



MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA Tasmania disappointed by lack of support for older Tasmanians in State Budget

The Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania has expressed disappointment following the State Budget announcement, which failed to deliver direct assistance or funding for older Tasmanians.

"We are concerned older Tasmanians have been overlooked in this budget," said Brigid Wilkinson, CEO of COTA Tasmania. "At a time when cost of living pressures are significantly impacting older Tasmanians, when increasing digitisation of services and complex bureaucratic processes are creating challenges in navigating support, the absence of targeted initiatives in these areas is particularly disappointing."

COTA Tasmania is also concerned by a lack of funding in the forward estimates for the government's 20-year Preventive Health Strategy, which has had wide input with consultation across the board, and which will play a crucial role in supporting healthy ageing and reducing long-term healthcare costs.

"Preventive health measures are not just good policy – they're smart economics," Mrs Wilkinson said. "Investing in preventive health programs today reduces pressure on both our hospital and aged care systems, supporting older Tasmanians to live independently for longer."

At the same time, COTA Tasmania welcomes the Government's commitment of \$281,000 over three years (2026-29) to fund the Older Tasmanians' Action Plan, which was launched in January 2025. "We are pleased to see a financial commitment to the Action Plan and look forward to working with the Government to understand how this funding will be allocated to best support older Tasmanians," Mrs Wilkinson said. "This investment shows the government recognises the importance of strategic planning for our ageing population, and we hope it signals a broader commitment to addressing the needs of older Tasmanians."

COTA had hoped to see creative initiatives addressing housing options for seniors, employment support for older job seekers, and programs supporting social connection and mental health.

"We are particularly disheartened to see that older Tasmanians will no longer benefit from half price bus fares. In most other states and territories, seniors receive free transport options to enable them to safely participate in their communities, while supporting cost of living pressures, which for many older people is all the harder on fixed incomes like the pension," Mrs Wilkinson said.

"Many older Tasmanians no longer drive due to health, safety or financial reasons, leaving them with extremely limited transport options," Mrs Wilkinson said. "Public transport isn't just about getting from A to B – it's a lifeline that enables older people to remain connected to their community, access essential services, and maintain their independence."

COTA Tasmania says the decision will create significant barriers to social participation, potentially exacerbating isolation and loneliness among older residents.

"The State's debt is set to increase to more than \$11 billion by 2029, and at that same time we will have one in four Tasmanians over 65 years of age. It is therefore upsetting that the Government has not planned with this in mind.

"In this budget we needed to see investment in age-friendly infrastructure and services that will both save money in the longer term and keep people independent and living at home for longer. We needed a greater focus on preventive health and social care within and run by communities," Mrs Wilkinson said.

"Tasmania's ageing population represents both a challenge and an opportunity. We needed a budget that recognises demographic reality and invests accordingly," Mrs Wilkinson said.

COTA Tasmania will continue to advocate for the needs and rights of older Tasmanians and calls on the Government to consider targeted measures in future budget cycles.

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About COTA Tasmania:

COTA Tasmania is the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of Tasmanians aged 50 and over.