

How we make a difference

COTA SA 2024 year in review



COTA SA

COTA (Council on the Ageing) SA is an older people's movement engaging every day with older South Australians all over our state. We are independent and non-partisan; we have our sights firmly set on calling out ageism and promoting ageing well; we are focused on overcoming disadvantage and inequality; we champion the diversity of ageing across our state; and we offer programs which create new possibilities for and with older South Australians.

COTA SA is also the peak body representing the rights, interests, and futures of more than 700,000 South Australians aged 50+, who together make up more than a third of our population.

We were established in 1957 and continue to evolve and develop to reflect modern South Australia. COTA SA is financially sustainable with revenue generated through government funding, investments, self-funded programs and services, private sector support, sponsorship, donations and bequests.

COTA SA is a proud partner in the COTA National Alliance, made up of COTAs in each state and territory along with COTA Australia. Together, our reach and influence is felt both locally and nationally.

COVER: COTA SA community member Max, who lives in the Riverland, and shared his experiences on the challenges of accessing adequate transport which we included in our 2024/25 State Budget submission.



Here for older South Australians in 2024

Older South Australians currently make up about 39% of our state's population, and this number is predicted to increase to 47% by 2041. COTA SA has a clear and important purpose: to advance the rights, futures and interests of this diverse group.

At COTA SA, we are constantly conversing with older South Australians. We listen to their experiences and challenges, find out what matters to them, and share their insights with government and other decision makers so they understand what older South Australians need to be able to age well.

We continue to amplify the voices of older South Australians across many areas of life in South Australia from cost-of-living and housing, to family and domestic violence, access to healthcare and transport, with the stories of older people at the forefront of our advocacy efforts. We recognise the diversity of those we seek to represent and our responsibility to advocate for the varied needs and interests of different groups.

This year, more than ever, our work has been driven by a firm focus on delivering on our core purpose for older South Australians and working strategically and sustainably to achieve this.

We conducted a review on the way COTA SA engages with older South Australians and made changes to our resources and approach, boosting collaboration across our research, policy development, communications and programs teams, so that we are better placed to act on the many insights we receive.

We made changes to our advisory group structure to allow us to build a more wide-reaching engagement program to connect with a diversity of older South Australians through a range of mediums. This includes continuing to engage with people aged 50+ in our State's oldest regions - the Yorke Peninsula and Lower Fleurieu Peninsula.

As part of this, we have been proud to support the evolution and growth of the Rainbow Hub – the advisory group COTA SA created with and for LGBTI elders in 2019 – which this year became its own, independent community-led Incorporated Association, providing a new, strong voice for LGBTI+ people. We were also pleased to work with the Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network in their establishment as an autonomous, volunteer-run service providing trusted, local information to older South Australians living in and around Victor Harbor and Goolwa. We continue to work closely with both groups as part of the extended COTA SA family.

We welcomed Minister for Human Services Nat Cook as she took on the additional portfolio of Seniors and Ageing Well; a change which recognises that ageing is indeed a 'human' experience that cuts across every part of life. We have been working closely with Minister Cook and look forward to a continued productive relationship in her new capacity, and we thank Minister Chris Picton for his long-standing support on issues affecting older South Australians under the Health and Wellbeing portfolio.

An engaged audience of 250 guests joined us for our celebration event to mark the UN's International Day of Older Persons on 1 October. Renowned Australian journalist Geraldine Doogue and a diverse panel of speakers explored the importance of meaningful connections as an essential part of living well, at any age.

In October we marked our first year of our free membership model, making membership accessible and available to all older South Australians who want to join our growing community and support our work.

Whether it be through advocating on behalf of South Australians aged 50+ or delivering programs and events to improve their health and wellbeing, we remain committed to ensuring that everything we do makes a difference to the lives of older South Australians. We are pleased to share our *2024 year in review* with you, which demonstrates COTA SA's impact and our many achievements over the last year.

These achievements would not be possible without the efforts of COTA SA's people: our passionate and skills-based Board, our values-driven staff and volunteers, our Patrons, and our funding partners, supporters and sponsors who support us and recognise the value of the work that we do. We'd particularly like to thank our COTA SA members and the thousands of older South Australians who share their experiences with us every day. COTA SA exists to work alongside you and improve your lives and we look forward to continuing this important work in 2025 and beyond.

Emeritus Professor Anne Edwards AO

President

Miranda Starke

Chief Executive

Your speakers and panel were amazing. I will be encouraging more of my colleagues to go to the next event.

Meaningful Connections at Every Age attendee



State Budget Submission
2024-25



Policy and Advocacy

COTA SA engages with diverse groups of older South Australians to understand what would make a positive difference to their lives, and then we deliver credible, evidence-based advocacy to decision-makers.

