

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2021

New program fosters social connections & improved wellbeing for those aged 50+

A new free program by COTA SA is supporting the health and wellbeing of older South Australians by connecting them with their community, helping them participate in social activities and facilitating access to services.

COTA Social Connections has been developed by the state's peak body for those aged 50+, in response to the disruption COVID-19 has on older people's regular social interactions and activities.

Research shows that people with social connections have delayed progression of dementia and experience less depression, anxiety, obesity and heart disease.

The free program is a one-to-one service designed to help older people connect with social activities that match their interests and needs.

Volunteers from COTA SA meet with program participants to discuss what they want to do, such as find a fitness group, volunteer, learn a new skill, or pursue a new hobby, and the organisation's volunteers identify options and support them to register, enrol or get started.

Others may need support accessing required services such as health treatments and aged care.

The program is run by COTA SA across the Adelaide metropolitan area, supported by funding from the Adelaide Primary Health Network (APHN), an Australian Government initiative.

COTA SA Chief Executive Jane Mussared said the program provided important social and health benefits for older people, after a challenging year due to COVID-19.

"Government restrictions stopped many social and community events and activities from occurring and people over 70-years-old were encouraged to stay at home," she said.

"Without these connections to community and friendships, people are more likely to be unhappy, insecure and feel no sense of purpose.

"The program will help reconnect older people with events and activities and support

others to access them for the first time.

“There are many reasons older people may need help seeking social connections or support services such as ill health, lack of transport, and digital exclusion.

“The program's free, confidential and respectful.

“We encourage older South Australians who are missing social connections to register for the program, or for family or friends to refer someone they know.”

To register for the program or to refer someone else, phone COTA SA on 8232 0422 or visit <https://www.cotasa.org.au/programs/cota-social-connections.aspx>

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.

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