

Portfolio summary: Climate resilience

What is the issue?

Victoria is facing a rapidly changing climate and subsequently shifting risk environment. In particular, climate change, population ageing, increasing economic inequality, and the growing frequency and severity of emergencies require more inclusive and coordinated approaches to preparedness, and wellbeing outcomes.

Older Victorians bring significant resilience, knowledge, and community leadership. However, older people are disproportionately affected during emergencies due to systemic barriers including reduced mobility, chronic illness, reliance on assistive technology, social isolation, transport disadvantage, insecure housing, language, and digital exclusion. Many older carers also face additional challenges preparing for emergencies due to the administrative, financial and emotional demands of their caring roles.

Without age-inclusive emergency planning and community resilience measures, older Victorians will continue to face increased risk during disasters and extreme weather events.

Key facts

- Older Australians experience weather-related fatalities at 12.8 times the rate of young people (aged 0–19)ⁱ.
- The 2009 Victorian heatwave caused 374 excess deaths above expected levels; those aged 70+ accounted for the overwhelming majorityⁱⁱ.
- Nearly 1 in 3 extreme weather hospitalisations involves a person aged 65+ⁱⁱⁱ.
- In a COTA Victoria survey of older Victorians conducted in 2025–26:
 - Only 21% were confident they could evacuate quickly.
 - 27% had a written or discussed emergency plan.
 - 89% had experienced an emergency in the past five years.

Our advocacy agenda

To date, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria advocacy work in relation to climate resilience has centred around emergency preparedness and the energy transition.

Through the development of an Age-Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Guideline, we advocated for:

- reducing risks for older people across all stages of emergencies;

- embedding older people and carers in emergency planning, co-design and evaluation;
- ensuring emergency information, warnings and preparedness tools are accessible and inclusive;
- integrating the needs of older people into municipal emergency management planning and community resilience strategies; and
- strengthening coordination between emergency services, local government, health services, aged care providers, multicultural organisations and community groups.

Alongside this Guideline, we have developed submissions, conducted research, and provided advice to decision makers and organisations within the energy sector, to support an inclusive transition towards more affordable, green energy systems and structures that considers the needs and preferences of older Victorians.

Recent COTA Victoria documents:

- An [*Older Age-Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Guideline*](#), that supports local municipal councils and emergency responders to meet legal obligations, improve safety and wellbeing, and ensure that every older Victorian is included, prepared, supported and treated with dignity in times of crisis
- <https://cotavic.org.au/policy/submission/submission-review-of-the-energy-retail-code-of-practice/>
- <https://cotavic.org.au/info/energy/energy-conservation-and-efficiency/>
- <https://cotavic.org.au/policy/submission/energy-retail-code-of-practice-review/>
- <https://cotavic.org.au/policy/publication/our-energy-futures/>
- <https://cotavic.org.au/news/media-release/victorian-default-offer-draft-decision-welcomed-but-older-victorians-still-need-access-to-cheaper-energy/>

Feedback on any issue raised in this briefing can be provided through our policy advocacy survey tool accessible at: [COTA Victoria Policy Advocacy - Feedback on Publications – Fill out form](#).

Last updated: June 2026

ⁱ <https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/78572/1/78572.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=14ec91a8-6a8f-492e-89ba-c1c2352d8420#:~:text=There%20were%20374%20excess%20deaths,for%20the%20previous%205%20years.>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/extreme-weather-injuries>