to allocate funds in 2005/06 to a range of initiatives (such as membership development) to ensure the long-term financial viability of COTA Victoria. The outcome has been a net deficit of \$38,022 for the year.

Peter Sexton of WHK Greenwoods again audited the COTA Victoria's financial affairs for the year ended 30 June 2006.

Key results

	2005-06	2004-05
Ordinary Activities		
Revenue	\$1,622,035	\$1,508,925
Expenses	\$1,660,057	\$1,301,095
Net	(\$38,022)	\$ 207,830
Net Assets		
Reserves	\$ 474,586	\$ 512,610
Cash	\$ 385,862	\$ 464,944
Fixed	\$ 88,724	\$ 47,666
Total Assets	\$ 859,078	\$1,035,214
Total Liabilities	\$ 384,492	\$ 522,604

Bequests & 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 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.

Executive Director

COTA Victoria is an organisation of older people, which exists to bring about positive social change. Its roles are to provide directly to older people and their carers, services, facilities and programs, which contribute to their well-being. Also, to advocate on behalf of the needs, rights and interests of older people, giving priority to those suffering injustice, discrimination, disadvantage or disability.

Given the broad scope of our roles and purposes and the many demands on our resources, the Board has adopted Strategic and Business Plans to ensure that we maintain a focus on achievements in key areas.

In 2006 our strategic priorities have been:

Represent the View of Older Victorians

Many older people participate in our processes of policy development and representation. Our representations are based on research and the development of realistic policy recommendations that we present to governments and other key stakeholders. Our research focuses on the conditions under which older Victorians are living, and the issues about which they feel most strongly.

Information Provision and Community Education

We seek to provide timely accurate information that will enable older Victorians to make informed decisions. We develop and conduct educational programs that challenge negative stereotypes about ageing and empower older people.

Membership and services for older Victorians

Membership is one way in which individuals and seniors and community organisations support our mission. Members contribute their expertise to all our activities and enable us to develop good products for seniors.

Confronting ageism

We create and organise programs that contribute to positive social change for older Victorians for example, COTA's OM:NI groups of older men and the Living Longer Living Stronger program that promotes progressive strength training for people of all ages over 50.

Organisational sustainability and continuous improvement

We strive for constant improvement to COTA Victoria itself, in terms of evolving services and updated organisational practice to ensure effectiveness and long-term financial viability.

Represent the View of Older Victorians

COTA Victoria's Policy Council, comprising Board members, COTA Victoria's Executive Director and other interested seniors, governs our policy directions and activities. The Council meets monthly to share information, monitor the work of policy working groups and staff, and decide our policy positions.

At its annual planning meeting for 2006 the Policy Council identified seven strategic priorities that were accepted by the Board as our primary focus for work for the next year.

State Government Budget

Using data gathered from polling of older, focus groups and individual submissions, our Policy Council presented a set of recommendations to the Victorian Treasurer, the Hon. John Brumby, ahead of the 2006 State Budget. This process culminated in COTA Victoria's inaugural Post Budget Breakfast, at which relevant State Government ministers presented the 2006 budget to numerous older people's organisations, and acknowledged COTA's role in drawing up budget priorities.

Elder Abuse

State government's adoption of the recommendations of the Cooney review was the culmination of months of intensive work by COTA Victoria's Policy Council and staff members. We made a formal submission to the review, were active members of the Elder Abuse task force, conducted seminars and participated in those of other stakeholders. Our key objective was to ensure that vulnerable older people are given the support they need to live their lives with confidence and security. Through our national body, COTA Over 50s Alliance, we contributed significant input into the work by the Australian Federal Minister for Ageing, Santo Santoro, on prevention of elder abuse in aged care facilities.

Retirement Villages legislation and regulations

Scores of residents participated in our consultations as we assessed the details and implications of proposed changes to government regulations. We successfully negotiated with key interest groups to modify the government's proposal and convinced the Minister to adopt them. As a direct result of this controversial and demanding initiative we have formed a working group, which includes key provider organisations and resident groups, to enable us to identify and resolve future issues. COTA established the Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV), and we continue to work collaboratively with the organisation, that now has over 1,150 paid-up members.



