

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday 2 June 2022

## **Cost of living focus welcomed by older South Australians**

Council on the Ageing (COTA) SA has welcomed important first steps in today's State Budget that will improve the lives of older South Australians.

Chief Executive for the peak body for South Australians aged over 50, Jane Mussared, said cost of living pressures disproportionately affected older people on fixed incomes, and she welcomed measures introduced by Treasurer Stephen Mullighan.

"Free travel for seniors will cost the State Government \$5.2 million a year, but the freedom it brings to older people in South Australia to participate in their communities full time is critical. The days of being Cinderella, and racing home before the 3pm curfew, are over. COTA SA has campaigned for this for years," Ms Mussared said.

"At a time when cost of living pressures are paramount for people on low and fixed incomes, this is so important. It also helps older people make the decision to leave the car at home and supports their independence."

Doubling the cost of living concession, while one off, at least recognises the significant pressures on households with low incomes at the moment, Ms Mussared adds.

"We appreciate that the government is responding to very real hardship for older people on low and fixed incomes."

The announcement of \$12.7 million for individual support training for aged care workers is another positive, Ms Mussared said.

"We won't fix the aged-care crisis unless we fix the workforce and this \$12.7 million for TAFE courses is a downpayment on increasing both the quality of training and the quantity of staff available to work in aged care.

"We would have loved to have seen an initiative that removed the barriers for older people returning to work and encouraged the careers of older workers. Tapping into our older workforce will be part of the solution to workforce shortages, not just in aged care but across other industries crying out for staff.

"Supporting the careers of older workers also begins to address the ageism that plagues employment for older people."

In terms of health, the record investment in a range of health initiatives including staff, beds and infrastructure, is welcomed although the flow on impact for older people is unknown.

“There is no doubt that older people have experienced disproportionate ramping. We expect these new Budgetary measures to be accompanied with better transparency about how older people are faring with ramping and accessing health care. It is important that the new government is held to account about people getting the right care in the right place at the right time. The new funding is the first step in a long journey.”

The budget made a very small but very welcome investment in public housing supply. Right now 10,000 older South Australians are in housing stress, Ms Mussared said.

“This budget provides for 400 new and 350 refurbished houses. That is a start. We welcome particularly that 400 of the 750 houses available to low income households will be in our regions. The so-called maintenance blitz for 3000 Housing SA homes is long overdue and also welcome.

“We recognise that this Budget delivers on the new Government’s election promises and takes some important initial steps to support older South Australians. We look forward to working with the government over the next 12 months to keep an active frame on the well-being and needs of older South Australians.”

**COTA SA is an older people’s movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.**

**For interview requests or more information, please contact:**

Jane Mussared COTA SA CEO 0408 814 483