

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 2021

### **Support needed for older country South Australians says COTA SA in pre-election platform**

COTA SA is urging the incoming State Government to put the needs of South Australians aged 50-plus, particularly those in regional areas, high on the agenda ahead of the state election in March.

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 7 key priorities from ageism and housing to wellbeing and employment.

COTA SA Chief Executive Jane Mussared says the priority areas have been informed by the community through consultation, surveys, conversations, social media, letters and emails.

"Top of our list is supporting older people in our regions. Over a quarter of our population live in regional and remote areas, and while there are many positives to living in these communities, there are sacrifices in quality of life due to a severe lack of services, housing and aged care options, staffing and transport," Ms Mussared said.

"The State Government has 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.

Ms Mussared said an issue that continues to impact older South Australians no matter where they live is ageism.

"Like sexism and racism, ageism is not something that will simply go away or can be brushed under the carpet. We can't as a community - and a government - let systemic ageism continue to grow. Until it is given the recognition, focus and leadership it deserves, it will remain embedded in our everyday treatment of older people. This is not acceptable, particularly as our population ages," she said.

"A lack of housing for older people on low and fixed incomes also continues to cause major issues. Social and public housing is virtually unavailable in Adelaide and in our regions. Right now, there are 10,000 older South Australians experiencing housing stress - it's simply not good enough."

COTA SA's platform represents the diverse voices, needs and interests of older people across seven areas of priority, including recommendations covering:

- **Ageing in Country SA** – includes the commissioning of an Ageing in Country South Australia strategy; the funding of a Country Engagement Program; and a plan and targets for optimal levels of health and aged care staffing and services in country SA.
- **Digital Inclusion** – includes research and funding of innovative, evidence based, best practice programs that identify and support older people at risk of digital exclusion; and maintaining non-online systems to enable access to information, support and all government and government-funded services.
- **Ageism** – includes tackling pervasive age discrimination through a targeted media and awareness campaign.
- **Employment** – includes a pilot project in regional SA to support upskilling, reskilling and workplace flexibility to create proactive employment opportunities, with a particular focus on older women.
- **Housing** – includes preventing homelessness for older people through an increase of public and social housing by at least 100 homes per year; the introduction of age as a criterion of priority for housing disadvantaged older people; and the establishment of a specialised advocacy and housing service that assists vulnerable older people living in housing stress to secure ongoing accommodation.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – includes greater access to health services and programs such as Strength for Life, particularly for CALD, First Nation Elders and isolated and regional South Australians; improving health outcomes and measures to reduce ambulance ramping for older people; free ambulance travel for Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders; and improved access to oral health care services.
- **Social Inclusion** – includes increasing the reach of COTA SA's Rainbow Hub for LGBTI elders living outside metropolitan Adelaide; extension of transport concessions beyond off-peak times; a review of transport options in regional SA; and reinvestment in peer-to-peer road safety awareness and education initiatives.

Ms Mussared says it is COTA SA's hope that the incoming State Government will use the platform to shape its policies and strategies for all older South Australians.

"The responsibility of an incoming government to older South Australians will extend beyond what is often included as an "ageing portfolio". Our COTA SA State Election 2022 Platform details 7 areas of priority and 18 recommendations which cover a wide sweep of government responsibility.

"We welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations in more detail," she said.

For the full report and to visit the 2022 State Election page on the COTA SA website, [click here](#).

**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 media interviews or more information, please contact:**

Ben Smeaton – [ben@communicate.net.au](mailto:ben@communicate.net.au) or 0488 940 010

Bec Tape – [rtape@communicate.net.au](mailto:rtape@communicate.net.au) or 0438 806 983