Residential Aged Care

Through our national body, COTA Over 50s Alliance, we made some representations to Minister Santoro on issues related to the long-term recommendations of the Hogan Review. Further work on equitable ways to fund the building and maintenance of aged care facilities is required to ensure that access to high quality care is available to all who need it. We have also contributed directly to a federal government project to identify appropriate indicators of quality care that can be used in the accreditation process for aged care facilities.

Issues facing people from non-English speaking backgrounds

Representatives from Ethnic Communities Council Victoria and ethnic seniors' organisations have been invited to participate in all our consultations to ensure that their specific perspectives are included in our deliberations.

Rainbow Seniors

Gay & Lesbian seniors often fear or directly experience discrimination. COTA Victoria has developed the Rainbow Seniors program to provide access to specific information to these seniors, and has formed partnerships with the ALSO Foundation and Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria to undertake consultations, address issues of discrimination and develop relevant policy responses where required.



Poverty and financial disadvantage

Planning is underway for a major campaign in 2007 to highlight the inadequacy of the single pension, and difficulties faced by those on low incomes as the cost of living rises faster than inflation. Action will be directed to the national level in regard to pensions and charges for health and aged care, and to state government for concessions and charges.

Community care

As part of the Victorian Community Care Coalition we contributed to a major discussion paper, *Moving to Centre Stage*. The initiative concerns community care for the aged over the next 10 years, and will inform Victoria's contribution to a national review of Community Care services.

COTA Victoria has represented older people and directly contributed to many different government reviews, reports and committees; namely:

- Ministerial Housing Task Force
- Taskforce on Elder Abuse
- Victorian Oral Health Alliance
- Victorian Community Care Coalition
- Body Corporate Review
- Victims of Crime Charter
- Health & Social Services Access cards
- Companion card
- Central Region Water Sustainability Strategy
- Yarra Water community consultant committee
- Home & Community Care Advisory committee
- Presentations to many conferences and seminars
- Public Transport Users Advisory Committee
- Accessible Transport & Accessible Taxis working group
- Fairer Victoria
- VCOSS joint discussions and action on ageing.



Information Provision and Community Education

Seniors Information Victoria

Now in its 7th year as Seniors Information Victoria (SIV), COTA Victoria's information service has had a challenging 2006. The year began with an extensive review of the service by the Office of Senior Victorians, resulting in its endorsement of SIV's current activities and recommendations for future directions. The CBD shopfront is well established, and with the increased visibility of the service and ongoing promotion, contact with the service continues to rise with a total of 17,078 contacts for the year, which is over 3,000 more than the previous year. Almost 50% of contact with SIV is now 'through the door' at 247 Flinders Lane. In terms of further development of the service, a focus will be on increasing awareness of the service in regional areas.

The issue that underpins the majority of contact with Seniors Information Victoria is the difficulty of making ends meet on a fixed income, whether it be a government or superannuation pension. This income is not keeping up with the cost of living or the need for particular services. A large percentage of contact relates to low-cost accommodation options, concessions, access to subsidised services (such as dental care and aids for independent living), free or minimal cost recreation or learning opportunities, and reverse mortgages as a means of maintaining a person's home and garden or providing an additional income. Increasingly there is contact from people approaching retirement who are seeking information on planning their finances, their eligibility for concessions, and low cost exercise and recreational opportunities.

Our Need to Know information sessions, established in response to frequent requests for particular information, such as "Considering a Retirement Village", "Local Government Services for seniors" and "Power of Attorney", have been well attended throughout the year. Feedback from participants is positive and expresses appreciation for the opportunity to "become informed".

A terrific group of volunteers has continued their involvement with the service, bringing their enthusiasm to their particular role, whether it be greeting visitors to SIV or assisting with the management of the various information resources, including the maintenance of an extensive database. This database is an essential tool in responding to enquiries. Their support has provided valuable assistance in meeting our increasing needs.

Community Education

2005-2006 has been a time of reflection, research and development of existing programs. Peer education continues to be a priority, and we have continued to develop our capacity through recruitment, training and resourcing of our dedicated band of peer leaders and the programs they support. We have found that the Peer Educator model of education is the most effective with older people.

