

Impact report 2025-26

Advocacy for older Victorians



For over 75 years, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria have worked alongside older people to shape policies, services, and systems that support safety, dignity, inclusion, and quality of life.

Our advocacy is grounded in the experiences of older Victorians. During the 2025–26 financial year, we heard from more than 1,500 older people through a variety of engagements. Across seven statewide surveys, targeted consultations, community conversations, and engagement with sector partners, we built an evidence base that translated lived experience into [policy positions, submissions, research, and recommendations](#).

Older Victorians are not a single group with shared experiences, and our work sought to ensure that policies and systems recognise this diversity. This approach underpins the work undertaken by the Policy & Advocacy team, across policy areas outlined in this briefing.

Embedding ageing across government

Ageing intersects with every area of public policy. Older people's experiences of housing, health, disability, employment, emergency

management, family violence, digital access, and economic security are shaped by decisions made across government portfolios. However, policy and programs are not always developed with sufficient consideration of how older people experience these systems differently.

During 2025–26, we continued to advocate for ageing to be recognised as a whole-of-government consideration rather than an issue confined to a single portfolio. This is reflected in the diversity of our participation across sectors, as well products such as our state budget submission and election platform.

We also contributed to ageing and non-ageing-specific policy and program processes, including numerous parliamentary and departmental consultations, the Senior Victorians Advisory Council, delivery of core elements of the Ageing Well Action Plan, and local consultations.

This work was underpinned by the development and dissemination of research publications, submissions, member briefings, and community engagement that consistently reinforced the importance of recognising older people's diversity, strengths, and contributions.

Economic security

Economic security is fundamental to ageing well and is at the core of many of the issues affecting older Victorians. During 2025–26, we advocated for policies and systems that recognise the structural factors contributing to financial insecurity in later life and the ways that intersects with housing, health, energy, aged care, and protection from abuse.

Our research, [“Addressing economic security gaps for older women in Victoria,”](#) drew on 40 survey responses and 27 in-depth interviews to explore the cumulative impacts of unpaid caring, workforce discrimination, housing insecurity, family violence, and inadequate retirement savings. The research demonstrated that financial insecurity in later life reflects disadvantage accumulated over a lifetime. This evidence informed discussions with government, financial counselling services, and the family violence sector.

We also contributed to the Australian Government's review of superannuation death benefits by bringing an elder abuse perspective to the reform process. We highlighted the ways financial abuse occurs in later life and advocated for stronger protections to prevent perpetrators from benefiting from the superannuation of older people they have abused.

Our work reinforced that economic security is not a standalone policy issue but a foundation for healthy ageing, central to older people's independence, safety, health and quality of life.

Housing, energy, and the cost of living

Secure, affordable, and appropriate housing is essential to older Victorians' independence and

wellbeing. During 2025–26, we advocated for stronger protections, improved affordability, and greater transparency across housing and essential services.

Our advocacy included submissions to retirement housing reforms, the Victorian state budget, and engagement with ministers, government departments, regulators, and the housing sector. We advocated for fairer and more transparent retirement village contracts, stronger resident protections, accessible dispute resolution pathways, clearer consumer information, non-digital options for accessing services, and recognition of elder abuse risks within retirement housing settings.

We also continued to advocate for better support for older Victorians experiencing housing insecurity through our older women's economic insecurity research and subsequent discussions.

As cost-of-living pressures continued, we made several submissions highlighting the challenges older consumers face navigating increasingly complex energy markets, including financial hardship, digital exclusion, and barriers to accessing concessions.

Our recommendations focused on more equitable embedded network pricing, clearer consumer information, improved life support protections, greater uptake of concessions and stronger human-centred support services. Many of these recommendations have since been reflected in reforms, including clearer bills and enhanced consumer support.

We also highlighted the risk that co-contribution requirements under Support at Home may lead some older people to delay or forgo essential services because they cannot afford the cost, advocating – in collaboration with the COTA

National Alliance – for accessible hardship arrangements and funding settings that ensure financial circumstances do not become a barrier to care.

Health, aged care, and disability

The team continued to advocate for health and aged care systems that are accessible, equitable, and responsive to the experiences of older people.

