

## SUBMISSION TO THE

### *Yorke Peninsula and Mid North Regional Plan Draft*

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Submission authorised by

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## Introduction

COTA SA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Yorke Peninsula and Mid North Regional Plan. We are South Australia's older people's movement—run by, for and with older people—representing the rights, interests, and futures of over 700,000 older South Australians.

Our ageing population must be seen as a major force shaping the future of planning in South Australia. In June 2020, 16% of Australians were aged 65 and over. By 2066, this is expected to rise to 21–23%<sup>1</sup>. The Yorke Peninsula and Mid North region already has a high proportion of older residents and retirees; indeed, the Yorke Peninsula is the second oldest demographic region in South Australia<sup>2</sup>. Ensuring the opportunity to age well in place must be central to this and all regional planning processes.

We have responded to the draft plan where we feel we can meaningfully contribute to decisions that could improve the quality of life for older South Australians for the next generation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Web Report: Older Australians, July 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Region summary: Yorke Peninsula](#)

## People, Housing and Liveability

COTA SA supports the Plan's recognition of population growth, changing household types, and the demand for diverse housing options. We are encouraged by the Plan's emphasis on affordable and environmentally sustainable housing, including models that support older South Australians to live independently in their communities. While the Plan acknowledges the ageing population and growing number of single-person households, it does not clearly outline how regional housing strategies will respond to the specific needs of older people. This is a missed opportunity, particularly in a region with an established retiree population and ongoing demand for accessible housing close to services and community networks.

The region's housing stock is dominated by detached homes (93% in the Yorke Peninsula, 94% in the Mid North) (p. 14), which limits options for those seeking to downsize or live in more age-friendly, connected settings. At the same time, high rates of unoccupied dwellings (up to 39%) and competition from short-term holiday rentals add pressure to an already stretched housing market. These trends highlight the need for proactive planning to diversify housing supply, improve affordability, and ensure that the needs of older residents are not overlooked.

COTA SA would welcome planning for a broader mix of housing options that reflect the diverse preferences of older people. This includes more adaptable homes through universal design, and housing models such as co-housing, Build-to-Rent, retirement living that support downsizing and ageing in place.

We welcome the mention of social housing as part of the broader response (p. 15), but note the absence of specific commitments, targets or age-appropriate housing models. Many older renters, particularly women are at risk of housing insecurity and require affordable, accessible options within townships that offer health and support services. COTA SA has consistently advocated for every government-led or Renewal SA residential development to include a proportion of social housing, yet recent projects have often failed to do so—missing critical opportunities to address unmet need. As SACOSS has identified, at least 1,000 new social housing dwellings per year are required across South Australia just to rebuild the current stock<sup>3</sup>. Anything less will fail to keep up with population growth.

### **COTA SA recommends that the Plan:**

- Respond more directly to the housing needs of older people by promoting adaptable, universally designed housing and a diverse mix of models—including retirement living, Build-to-Rent, co-housing, and smaller, accessible homes that support downsizing and ageing in place with choice and dignity.
- Commit to measurable social housing targets across regional towns, aligned with SACOSS's recommendation of 1,000 new dwellings per year statewide.

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<sup>3</sup> [SACOSS, Policy Brief: Public Housing, February 2022](#)

## Productive Economy

COTA SA welcomes the Plan's recognition that the Yorke Peninsula and Mid North region has an ageing population, and that this will require health care services that meet the needs of this shifting demographic (p. 22). As this demographic shift accelerates, the capacity of local infrastructure and workforce systems will need to keep pace to ensure that older people can age well in their communities.

In March 2025, COTA SA conducted a series of listening posts across the Yorke Peninsula, engaging directly with older residents in Yorketown, Wallaroo, Kadina and Moonta. Participants consistently raised concerns about access to health care and transport to medical appointments. Many reported long travel distances to see GPs and specialists, challenges navigating fragmented health systems, and a lack of service coordination. These barriers are compounded by ongoing workforce shortages and rising cost-of-living pressures.

While the Plan acknowledges increased demand for healthcare services due to the demographic shift (p. 22), it stops short of outlining how regional planning will address these issues. The upcoming Support at Home program and broader aged care reform agenda are centred on enabling older people to remain in their homes and communities for longer. To make this possible, regional development must plan for and support a mobile, skilled care workforce and ensure the integration of health, aged care and support services at the local level.

### **COTA SA recommends that the Plan:**

- Include specific strategies to build and sustain a mobile and regionally based care workforce to meet the needs of smaller townships and more isolated communities.
- Ensure that regional infrastructure planning aligns with national aged care reforms, including the Support at Home program, to allow older people to receive coordinated care in their communities.

## Natural Resources, Environment and Landscapes

Like Australians of all ages, many older people are concerned about climate change and the health of our natural environment. COTA SA takes these concerns seriously, and our Climate Change Group is committed to climate action at the policy, organisational and personal level. Our *Statement of Interest on Climate Change* outlines our ongoing advocacy to ensure the planning system supports climate mitigation and adaptation<sup>4</sup>.

