

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA SA warns of older homelessness ahead of state election

As we head to the polling booths this Saturday, COTA SA has reminded voters and candidates that the incoming government needs to act fast on housing or risk thousands of older South Australians being homeless.

The peak body for older people has made housing security for older people one of the key priorities in its 2022 State Election platform, with several recommendations.

“Right now, as many as 10,000 older South Australians are in housing stress,” said COTA SA chief executive Jane Mussared.

“They have a low income, they don't own their own home, and they don't have access to affordable housing as they age.

“Older people in housing stress spend more than 30 per cent of their income meeting housing costs, which severely restricts their budget for essentials such as food and healthcare. Pressures on cost of living and an absence of housing options are creating a very frightening future, including for an increasing number of older women. Many are invisible to housing and homelessness services and have never had to seek help before.”

Rates of home ownership by older South Australians are dropping rapidly, with the rate of older households (55+) still paying off a mortgage tripling from 7 per cent to 21 per cent in the past 20 years. The situation is compounded because more and more older households are single.

Housing stress for older South Australians is compounded by ageism, poor health, and long periods of underemployment prior to age pension eligibility.

Single older women are the fastest growing group at risk of homelessness as lifetimes of discrimination, disproportionate responsibility for unpaid caring, lower wages and minimal superannuation continue to have an effect.

“We ask voters to review promises by candidates in terms of a commitment to increase the quantity of public and social housing for older people – we have suggested we need at least 100 more homes per year to put a roof over the heads of older South Australians in need,” Ms Mussared said.

“Older people need to be a priority for public housing and the State Government needs to fund a service that supports vulnerable older people in housing stress to secure ongoing and affordable accommodation.”

The 2022 State Election Platform by COTA SA, which represents the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians, contains 18 recommendations centred around seven key priorities which have been informed by the community through consultation, surveys, conversations, social media, letters and emails.

For the full report and to visit the 2022 State Election page on the COTA SA website:
<https://cotasa.org.au/policy/elections/2022-state-election-platform.aspx>

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.

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