

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA SA RESPONDS TO 2024-25 STATE BUDGET

The State Budget has not gone far enough to ease the pressure on older South Australians amid a cost-of-living and housing crisis, according to COTA SA, the State's peak body for 700,000 South Australians aged 50+.

Older South Australians on low incomes will appreciate the additional \$243.90 cost of living payment this month. COTA SA is also pleased to see that renters and Commonwealth Senior Health Card holders will have their concession amount doubled to match that of homeowners.

COTA SA Chief Executive Miranda Starke said, "This is particularly important for the growing population of older renters, who are amongst the most financially-disadvantaged as they juggle the increasing costs of housing, food, energy and fuel, often on low and fixed incomes.

"While any relief is welcome, older people will be aware that in reality, this relief is at a similar level to what they received last year through State and Federal Budget measures. While the relief level has barely increased, their energy bills and household expenses are continuing to skyrocket."

COTA SA's 2024-25 State Budget submission outlined three key priorities for investment to address the needs of older South Australians across health, housing and ageing well in regional South Australia.

"We are glad to see the ambulance electronic patient management system is finally on its way. This is something that we have advocated for strongly and agree that will make a difference and improve patient safety and quality of care by transferring crucial information to first responders," Miranda said.

"We were disappointed that our call for free ambulance for South Australians on the full Age Pension was overlooked, yet again. South Australia is one of the last states to provide free ambulance services to aged pensioners, who are amongst our most vulnerable health consumers. With the highest ambulance call-out fees in Australia, cost is a real barrier that prevents older people from calling an ambulance, even when their condition is serious."

At a time when the State Government is reaping record levels of stamp duty from rising home values, this money is not finding its way into investment in public housing stock when it is so desperately needed.

"We acknowledge the announcements about new housing developments, however the net increase in public housing stock is simply not sufficient to meet the demand. We join with SACOSS in calling for at least 1000 new public housing properties a year to have any chance of keeping up."

Given the growing risk of homelessness for older women, COTA SA was surprised to see this group were not named in either the housing or women's Budget announcements. We will continue to advocate for the State Government to invest in implementing the recommendations from the *Improving Housing Security for Older Women* report.

"Older people living regionally will be left wondering what was in this Budget for them. COTA SA will continue to advocate for much-needed investment in transport, health access and digital connectivity so that South Australians can age well in the regional communities that they love.

"Last year, older people told us that they felt invisible in the State Budget. In the coming days, we will be asking older people how they feel about these announcements in our State Budget survey so we can continue to advocate on their behalf and raise their issues and concerns in the areas that matter most to them," Miranda concluded.

-ENDS-

COTA SA'S TOP THREE PRIORITIES IN ITS STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION:

- PRIORITY ONE: Improving access to health and community connections for older South Australians, including free ambulance services for those on the full Age Pension.
- PRIORITY TWO: Ensuring housing security for older South Australians, with a focus on older women.
- PRIORITY THREE: Enabling older people to age well in regional South Australia.

ABOUT COTA SA

COTA (Council on the Ageing) SA is an older people's movement and the peak body that represents the rights, interests and futures of the more than 700,000 South Australians aged 50+. COTA SA stands with older South Australians to create new images and new expectations for the older years. Understanding the diverse views and experiences of older South Australians is core to achieving COTA SA's purpose to advance the rights, interests and futures of South Australians as we age. The organisation helps to reframe the way we age and values ageing as a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Belinda Bocson | belinda@bpublicrelations.com.au | 0402 358 000
Claudia Ielasi | claudia@bpublicrelations.com.au | 0401 855 042