Our Speakers program has been busy exploring a range of topics that appeal to the interests and needs of our growing and changing community. To this end, forging partnerships with like organisations such as Victorian Economic Chamber of Commerce Institute, Municipal Association of Victoria and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, is ongoing with many of the benefits of these to be realised in the next calendar year.

Seniors Access to Information Networks

Commonly known as SATIN, this program has continued to provide education, training and access to our members and the broader Victorian community, to help older people gain confidence in the ever evolving world of Information Technology. This year approximately 78 people over the age of 50 have accessed the service, and interest is growing, despite a growing number of IT education programs offered by various organisations, in part due to COTA Victoria's emphasis on peer facilitation. A recent comment from a new learner about his Peer Educator: "If she had been my teacher at school I would have excelled – such patience."

As we embark on another phase of SATIN in the coming year we would like to acknowledge the efforts of Don Ellard, who has been this program's mentor over the past 9 years.

Community Quality Use of Medicines

The Seniors Community Quality Use of Medicines (CQUM) Program completed its first stage contract on 31 December 2005 with 320 community information sessions presented to seniors' clubs and community groups throughout Victoria. This was part of a national program conducted in partnership with the National Prescribing Service through all COTA states and territories, which combined presented over 1,400 talks Australia wide.

Under the program, COTA Victoria has trained over 30 Peer Educators who have facilitated the free medicine information sessions for a wide variety of groups, including senior citizen clubs, service clubs, chronic illness support groups, Living Longer Living Stronger partners, community health centres, local government services, activity and interest clubs, carers' groups, migrant resource centres, Probus

clubs, life learning groups, retirement villages and day programs.

Overall, the program has successfully presented our message to approximately 7,800 consumers and has taken us to 43 municipalities across regional and metropolitan Victoria. Through the support of Seniors Information Victoria we have provided the information sessions in 18 languages other than English, including one session in sign language. The diverse nature of the groups that seek the sessions indicate a wide range of needs and issues that concern consumers in relation to medicine use.

Negotiations were undertaken this year to launch the next stage of the CQUM Program, and COTA Victoria is now working towards the new target of an additional 500 sessions by June 2008. This involves training more Peer Educators, the development of a new training module in generic medicines and creating opportunities to market sessions through community partnerships.

The HACC Training Advisory Committee

The Western area HACC Training Advisory Committee continues to provide high quality training and developmental opportunities for staff and volunteers of HACC funded programs in the West. Fifty-one training calendar events will have been delivered by the end of 2006, to upwards of 950 staff and volunteers.

Highlights from 2006 include:

- Facilitation of forums in the areas of elder abuse prevention, diabetes management, promotion of well-being through respite and falls prevention.
- Production of the Sample Policy & Procedures Manual and Resource Kit for HACC Social Support Programs to assist agencies in their preparation of agency specific policies and procedures.
- The attainment of Certificate IV in Service Co-ordination by 10 HACC co-ordinating staff via a funded skills recognition process.
- The appointment of a part time Administration Officer resulting in improved efficiency of, and access to, training events and better communication flow.
- In preparation for 2007, a survey of skills, qualifications and training needs will be conducted across the region commencing in October 2006.

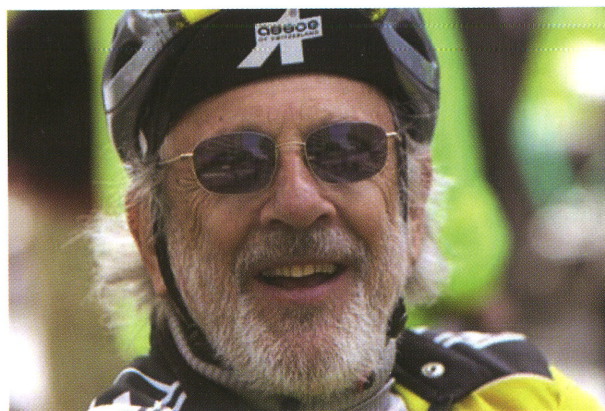
Financial Literacy For Women

The Financial Literacy For Women workshops was funded by the Office of Women's Policy, Office of Senior Victorians and Helen Macpherson Smith Trust (HMST) to implement a series of workshops in 10 locations across Victoria. The feedback from women who attended the sessions was overwhelmingly positive. However attracting women to the sessions was not as successful. We are working with Women's Information Referral Exchange (WIRE) and HMST to explore the issue of relevance and information transmission further.

