

25 June 2021

David Basham MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development
Member for Finniss
GPO Box 1671
ADELAIDE SA 5001

minister.basham@sa.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re – Rural Ageing

I am writing to draw your attention to the work that COTA SA is doing to shine a light on the contributions and needs of older South Australians who live outside metropolitan Adelaide.

Our rural communities have age profiles that will be commonplace across the developed world by 2050. The Regional Development Institute say that the ageing of our regions is the most significant demographic shift in the last 30 years.

Over 633,000 South Australians are aged over 50 and more than a quarter (26%) live outside the metropolitan area. Many of our country communities have much higher age profiles than metropolitan Adelaide. You are no doubt aware that in some of our regions, such as Victor Harbor and Goolwa, about 60% of the population is aged over 50. Similarly in areas including Moonta (57%), Peterborough – Mount Remarkable (55%) and Mannum (53%) the proportion of people aged over 50 is high, and much higher than the state average of 36%.

Regional South Australia is facing a unique set of both opportunities and challenges as its population ages. While older people are important investors, business owners, volunteers and leaders in regional SA, access to affordable housing, higher unemployment, risks of loneliness and social isolation, more limited transport, health and aged care options and lower digital literacy mean that many older people in country South Australia are at a distinct disadvantage when compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

In 2018, the COTA SA Board directed that we should improve our reach into rural SA as part of our strategy to better reflect South Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Since then COTA SA has –

- Conducted Listening Posts in Shopping Centres across 20 regional centres (see report attached)
- Established COTA SA Advisory Groups in Goolwa-Victor Harbor and in the Yorke Peninsula
- Added 4 rural members to our COTA SA Policy Council
- Offered wherever we have been able to, support, information and advocacy events and services for older people in rural areas including with funding from the SA Country PHN

- Reached out through our Rainbow Hub wherever possible to connect with LGBTI elders living outside Adelaide
- Continued to build the presence in country SA of COTA SA's Strength for Life program
- Undertaken a Round Table with key SA leaders in 2018.

Our engagement with older people in rural and regional areas shows there is an urgent need for a whole-of-government regional ageing strategy to ensure that our regions are adequately equipped to deal with the opportunities and challenges presented by their age profile.

A strategy is an important step in enabling those in country South Australia to reap the benefits of living longer in our regions while exploring opportunities to contribute to, and be included in, their communities. It is also a chance to harvest and promote the opportunities of our rural ageing and lead the way in designing what will be the communities of our future.

My Executive Assistant, Ross Atkinson will contact your office in the next week or so to seek a time for me to meet with you. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me any time by telephone on 0408 814 483 or by email jmussared@cotasa.org.au.

I look forward to an opportunity to meet.

Yours sincerely



JANE MUSSARED
Chief Executive

About COTA SA

COTA SA is an older people's movement run by, for and with older people. We represent the aspirations, interests and rights of more than 630,000 older South Australians. COTA SA reflects the diversity of modern ageing in terms of living arrangements, relationships, income, health, ambitions and aspirations. COTA SA connects with thousands of older people each year throughout SA. Our policy and advocacy are guided by the COTA SA Policy Council made up of older South Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds, along with a number of advisory groups. COTA SA's social enterprise, The Plug-in undertakes regular surveys with older South Australians in addition to its work facilitating access to older people for organisations, researchers and service providers. COTA SA is part of the COTA Federation with independent COTAs in each state and territory along with COTA Australia.