

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 2021

### **Critical issues facing country South Australians should be addressed in this election says COTA SA**

COTA SA is urging the incoming State Government to put the needs of older South Australians, particularly those in regional areas, high on the agenda ahead of the state election in March.

COTA SA Chief Executive Jane Mussared says supporting older people in the regions should be a high priority.

"More than one quarter (26%) of our population live in country SA," she said.

"While there are many positives to living in these communities, a severe lack of services, housing, aged care options and transport, and staffing issues in aged care, are increasingly compromising opportunities to age well.

"The incoming State Government will have an opportunity to lead the nation in building strong and cohesive communities in regional SA, but to do so, we need a practical response to the challenges and possibilities that our regions face."

COTA SA's platform recommends the commissioning of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy that responds to the critical issues in regional areas.

"We need a strategy that brings together the voices of older people, local councils, government agencies, business and community groups to identify the priorities on a region-by-region basis and plan accordingly," Ms Mussared said.

COTA SA is also pushing for an investment to foster strong relationships with local government and services in regional areas to build sustainable supports and connections.

"Funding of a Country Engagement Program would enable COTA SA to work with older people and stakeholders in country areas to promote ageing well, build local capacity and support options for people to remain in their community as they age," Ms Mussared said.

COTA SA's final recommendation centres around better health and care services.

“The bedrock of strong country communities is timely access to quality health and care services,” Ms Mussared said. “But, there is a growing crisis in regional SA to provide these services for older people, with a critical shortage of health professionals, aged care workforce and mental health services.”

COTA SA urges the incoming government to map, plan and set targets for optimal levels of health and care staff and services in country SA.

It is COTA SA's hope that the State Government will use the platform to shape its policies and strategies for all older South Australians, particularly those in regional areas.

“The response needed to address the critical issues in our regions highlights the need to apply an ageing lens across all areas of government and not just within an ageing portfolio,” Ms Mussared said.

“The needs of older South Australians must be included in the plans of areas such as housing, environment, regional development, transport, digital inclusion, employment and health.”

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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