



State Election
Statement
2021

*A good life
as we age*

Who we are, not
how old we are.

About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing [Tas] Inc) is a not-for-profit organisation, operating as a peak body for a wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to encouraging our community to think positively about ageing. This involves promoting and encouraging social inclusion and championing the rights and interests of Tasmanians as they age.

Our Mission

We advance the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age.

Our Vision

Ageing in Australia is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence.

Tasmania's Ageing Profile:

206,435 Tasmanians are over the age of 50 years and are enrolled to vote in the 2021 State election. This group represents 40% of the total population and around 50% of Tasmanian voting population.

Almost 20% of Tasmania's population is over 65 years, with four local government areas (LGAs) having over 25% of the population over 65 years. Regions outside of major centres tend to have a higher proportion of the population aged over 65 years.

There is great opportunity for Tasmania to take a lead in supporting its ageing population and set a benchmark for the rest of Australia.

Things will have to be done differently and our attitudes towards ageing must change.

Tasmania has an enviable record of innovation in response to opportunities and challenges. We must design and deliver strategies that deliver more liveable communities for Tasmanians of all ages and address the current barriers to living a good life in Tasmania as we age.



Older people make up around 50% of Tasmania's voting population.



COTA Tasmania calls for political parties to commit to:

Digital Inclusion

- *As a priority, commit to increasing digital inclusion (access, ability and affordability) for older Tasmanians.*

Access to information is a fundamental human right.

While many older Tasmanians are effective users of digital technology, Tasmanians over the age of 55 and particularly those 65 and over are still among some of the most digitally excluded populations in Australia and Tasmania. In the 2020 Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII), which tracks digital inclusion across three dimensions – Access, Affordability and Digital Ability, Tasmanians aged 65+ were the least digitally included age group in Australia, with a score 13.8 points below the state average and 3.9 points lower than the national 65+ age group average.¹

The 2020 ADII report also reveals a pattern of diminishing digital inclusion as age increases – particularly in relation to Access and Digital Ability. The ADII score of those aged 70-79 and 80+ was significantly lower than those aged 65-69 years.

Increased reliance on digital communication has brought into sharp focus the difficulties faced by those in the community who are not digitally connected. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed not only the way in which people who are digitally excluded can face loneliness and disconnection from the people and groups that are important to them, but the inequity behind digital exclusion in terms of access to key services.

1 Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020

Health and Wellbeing

- *Increase the level of investment in preventative and rehabilitative health infrastructure and services that will target the needs of Tasmanians at various life stages, and contribute to healthy ageing.*
- *Increase mental health literacy and awareness campaigns specifically focused for older people's mental health and mental health literacy.*
- *Engage with older Tasmanians in co-designing health services that will support healthy ageing throughout the state.*

Health rates as a high priority for older Tasmanians, and consistently rates as the aspect they most value in living a good life.²

COTA Tasmania urges that priority is placed on preventative health in Tasmania – particularly measures that increase quality of life, and the capacity to maintain strength and mobility to support ongoing independence. As we enter the UNs 'Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030' and our community continues to age, COTA Tasmania would like to see increased focus and investment in health measures that build and foster functional capacity over the lifespan.

Even before the COVID 19 pandemic and the impact of lockdowns and COVID-safe practices, a large proportion of older Tasmanian had risk factors for loneliness and social isolation.

It is thought that between 10 and 15 per cent of older people experience depression and about 10 per cent experience anxiety. Rates of depression among people living in residential aged-care are believed to be much higher, at around 35 per cent.³

The expansion of mental health services for older Tasmanians is a critical element of the COVID recovery process and will underpin the wellbeing of our community.

2 TASCOS, 'A Good Life in Tasmania' 2020

3 Beyond Blue, 'Older People', <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/older-people>



Housing and Homelessness

- *Commit to sustained investment over the longer term to ensure Tasmania can meet current and projected demand for accessible, appropriate and affordable housing.*
- *Adopt innovative approaches to address the needs of older Tasmanians in the private rental market.*

Affordable, appropriate and accessible housing that will meet Tasmania's current and future needs is critical to underpinning the wellbeing and success of our community.

Tasmania is experiencing a housing crisis and actions to support those adversely impacted are needed now. The increasing incidence of housing stress and homelessness being experienced in Tasmania has reinforced the critical need for an increase in the supply of affordable and appropriate housing in our state.

