



with IAN YATES COTA chief executive

crucial: NINE in every 20 voters in the state election are over 50 years old, so seniors issues could be a key factor if the election remains close.

COTA Seniors Voice's calls for an immediate boost to energy concessions and then their indexation was answered before the official election campaign began.

Following our direct negotiations with the Government, Premier Mike Rann announced that maximum energy concessions would jump 25 per cent on July 1 and then be indexed 5 per cent a year.

The Premier also announced caps on water, sewer and emergency services levy concessions would rise 5 per cent on July 1 and then 5 per cent each year.

This is a good start to reform of concessions, but does not go far enough.

All concessions must be indexed to price rises so that as energy prices double over the next few years, so will the concession.

The most important gap in the Premier's announcement was that the maximum water concession was only indexed 5 per cent when the Government's own decisions mean that water prices are doubling over four to five years.

The water concession should be doubled from 20 per cent of the bill to 40 per cent

and the cap also doubled, and then increased in line with price increases.

The absence of the council rates concession from the 5 per cent annual indexation was also mystifying and should be corrected. Unless concessions keep pace with prices then the hard-fought federal pension increase last year will be eroded by state charges.

At this stage, we await the Opposition's response to COTA Seniors Voice's claims.

We expect the Government's increase will be matched. We hope they will go further.

Readers should keep an eye out for this announcement.

Other key issues in our election statement – A Fair Go for Senior South Australians – include a better public transport system that meets the needs of seniors such as equity for seniors outside Adelaide; a major increase in health promotion funding of community programs directed to seniors; mandated accessible housing design and a housing program for older South Australians; and stronger age discrimination legislation and other measures to promote and support mature-age employment.

A copy of the full election statement can be found at www.seniorsvoice.org.au »