COTA SA supports the Plan's intent to "encourage carbon-efficient living environments" (p. 31). Older people, particularly those living alone or in low-income households often reside in poorly insulated homes and are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.

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<sup>4</sup> [COTA SA, Climate Change Statement of Interest](#)

Many rely on air conditioning to maintain safe indoor temperatures during heatwaves, and research by the University of Adelaide has shown that over 80% of older South Australians did so during the 2008 heatwave<sup>5</sup>. As a result, housing design and retrofitting programs must be central to climate adaptation strategies. This will be of particular importance when considering the region will be facing increased risks from climate change such as projected temperature rise of 1.8°C and 12% less annual rainfall by 2050 (p. 31).

COTA SA supports the Plan's emphasis on enhancing tree canopy and green infrastructure across the region (p. 20). These investments provide cooling benefits, support active lifestyles, and increase amenity, particularly in older communities where walkability and shade are essential to daily health and wellbeing. We encourage greater attention to how urban greening strategies can serve as both a climate adaptation measure and a health and inclusion strategy, including through the creation of public spaces such as cool/warm refuges, community gardens and shaded rest areas.

**COTA SA recommends that the Plan:**

- Support thermally efficient and climate-resilient housing design, including retrofitting programs for older people in low-income or rental housing.
- Integrate the specific needs of older people into climate adaptation and hazard planning, particularly in response to increasing heat and extreme weather risks.
- Expand tree canopy and shaded public infrastructure to reduce heat exposure and support health, mobility and inclusion for older residents.

### **Transport and Infrastructure**

Access to transport, digital connectivity and health infrastructure is essential for older people to remain active, connected and supported in their communities. COTA SA acknowledges the long-standing, trusted and highly valued Community Passenger Transport Service operating in the Yorke Peninsula, however we also understand that more resources will be needed to expand transport options for older residents. Through COTA SA's March 2025 listening posts across the Yorke Peninsula, older residents consistently raised concerns about both transport and digital connectivity—highlighting these as barriers to access services particularly healthcare.

The Yorke Peninsula and Mid North Regional Plan acknowledges that “public transport is limited and is an important issue for the region due to its ageing, disadvantaged and dispersed populations” (p. 37). COTA SA supports this acknowledgement and urges stronger emphasis on accessible public and community transport, as well as infrastructure to support a growing mobile care workforce.

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<sup>5</sup> [Soebarto V, Bennetts H, Arakawa Martins L, van Hoof J, Visvanathan R, Hansen A, Pisaniello D, Williamson T, Zuo J. 2021. \*Thermal comfort at home: A guide for older South Australians\*. The University of Adelaide](#)

As more older people remain living at home, the demand for in-home and outreach health services will increase, and so too will the infrastructure required to support these workers.

The plan acknowledges that “advancing telecommunications connectivity and access is a key priority for the region” (p. 40). Although we welcome this it does not fully address the digital divide faced by older people<sup>6</sup>. Digital inclusion is not just about infrastructure—it also requires programs to build confidence, skills and access to affordable technology. According to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII), regional South Australia scores significantly lower than metropolitan areas, and older people are among the most digitally excluded<sup>7</sup>. Without action, these gaps will continue to limit access to telehealth, online banking, government services and connection with family and community.

In our 2025-26 State Budget Submission, COTA SA called for funding to fix connectivity and reception blackspots across the state. We also advocated for increased support and resources in public libraries and community centres across regional areas to improve accessibility and digital literacy in older South Australians<sup>8</sup>. Resolving black spot areas and improving digital connectivity and digital literacy in older South Australians will be key to the expansion of virtual health care services, reducing pressure on public hospitals.

**COTA SA recommends that the Plan:**

- Invest in accessible and flexible transport solutions, including public, community and active transport, and infrastructure to support a growing mobile care workforce.
- Improve digital inclusion in regional areas through infrastructure investment and structured programs to support older people with skills, confidence and affordable access.
- Coordinate health and social infrastructure planning to meet rising demand and enable older people to access care and support within their communities.

**In closing and for future discussion**

COTA SA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Yorke Peninsula and Mid North Regional Plan and supports its ambition to shape a region that is sustainable, liveable and future-focused. We welcome the opportunity to work with the State Planning Commission and regional stakeholders to ensure that the final Plan supports older people to live well and age in place. Please contact Chief Executive Miranda Starke in the first instance for further discussion.

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<sup>6</sup> [Australian Digital Inclusion Index, Key findings and next steps](#)

<sup>7</sup> [SACOSS, Digital Inclusion in Regional SA](#)

<sup>8</sup> [COTA SA, State Budget Submission 2025-26](#)

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

COTA SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land of South Australia. We honour Aboriginal peoples' continuing connection to Country and recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present, and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.