

18 December 2018

A Message from the CE

It is almost Christmas and time for a pause. Our COTA SA team, made up of volunteers, members, friends, partners and staff, have worked hard together to extend our reach to older people throughout SA.

We continue to be ambitious about shaping ageing in SA.

The Plug-in, COTA SA's new social enterprise, has already found ways for older people to influence the future – of aged care standards, of precinct and service development and of services and products. 2019 will see The Plug-in hit its straps under new leadership making the most of the outstanding work of our founding team.

Our modern ageing festival, ZestFest, delivered 257 arts and community events in October that created new connections, challenged old thinking and celebrated the possibilities of our longer lives. ZestFest gets stronger every year with highlights in 2018 including Dr Norman Swan's myth busting oration and a new Writer's Competition.

We were thrilled that the SA Government delivered on its election commitment to support the extension of *Strength for Life*, a tailor-made exercise program designed to get older people back to exercise that is already offered in 92 locations in SA. Our volunteer peer educators continued to take their programs, including *Moving Right Along*, *Maximising My Independence* and *My Aged Care Support*, well beyond metropolitan Adelaide, leading the way for the major push COTA SA will make in 2019 to ensure older people in our country areas are at the centre of all we do.

This year we delivered the *LGBTIQ People Ageing Well Report* guided by the LGBTI Advisory Group. Working closely with partners such as the SA Rainbow Advocacy Alliance, COTA SA is the new SA lead for the Silver Rainbow training program, and we will offer a community visitors scheme with older LGBTI people in SA starting next year.

COTA SA has continued to fight for a fair go for older South Australians with great support from our Policy Council which includes several new faces. Specialist Round Tables support our advocacy for affordable housing, an end to employment discrimination and better recognition of rural people. Students from the University of SA and Flinders University were part of our team this year extending our capacity to research and contribute to policy topics that matter.

We are thrilled with the very first national survey titled *The State of the (Older) Nation*, commissioned in collaboration with our colleagues across the COTA Federation which has produced a comprehensive baseline picture of the real lives of older Australians. The COTA Federation will undertake the survey every year. Just as COTA SA started 2018 with a strong input to the State Election, in 2019 we will make sure, in conjunction with our colleagues at COTA Australia, that the issues of older South Australians are well understood in time for the Federal Election which will happen before May.

As we close out 2018, I acknowledge the 110 volunteers who are part of our COTA SA team. Together they contribute more than 4400 hours, covering 20 different roles across all areas of COTA SA. They are aged from 22 to 88 and come from all over SA including Edithburg, Lucindale, Kadina, Hayborough, Nuriootpa, Crystal Brook, and the Riverland. I also thank our talented COTA SA staff whose cleverness, kindness, energy and passion amplify our impact.

There are very few sleeps until Christmas. The COTA SA office will close from 21 December and will re-open on 2 January. Remember that there may well be older people in your neighbourhood without family and friends – please include them if you can.

We will be back in 2019 with our batteries recharged. In the mean-time have a wonderful holiday period full of good fun.