The housing needs of our community have changed and will continue to change. Accordingly, our housing supply must reflect and accommodate these evolving needs.

COTA Tasmania continues to be concerned about the vulnerability of older Tasmanians living in private rental arrangements and the availability of age appropriate housing, both in key centres and in regional areas.

While the COVID-19 pandemic, border closures and government rental protection measures gave some Tasmanians a brief respite from housing pressure and rising rents, prices started to increase again towards the end of the year, going up by 2.1 per cent between September and December of 2020. It now costs 36.5 per cent more, about \$165 a week, to rent a house in Hobart than it did a decade ago. And it is still cheaper to rent a house in Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.⁴

4 SGS Rental Affordability Index 2020, <https://www.sgsep.com.au/projects/rental-affordability-index>

Ageism and Reframing Ageing

- *Take the lead in addressing ageism in our community by introducing intergenerational programs that build connection across age groups.*
- *Ensure the collection, analysis and reporting of data undertaken by the Tasmanian Government disaggregates the over 60 year cohort to enable evaluation of the impact of activities on older Tasmanians.*

Ageism is a very destructive type of discrimination that is particularly damaging because it is so normal, and almost expected, in Australian society. What makes ageism slightly different to other '-isms' is that we have all either been younger or will (hopefully) become older, and therefore, we discriminate against younger or older versions of ourselves.

“ *Ageism is not benign or harmless. It is a big problem because it impacts on our confidence, quality of life, job prospects, health, and control over life decisions.*⁵

Ageism can be seen in the community, in the workplace, in legislation, in organisational policy, in research design, data collection and in customer service among other spheres of life. Ageing doesn't need to confer special rights, but COTA Tasmania feels very strongly that as Tasmanians age, there must be an equal opportunity to participate and contribute in meaningful ways in our community.

5 The Benevolent Society, The Drivers of Ageism Summary report p 9 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/benevolent/pages/393/attachments/original/1538977356/Ageism_SummaryReport_Final.pdf?1538977356



Elder Abuse Prevention

- *Commit to review and update Tasmania's Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy (2019-2022)*
- *Ensure that emergency support and specialist services for Older Tasmanians experiencing abuse are available statewide*

COTA Tasmania believes strongly that addressing ageism in the community is a key factor in elder abuse prevention. Just as the frameworks that address violence against women put measures to combat sexism front and centre, so too must combatting ageism be at the heart of efforts to prevent elder abuse.

Elder Abuse remains a significant and under-reported issue in Tasmania. Large population-based studies show incidences of abuse at between three and five percent of the population, which equates to 3,000–4,500 Tasmanians.⁶ The consequences of abuse can be substantial and older people experiencing it can feel helplessness, alienation, guilt, shame, fear and anxiety. Abuse of older Tasmanians is a violation of human rights and a rejection of the fundamental respect that our older people deserve.

Older Tasmanians deserve the right to feel safe and respected in their own homes, in their relationships and within their communities and to be supported when experiencing abuse.

Mature Age Work

- *Work with COTA Tasmania to enact an awareness campaign regarding ageism and age discrimination in the workforce – with an emphasis on intergenerational diversity.*
- *Support lifelong learning and workready skill building strategies to specifically target mature age job seekers.*

As Tasmania and Australia's population profile ages, harnessing the skills of older people will be crucial to accessing the skills and labour required to maintain a high functioning economy.

Tasmania has the oldest median age (42 years), four years above the national average, the highest proportion of people aged over 65 and the lowest proportion of children and working age people of any Australian state or territory. The workforce aged 45 years and older was 45.5% in 2016. This figure represents an increase of 12.9 percent since 2006 and compares to a national figure of 7.5% increase since 2006.⁷

Whilst this demographic change will present some challenges, it also presents opportunities. Mature age workers can play a key role in our economy if existing barriers to participation are addressed.

Age discrimination has a negative effect on older people's participation in work. It is also important to note that age-discrimination is an issue regardless of age group – while it plays out differently for younger and older people, it is a pervasive and significant barrier for people of all ages participating in the workforce.

6 Department of Health and Human Services 2012, *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse*, Tasmanian Government

7 L Denny "Insight One- Tasmania's Workforce" Institute of Social Change, UTAS https://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1048891/InsightOne.pdf



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COTA Tasmania's State Budget Community Consultation Submission can be found here:
www.cotatas.org.au/information/resources/submission/state-budget-2021-22



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