

Statement of Interest on Climate Change

Older people, like many Australians, are concerned about climate change. Older South Australians, like other generations, see climate change as a significant and real threat to our national interests.

COTA SA's surveys indicate that older South Australians have reviewed the science and have seen the impact of climate change often firsthand. There is a prevailing view that the scale of the crisis has not yet been met with an adequate response from our leaders despite the consequences of inaction.

Over the last ten years, the number of days over 40 degrees in Adelaide has more than doubled. The impacts of climate change will worsen into the future. Rising sea levels threaten coastal areas and heatwaves and droughts will ravage inland areas. The scale of the damage depends on the actions that we take now.

Marginalised communities are hit first and hardest by the climate crisis including people in low socioeconomic groups, rural communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people and people from new migrant backgrounds.

The bushfires that burned across the country over the summer of 2019/20 were a reminder to many older people that climate change is no longer a future prospect but is impacting our health, well-being and livelihoods now.

When asked about the bushfires in early 2020, older South Australians made the clear link between the fires and climate change and more than 65% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that "Human activity is the reason for climate change". They noted the impacts of the fires on their lives, with many noting both physical impacts (from smoke or evacuation) and effects on mental health and wellbeing.

Older people do not believe the government - at all levels - has been leading on climate change. Very few older people think that the federal, state and local governments are handling climate change well or very well. Older people are resolute in the need for action with more than 81% agreeing that "The economic cost of preserving the environment is worth it".

Older people are concerned about climate change for several reasons. 85% say they want to leave a world for grandchildren and/or future generations that is healthy, productive and sustainable and 84% want to enjoy clean air and natural and green spaces around the state, country and the world.

There is also a real desire to contribute to the prevention of, and adaptation to, climate change; to debunk the myth that older people do not care about climate change; to ensure older voices and efforts add value to the voices and efforts of other age groups and to stop the negative impacts of climate change on the health, well-being, cost of living and enjoyment of all people.

Many older people are already active in their communities on climate change. They volunteer, they knock on doors, they plant trees, they contact elected representatives and they get involved in efforts to build a more sustainable future.

COTA SA takes the threat of climate change seriously and has committed to join the movement for action on climate change. COTA SA aims to –

- Facilitate learning about why climate change matters, how climate change impacts lives and what can be done.
- Reflect the concerns of older people to support action on climate change.
- Learn from and share stories of older people taking action on climate change.
- Partner with other generations and organisations to support their work, find opportunities for collaboration and increase the influence and opportunities of older people to tackle climate change.

Our Climate Change Group, made up of older South Australians, will offer a program of activities to meet these objectives in 2020-21. We invite all older South Australians to be part of our work. Please stay in touch via our website at <https://www.cotasa.org.au/policy/climate-change.aspx> or contact us on (08) 8232 0422 (Country Callers 1800 182 324) or cotasa@cotasa.org.au.

COTA SA Climate Change Group Members -

Barry Apsey (Chair) COTA SA Board Member and Policy Council Member
Anne Burgess, COTA SA Board Member and COTA SA Policy Council Chair
Peter Croft, COTA SA Policy Council Member
Paige Le Cornu, Volunteer Policy Officer
Stephanie McGee, Volunteer Policy Officer
Mike Rungie, COTA SA Policy Council Member
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