



COTA VICTORIA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th November 2025 online via Zoom and in-person

At Australian Nurses Memorial Centre, Fawkner Towers, Suite 11 / 431 St Kilda Road, Melbourne
VIC 3004 from 10.00am to 10.34am

Our Vision: *Ageing in Australia is a time of possibility, opportunity, and influence*
Our Mission: *COTA advances the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age*

Apologies: **Kathryn Brown (Treasurer)**

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

1. Welcome

The CEO, Ben Rogers welcomed everyone present at the Council On The Ageing Victoria (COTA Victoria) meeting both in-person and on-line.

The CEO acknowledged the past President and Board Members present, Mike Lescai and Greg Nicolls. The CEO also acknowledged former Treasurer, Deputy President and Board member, Graeme Bird.

The CEO also acknowledged the presence of representatives from U3A Victoria, and Life Activities Clubs Victoria.

2. Acknowledgement of Country

The CEO read the acknowledgement of Country.

3. Presidents Report

The President welcomed attendees online and in person. COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria have continued to deliver impact and outcomes for older Victorians over the past. The President explains we improved our financial position, leadership, and connections as the peak body for ageing in Victoria and the leading voice against elder abuse – as well as moving to a new office.

COTA continue to be in a strong financial position despite a tough fiscal environment and are reporting a \$377,000 surplus for the 2024/2025 financial year, building on great financial performance from the previous year.

This is all underpinned by the successful delivery of our programs and services. As always, SRV continues to play a key role in the state's response to, and prevention of, elder abuse. The President declares We are proud to deliver this essential service; it is vital that we drive the agenda around elder abuse, especially as the state faces an ageing population and increasing demand for elder abuse support.



A highlight this year was the launch of our Beyond Age campaign, as part of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2025. Through powerful visual storytelling, older Victorians reflected on ageing with insight and dignity, challenging stereotypes and sparking meaningful conversations. Beyond Age was created as a two-year campaign, and we hope to build on this year's success in 2026.

COTA's policy and advocacy work remained strong. This includes playing a leading role on the Senior Victorians Advisory Committee and ensuring older people's needs were included in state-wide planning and reform.

The President reflects on the great work requires the support of a significant number of funders, supporters and corporate partners and listed those and formally thank each one of them for their support of COTA Victoria and SRV. A comprehensive list is available on our websites, cotavic.org.au and seniorsrights.org.au.

The President showed gratitude to the Board – who are all volunteers – and to CEO Ben Rogers and his dedicated team of over 30 staff at COTA Victoria and SRV for the successes we've achieved over the last 12 months.

As part of this, he also extended his thanks to Ray Cummings, who resigned as a Director in October. Ray has played a key role in positioning this organisation as the peak body for older Victorians. The President deeply appreciates his skill, knowledge, and dedication over the past 2 years.

The President also thanked our board members: Deputy President Tanya O'Connor, Treasurer Kathryn Brown, and Directors Mary Downie, Mark Stokes, Hayley Hunter, and Gerard Mansour. It's very important to reiterate that they're all volunteers and put in a tremendous amount of their own time to ensure COTA Victoria continues to run smoothly. I also want to welcome our new Board members, Bianca Brijnath and Sue Roff, both appointed after a competitive recruitment process, who will bring a new range of skills, experience and insights to support the organisation as we go forward.

He also thanked all the members of COTA Victoria for their ongoing support and look forward to engaging with them and experiencing even greater successes over the next few years.

4. CEO Report

Expressing that it was an honour to speak as the CEO of COTA Victoria and SRV, Ben Rogers stated that it enables him to celebrate and highlight the hard work, dedication and outcomes of his colleagues from across the past year, and acknowledge the contributions of our partners, members, volunteers, staff and Board. He affirmed that COTA Victoria continues to play a leading role in the sector and deliver a range of vital supports and programs, with an impact and reputation that dwarfs its size and funding.

Ben presented that advocacy has been informed by over 350 engagements with members and supporters, including survey responses, online and in-person discussion groups, forums, and workshops, alongside thousands of calls to our COTA WISE and Seniors Rights Victoria helplines.

Community education is a key method for us to support our communities. Across COTA Victoria and SRV's community education programs, we reached over 3,400 older Victorians in 90+ sessions, with a number of these focused on older Victorians in regional areas, those from a CALD background and LGBTIQ+ older people. Connected to this is our COTA WISE information service, which helps older people via telephone and email. This year, we received approximately 2,000 calls to our COTA WISE Helpline. We resolved roughly 150 inquiries each month, with key topics of interest being Aged Care, Centrelink, service navigation, and cost of living issues.

Emerging issues – like those that have arisen from reforms to the Aged Care Act which went into place on 1 November -- are relayed to our policy team, alongside our peers at COTA organisations nationally and across states and territories, to support Victorians.

We have welcomed 354 new members this year, with 1,659 total members at the end of the financial year.

The CEO highlighted Women Working Together. Our Women Working Together employment support program concluded as of 30 June 2025 and supported women aged 50-64 in Melbourne's south-east and west to gain employment, a volunteer position, or engage in training or education. In the past year, we supported approximately 80 women, with many of the participants experiencing long-term unemployment prior to engagement. It was wholly made possible through the wisdom, guidance, and expertise of volunteer mentors who donated their time to this important program.

Our position as a Care Finder organisation, ensures that we can help vulnerable older people who would not be able to arrange aged care services without intensive support — and who do not have a support person who can help — within the City of Kingston. We were grateful to be extended as a provider for another year, and fingers crossed that we will be able to continue to support this cohort going forward.

