

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Focus needed on older unemployment in State Budget stimulus

COTA SA acknowledges the significant spending included in this year's State Budget that has kept South Australians, and older people particularly, safe during COVID-19, crediting the government's pandemic response as outstanding.

The peak advocacy body also recognises the importance of the State Budget which backs and bolsters the South Australian economy.

However, Chief Executive of COTA SA, Jane Mussared, says that the State Budget, touted as turbocharging the economy, must ensure some of the stimulus makes its way to older jobseekers who, without targeted support, will find it very difficult to get back into work.

"Without funding for incentives and training, there is no clear pathway back to work for older people who continue to face ageism in their job search," Ms Mussared said.

"The stimulus announced has the potential to provide all South Australians, especially older jobseekers, with employment opportunities.

"Older workers spend much longer out of work than any other age group, with many forced to retire early. We must address the ageism and other barriers that get in the way, or the older South Australians currently receiving JobSeeker will still be out of work when next year's Budget is delivered.

"Meanwhile, an ever-increasing number of older South Australians are experiencing acute housing stress.

"Funding for new social housing infrastructure would have given the state double bang benefits – stimulating the economy while providing housing to people who otherwise face homelessness.

"Within the framework of this Budget there are opportunities to fund specific strategies to prevent disadvantage for an increasing number of older people.

"We accept the invitation extended by the Treasurer today to work with the State Government to help implement these opportunities as the Budget is rolled out.

"If we don't address mature aged unemployment and housing stress, we will create new poverty in older age."

COTA SA welcomed the \$1.6 billion announced for regional infrastructure – such as roads, parks, the arts and health – which Ms Mussared says is a vote of confidence in the regions and will improve the quality of life for older South Australians who are well represented in these areas.

“We look forward to the potential employment opportunities this investment will create for older workers in regional areas,” she said.

Ms Mussared also welcomed the modest but important announcement of 750 traineeships for in demand industries such as aged care, saying improvements and overhaul of the sector weren't possible without a skilled and job ready workforce.

With COVID-19 exposing the real risks of digital exclusion for many South Australians who are not 'online', COTA SA was disappointed not to see any initiatives that will close the digital divide and help older people in particular access vital services and information.

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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