Membership and services for older Victorians

COTA Victoria's vision is achieved is achieved through our work for all senior Victorians, and areas such as SIV and education services continue to seek ways to reach more seniors.

In addition to our universal services, we provide membership to people over 18, with full voting rights for those over 50 years. This year we have introduced a new product into its membership scheme that provides even more discounts to seniors, beyond the existing insurance products. The scheme provides discounts to supermarkets, petrol and other everyday household items, as well as broader dining, leisure and travel discounts.



Confronting ageism

Ageism, based on negative stereotypes, diminishes people's life opportunities. Our representation, information and community education programs focus on challenging negative stereotypes and encouraging attitudes and behaviours that value older people and their capacities. In addition, we organise or contribute to a number of innovative programs that demonstrate the capacities of older people and develop good practice amongst service providers to remove barriers to participation by older people.

Senior of The Year and Senior Achievers Awards

Positive role models and showcasing the valuable work that seniors do in our community is one way of confronting ageism and underpins the purpose of these awards, which COTA Victoria initiated and are undertaken in partnership with government.

Enhancing Practice Program

The Enhancing Practice Program is a partnership project, designed and delivered by COTA Victoria and Northern Health. Funding for the program is via the Department of Human Services, as part of the initiative of Refocussing Culture and Improving Care for Older People. The program gives a wide range of health service workers the opportunity to explore issues of ageing, ageism and approaches to person-centred care in a multi-disciplinary environment. Participants are encouraged to consider how the delivery of services to patients and their carers can be enhanced.

During the 2005/06 financial year, 19 programs (comprising 230 participants) were completed around the state, with a further rollout of 32 programs in 2006/07 anticipated. COTA Victoria's facilitators have undergone training and development, with 7 facilitators currently involved in Enhancing Practice Program delivery. Evaluation of the program has been extremely positive from individuals, managers and health services. The range of "action plans" developed by participants as a quality outcome of the program point to key impacts and improvements in the areas of person-centred care, care needs, the physical environment, education and partnerships within the health service.



Positive Ageing Project

A joint project focusing on local communities is a project between COTA Victoria and Municipal Association of Victoria, funded by Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) to work with local government to create more age-friendly communities. The project was funded to provide grants to local councils to undertake demonstration projects around key themes and to create new ways of engaging older people in their communities. Two adjunct projects to this include educational workshops with council staff and older people facilitated by COTA Victoria, and a project to determine age-friendly indicators, within a research model being undertaken worldwide and overseen by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Living Longer Living Stronger™

The Living Longer Living Stronger™ (LLLS) endorsement scheme provides safe effective strength training programs for people over the age of 50 through an endorsement scheme. Increased strength and muscle mass can control chronic diseases and minimise physical deterioration caused by loss of muscle that comes with inactivity as we age.

Through the endorsement of 120 health and fitness centres, approximately 7,000 Victorians over the age of 50 are gaining and maintaining their strength to support them in their day-to-day functional activities.

Endorsed Partners

Community Health Centres	24
Community facilities	15
Rehabilitation Centres	6
Health and Fitness Centres	75

Sport and Recreation Victoria have recognised the need for the endorsement scheme to be financially self-sustaining and has provided funding to engage a consultancy firm, Dean McClean Carlson, to undertake a business case review. Their recommendations will be put to the Board in October 2006.

The theme of the annual COTA Living Longer Living Stronger™ conference, held in May 2006, was to "Strengthen your Body of Knowledge". It targeted health and fitness professionals who design, instruct and promote the program. The conference attracted 160 delegates, and presenters included Dr. David Dunston from the International Diabetes Institute, Prof. Rob Newton, Edith Cowan University, WA and Craig Harper, author and highly respected personal trainer in Victoria. The conference was opened by the Hon. Gavin Jennings, Minister for Senior Victorians, who announced a \$30,000 increase in funding to the program. This funding will subsidise enrolment costs for people to undertake accredited health and fitness training. Priority for grants will go to people who display a strong commitment to working with people over the age of 50, who are living in rural areas, or who belong to the CALD community.

The next twelve months will see the LLLS program grow and gain even more support from the government sector, the health and fitness industry, which will further assist in the delivery of high quality strength training programs in all sectors of the community.