We made 16 submissions to represent the rights and interests of people aged 50+ on topics including housing, e-scooters, climate change and human rights.

We delivered our State Budget Submission 2024/25, which was directly informed by consultation and engagement with thousands of older South Australians and key stakeholders. This submission featured real stories from older South Australians across our key policy priorities to demonstrate their importance.

We continued our advocacy for free ambulance services for South Australians on the full aged pension. As this was overlooked in the 2024/25 State Budget, we are continuing to advocate for change for older South Australians to make paramedic services affordable and accessible, as it is in other states.

In preparation for our 2025/26 State Budget Submission, we held five metropolitan 'Listening Post' engagement events in both metropolitan and regional locations.

COTA SA's Policy Council members shared their diverse interests, knowledge, and experiences as we explored issues of importance in depth and tapped into their expansive networks to consider different viewpoints and policy responses.

We launched an ongoing 'How are you going?' survey to provide us with a snapshot of the life experiences of older South Australians to help shape our advocacy. Amongst the insights from this survey, South Australians aged 50+ tell us that the top issues of concern to them are cost-of-living, access to healthcare and the aged care system.

This year, we reviewed COTA SA's engagement approach and how we work with advisory groups, which have been one of our engagement mechanisms in recent years, outlined on page 3.

The new Aged Care Act was tabled in Parliament in September 2024, and COTA SA provided input and member feedback to COTA Australia's advocacy and submission to the Community Affairs Committee Inquiry on the Aged Care Act 2024.

We continued to maintain and establish relationships across the government, community, private and academic sectors to collaborate on projects that impact older people with COTA SA staff and volunteers contributing to over 20 committees.



Engagement

We meaningfully engage with older South Australians

Age is to be celebrated, a privilege indeed.

Meaningful Connections at Every Age attendee

Ageing is a time of possibility, opportunity & influence.



Raised my enthusiasm to do new things for my environment.

Conversations in the City attendee

Events

COTA SA events are an opportunity to inform, educate and empower — and bring older South Australians together.

Thanks to a Community Impact Strategic Grant from the City of Adelaide, this year, we delivered three **Conversations in the City** events focused on positive ageing with guest speakers including gardening guru Sophie Thomson, history buff Keith Conlon and Lord Mayor Dr Jane Lomax-Smith.

We hosted our biggest ever **International Day of Older Persons** celebration with our **Meaningful Connections at Every Age** forum. Keynote speaker renowned Australian journalist Geraldine Doogue and a diverse panel shared their reflections on strengthening social connections across generations.

With the City of Salisbury, we co-hosted three **Conversations with Salisbury Seniors** events, focused on topics impacting the lives of people in Adelaide's northern suburbs including social connection and being thrifty in the current climate.

Our Climate Change Group continues to be active in the community, including hosting two popular webinars providing older South Australians with practical information about actions we can all take to improve our environmental footprint.

Volunteering

COTA SA is grateful for the support of 110 active and highly engaged volunteers. We celebrated our volunteers and their contributions to COTA SA with an appreciation event during **National Volunteer Week** in May at the volunteer-run Capri Theatre.

From guiding COTA SA strategically into the future, contributing to policy development, greeting visitors and callers at our reception desk, representing COTA SA at community events, and supporting the delivery of our array of programs, our volunteers all play an important role in helping us achieve our purpose.

She is the sunshine
of my day.

Carole – COTA Visitors recipient



Programs and Services

Our programs and services aim to support, encourage, connect and empower older South Australians.



COTA Visitors create meaningful connections with older South Australians

The **COTA Visitors** program pairs friendly volunteers with older people who are at risk of social isolation to maintain an ongoing friendship. COTA Visitors is part of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, an Australian Government initiative.

2024 has been a particularly successful period for the program, which saw volunteer recruitment grow significantly with 65 active volunteer visitors now visiting 105 participants over 2394 times (compared to 55 COTA Visitors visiting 64 participants 1500 times last year).

Valuable support to navigate the aged care system

Funded by APHN, COTA SA's four skilled Aged Care Navigators offering a care finders service as part of the **Let's Talk Aged Care** program. Working with more than 450 vulnerable older people in metropolitan Adelaide this year, supporting them to understand, navigate and access aged care. Intensive care finder support is invaluable to older people with complex needs and no family or carers to help them, and can last a few weeks to many months, often due to delays and waiting times in the aged care system.



My general outlook on life has very much improved now I have the help I need.

Charlie – Let's Talk Aged Care recipient

Take the opportunity to join Strength for Life. It has the potential to improve your quality of life physically, socially and emotionally.