SRV continues to deliver an incredible statewide service focused on responding to, and preventing, elder abuse. Our Helpline provides advice, information, and referrals to older people and professionals. This year, our Helpline advocates received 13,203 calls, a 12% increase compared to last year, and were able to respond to 3,970 contacts with a total of 5,238 discreet issues. An incredible amount

of work.

SRV operates a multidisciplinary model where lawyers and advocates work together to provide ongoing support to those who are experiencing or at risk of elder abuse. Many clients who receive advice from SRV want to know about their options but do not wish to start legal proceedings. This year, SRV had advice appointments with 233 clients, while opening 103 new cases, and closing 85 cases. We are seeing increasing acuity and complexity in the cases we are managing. The average number of days a case remained open was 646 days, while the longest a case was open was 1,788 days. This puts an increased strain on our resources and the team, as we work to meet community demand.

The CEO expressed a key part for why we can deliver impact is through volunteers, who I deeply thank for their efforts. Volunteers have continued to deliver great work, including Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) groups continuing to provide a safe and supportive environment for older men, our Women Working Together mentors helping people with their job prospects, and our Elder Abuse Peer Educators being key voices to support community awareness.

One of the highlights was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, or WEAAD, which shines a spotlight on the critical issue of elder abuse, fostering global recognition and action. This year, COTA launched our two-year Beyond Age project to target one of the main drivers of elder abuse: ageism. As part of the project, community members attended workshops and coupled photo of their past and present, then provided advice about getting older to their younger self. Participants were encouraged to have conversations about preserving the dignity of older people, and to speak out against ageism. The project was officially launched at the Melbourne Town Hall on 10 June 2025, where completed storyboards were displayed alongside a special a pop-up event at Flinders Street, alongside a permanent online gallery. A travelling exhibition also toured the state as part of the Victorian Seniors Festival in October. The response to Beyond Age far exceeded our expectations, and the CEO WAS pleased that the campaign will run through 2026.

5. Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2024

No questions were raised, and the following motions were passed:

That the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Moved Mark Stokes Seconded Gerard Mansour Carried.

6. Treasurers Report

Tanya O'Connor presented the audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2025 highlighting the following:

The Financial Statements for the financial year, show a net surplus of \$377,958 compared to a net surplus of \$203,246 in the prior year. This increase is due to additional “one-off” indexation payments received in grant income and favourable accounting adjustments made in portable long service leave for staff and the termination of the organisation’s premises lease and the commencement of the new lease.

Total income for the year of \$3.9m has increased by 5% compared to \$3.7m in the prior year due to an additional grant income and accounting adjustments as already mentioned. State and Federal Government funding represent 95% of total revenue

Total expenses for the year of \$3.6m have increased, compared to the prior year of \$3.5m due to an increase in payroll and related on costs. Payroll and other employment expenses continue to represent 86% of total expenses.

Total current assets are approximately \$2.4m up by 60% from the prior year due to timing and income received in advance. Cash assets represent 97% of this balance.

There is approximately \$1.1m in Current Liabilities which includes Lease liabilities, Employee benefits and Grant Income Received in Advance. Overall, the net asset position of \$1,246,312 remains healthy, reinforcing its financial sustainability and supportive of the organisation’s future operations.

There has been no significant change in accounting standards during the financial Year.

The Audit and Risk committee and the Board would like to thank the auditor for their service and ongoing support.

The Treasurer thanked the members of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee for their continued commitment and support during the year and thank Ben Rogers and Janet Zhang for their support

7. Appointment of Auditor

It was agreed that The Banks Group be appointed as Auditor for the 2025 financial year.
Moved Hayley Hunter Seconded Mark Stokes Carried.

8. Announcement of Board Positions

In his role as CEO and Reporting Officer, Ben Rogers declared the following:

- Pursuant to rule 52.7 of the Constitution, Directors Mark Stokes, Tanya O’Connor, and Hayley Hunter, all being eligible for re-election, have been re-elected for one more 3-year term to serve the organisation.

9. Strategic Plan 2025-2030

The CEO declared he was happy to today launch the COTA Victoria Strategic Plan 2025-2030. This Plan has been developed over months, with input from volunteers, staff, management and our Board, as we look towards the role of our organisation and what we want to achieve. It was an engaged and in-depth process that he believe sets us on a clear direction for the next 5 years, and thanked Andrew Hollo for helping us to craft this vision.

The CEO commented that he believes that ageing is not a problem to be solved, but a powerful and natural phase of life to be lived with meaning, autonomy, and connection. We work alongside older people to uphold their rights, amplify their voices, and ensure their full participation in the economic, social, and cultural life of our communities. And this is about our impact to deliver a Victoria where older Victorians are empowered to make decisions, shape their own futures, and live with purpose at every stage of later life.

In 2025-2030, COTA will be focusing on our influence, empowerment, and amplification. Through our influence, we shape the systems, policies, and decisions that impact people as they age: from aged care and health to housing, digital inclusion, and economic security. COTA provide platforms that engage, listen to, and echo diverse views and experiences, with a strong focus on those whose voices are not heard.

As COTA come up to our 75th birthday at COTA Victoria, the CEO believes this strategy, if delivered, puts COTA in stronger position to ensure we can support and benefit older Victorians for another 75 years.

COTA are starting to deliver on the steps required by and set out in the Strategy as we go through the rest of 2025/26.

10. Questions from the members

A member commented online on how COTA will support OM:NI going forward and new groups and what plans they had in place.

- The CEO advised we are bringing back the OM:NI advisory group and through that we will utilise this and support new groups going forward.

11. Other Business

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.



The meeting closed at 10.34 am.

Robert Caulfield
AGM Chair & President