As aged care reforms progressed, insights from our own education and Care Finder teams, alongside engagement with the wider sector, identified emerging challenges associated with the implementation of Support at Home. Our collaborative advocacy has highlighted affordability pressures, barriers in thin markets, access to hardship assistance, and the need for accessible information to help older people navigate reform.

This work informed practical recommendations for government and led to the publication [“Aged care supports in Victoria,”](#) which supports older Victorians to better understand and navigate the aged care system.

We also contributed to legislative reform through engagement on the 2025 aged care medication bill, advocating for reforms that support safeguard, high-quality care.

Recognising that disability and ageing cannot be considered separately, we published and continued engagement efforts relating to our [disability supports “Agenda for Action”](#) and [“Inclusive Use of Digital and Non-digital Communications for Older People with Disability,”](#) alongside member briefings on digital inclusion and aged care reform for multicultural CHSP providers.

Together, these resources reinforced the importance of accessible information, inclusive service design, and recognising older people with disability as experts in their own lives.

Elder abuse

A focus of our elder abuse advocacy was ensuring the experiences of older people were recognised within family violence reforms, including discussions about the proposed criminalisation of coercive control. Through government roundtables, submissions, and engagement with decision makers, we continued to advocate for recognition that elder abuse is a distinct form of family violence requiring tailored responses.

We emphasised that legislative reform must be accompanied by sustained investment in prevention, community education, workforce capability, early intervention, and diversion pathways.

We also contributed to the development of the [2nd National Plan to end the abuse and mistreatment of older people](#), advocating more measurable language and commitments, funding to underpin the delivery of actions, and a roadmap of what’s been achieved to date as well as actions that remain in progress.

This work was strengthened through publications including reference guides on intersectionality in elder abuse which highlight how age, disability, gender, culture and other characteristics intersect to shape experiences of abuse and access to support.

We also continued to coordinate the Victorian Elder Abuse Strategic Alliance, strengthening collaboration across government and community organisations to ensure older people's experiences remain central to reform.

Emergency preparedness and climate resilience

Older people can face disproportionate risks when emergency systems fail to consider factors such as mobility, disability, lived experience of disasters, digital inclusivity, housing insecurity, and social connection.

During 2025–26, we developed Australia's first [“Age-Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Guideline,”](#) informed by the experiences of more than 300 older Victorians and carers.

Rather than viewing older people primarily through the lens of vulnerability, the guideline recognises their skills, knowledge, and lived experience as important contributors to community resilience. It provides practical guidance for governments, emergency management organisations, and community services to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery while ensuring older people's needs and contributions are recognised.

Participation, leadership, and challenging ageism

Throughout our advocacy, we have continued to challenge ageism and promote recognition of older people as active contributors to Victorian communities.

Our work on leadership and participation explored the opportunities and barriers affecting older Victorians' involvement in formal and informal leadership roles. Through research, consultation, and sector engagement, we examined pathways into leadership and highlighted the skills and experience older people hold.

This work was supported through the publications [“Older Victorians Shaping Communities”](#) and the accompanying practical guide [“Tips to Step into Leadership,”](#) alongside an online leadership forum that shared practical strategies and lived experience.

We also continued to challenge ageism through publications including [“Discrimination Against Older Workers in Victoria”](#) and the member briefing [“Understanding and Addressing Age Discrimination in Victoria,”](#) highlighting the impacts of age discrimination on employment, volunteering and community participation.

Recognising that participation also depends on connection, we published [“Understanding Loneliness and Connection,”](#) which examines the importance of social inclusion and belonging for healthy ageing.

Together, this work reinforces that older people are not simply recipients of services and support. They are leaders, workers, volunteers, carers, advocates, and community members whose knowledge and lived experience strengthen Victorian communities and should continue to shape the policies and systems that affect them.

Looking ahead

As Victoria's population continues to grow older, recognising, respecting, and including older people in decision-making is essential to building communities where people of all ages can thrive.

By grounding our advocacy in lived experience, evidence, and collaboration, we can continue to bring older people's voices into the decisions that affect them.