Lillian – Strength for Life participant



Stronger than ever thanks to Strength for Life

COTA SA's Strength for Life program continues to promote an active lifestyle for older South Australians.

Strength for Life is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2024. Since its inception, over 24,000 older people have participated in Strength for Life, improving their strength, fitness and overall wellbeing.

The program will grow in 2025 with COTA SA being chosen by Active Ageing Australia to deliver their training modules for Easy Moves and Falls Prevention into the future, offering older South Australians more choice and increased opportunities for health and wellbeing under the Strength for Life program.

Supporting victim-survivors of family, sexual and domestic violence

COTA SA's research and engagement consultancy, The Plug-in, was supported by Office For Women to undertake a project to contribute to better evidence-based solutions to improve service accessibility, and raise awareness of the unique experience of older women who are victim-survivors of family, sexual and domestic violence (FDSV).

As part of this project, COTA SA has developed a webpage offering a list of FDSV services and supports that can be accessed by community, and four public service posters have been developed championing older women victim-survivors voices and encouraging people to seek support.

Rainbow Rights in action

A new Rainbow Rights Toolkit was created and launched by COTA SA with the support of the South Australian Government's Office for Ageing Well, to share information about services and programs that safeguard the rights of older LGBTI+ people.

The toolkit was launched at COTA SA's Rainbow Rights in Action Forum in June to an audience including LGBTI+ community members, allies, Government service providers and media. The Rainbow Rights Toolkit is available online and to download at cotasa.org.au/rainbow-rights.

Violence doesn't discriminate by age.

"It took 45 years to finally have the knowledge and courage to make a new life."



It's never too late to seek help, even if you have experienced violence **all your life**.

If you or someone you know is experiencing violence or abuse, you can call **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**, text **0458 737 732** or visit www.1800respect.org.au for online chat and video call services.

This campaign is supported by the Office for Women. To find out more about violence towards older women and support available, go to www.cotasa.org.au/olderwomen



The Plug-in.

COTA SA

Kaurna Country,
Level 1, 85 Hutt Street,
Adelaide, SA 5000

PO BOX 7042,
Hutt Street SA 5000

P: 08 8232 0422

Free Call: 1800 182 324

E: cotasa@cotasa.org.au

www.cotasa.org.au



COTA SA acknowledges all Aboriginal nations throughout South Australia. We honour Aboriginal people's continuing connection to Country and recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.

COTA SA Board

COTA SA's Board is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds who bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience to ensure COTA SA and everything we do is guided strategically into the future.

Emeritus Prof Anne Edwards AO
President

Anne Burgess AM
Deputy President, Chair Policy Council

John Lipkiewicz
Chair Finance and Audit Committee

Alexandrea Cannon OAM
Chair of Governance Committee

Barry Apsey

Kate Barnett OAM

Mike Dixon

Helena Kyriazopoulos OAM

Julie Obst

COTA SA Patrons

**Her Excellency the Honourable
Frances Adamson AC**
Governor of South Australia

Mr Rod Bunten

Leadership Team

Our leadership team works closely with staff and volunteers to make COTA SA's vision a reality.

Miranda Starke
Chief Executive

Sarah Groth
Finance Manager

Ageing Well Peak Body Program Partner

**South Australian Government's
Office for Ageing Well**

IDOP Event Sponsors

Kalyra - Principal Partner

COTA Insurance - Supporting Partner

ECH - Supporting Partner

Resthaven - Supporting Partner

Hender Consulting - Event Sponsor

**Flinders University's Caring Futures
Institute** - Event Sponsor

**Office for Ageing Well and Seniors
Card** - Event Sponsor

COTA SA Supporters

Ananda Aged Care Incorporated

Beyond Bank

Chapel Funerals

Catapult Wealth

Centennial Park

City of Mitcham

City of Unley

City of West Torrens

Copper Coast Council

COTA Insurance

ECH

Eldercare

**Flinders University's Caring
Futures Institute**

Gawler Community Retirement Homes

Helping Hand Aged Care

Hender Consulting

HESTA

Housing Choices SA

Kalyra

Life Care

Port Augusta City Council

Resthaven Incorporated

Self Storage Australia

St Basil's Homes (SA)

Town of Walkerville

Program Partners

Adelaide PHN

City of Salisbury

City of Adelaide

Department of Health and Aged Care

Department of Social Services

Fay Fuller Association

iLA

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia

Office for Ageing Well

Office for Women

Preventive Health SA

Suzanne Elliott Charitable Trust

Thank you also to Adelaide Festival Centre, InterContinental Adelaide and Vili's Family Bakery for their support of COTA SA events.