Cycling

COTA Cyclers continue to meet every week to investigate the many trails and paths of Melbourne and beyond. The group has swelled in number to over forty regular riders, including all ages over 50, with a mix of fitness and life experiences on the bike. Janet Bennett and her team create these wonderful social gatherings of physical activity.

Older Men New Ideas

The second year of the Older Men's Health Project has seen an acceleration in the growth of Older Men New Ideas (OM:NI) groups in Victoria. Five new groups have been established bringing the total to eight groups. This includes the first group outside Melbourne, in Belmont, Geelong.

This growth was possible as a result of continued financial support from the Rotary Club of Balwyn. Mr Ken Davis from the Balwyn Club has again been a vital link and supporter. Together with funding from the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) it enabled the project worker to expand his hours. DVA funds have been focussed on attracting Veterans into OM:NI groups. Two of the new groups this year have been formed in conjunction with RSLs.

The expansion of OM:NI has been built upon developing partnerships with service providers and interested people in local areas. In addition to RSL's this has included local councils, community centres, Do Care, community health centres, Vision Australia and Uniting Care (Brimbank Men's Shed).

An increasing number of OM:NI group participants have taken an active role in OM:NI's growth and development this year, volunteering to talk about their experience of OM:NI at the launch of new groups, and at other forums to encourage other men to get involved. Richard Fisher (Croydon Hills OM:NI) and Ralph Johnson (Boroondara OM:NI) have been particularly active and invaluable in this.

OM:NI will expand into more areas with a particular focus on regional and rural Victorian communities. The pace at which this growth occurs will be largely dependent on securing additional funding for the co-ordinating position.



Aged Services Network Western Region

The Aged Services Network, Western Region (ASN), under COTA Victoria's auspice, represents all aged service providers in the Western Metropolitan Region. The Network includes HACC-funded and other agencies that provide services to older people, including GPs, allied health, hospital and community health providers, representatives from Local, State and Commonwealth governments, and the Western Region's Ethnic Services, Carer, PCP and Disability networks. COTA Victoria chairs the ASN committee, ensuring that the consumer perspective informs the work of service providers.

In 2004-2005, the ASN Committee undertook a Strategic Planning process resulting in the development of a 3-year framework for 2005-2008. The ASN Strategic Plan 2005-2008 identified the following priorities:

- Facilitate planning for Aged Care service providers in the Western Metropolitan Area 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 WMA and the NW Metropolitan Region.
- Represent WMA aged service providers in a range of forums and planning and policy settings, with an emphasis on issues related to consumers and aged services, particularly older carers, family carers, non-traditional carers, older people with disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

DHS HACC Regional Planning

In 2005, the ASN again helped facilitate the consultation process for the NWMR DHS Regional HACC Plan 2003-2006. The process in 2005 was undertaken to fine-tune the distribution of HACC Growth funds across the new North and West Metropolitan Region (NWMR). The ASN also provided input to DHS in planning for changes to joint planning processes for the following triennium, 2006-2009.

The ASN contributed to a number of activities, which included:

- EACH Dementia Consultation
- 2006 NWMR Regional HACC Consultation
- Consultation on the National Framework for Action on Dementia
- Victorian Aids & Equipment Program Review
- VicHealth & DHS Consultation Health Promotion Priorities 2007-2012
- VicUrban "Communities for All Ages"
- A Fairer West – Western region Social Justice Network
- Brimbank Senior Citizens' Petition Campaign
- Western Region CALD Aged Care Strategic Plan 2003-2008

The ASN provided co-location for the Western Metropolitan Area (WMA) CALD Community Development, and supported the WMA Culturally Equitable Gateways Strategy including chairing of the Committee meetings and the CALD Health Promotion Project Working Group.

Organisational sustainability and continuous improvement

COTA Victoria's New look

As we emerged from the national deliberations, it was time to review our look and communication processes with members and the broader community. We have developed a new livery of products, including logo, style guide, website, annual report, membership brochure and general information pamphlets.

Internal Policies and Procedures

The organisation has grown significantly over the past five years, which has required a review of existing policies and procedures, and the corresponding updating and inclusion of new areas of interest, responsibilities and operation.





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