

ATTACHMENT 2**COTA SA – A PROFILE****COUNCIL ON THE AGEING (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC.**

COTA SA is South Australia's peak seniors organisation with an individual membership of around 20,000 and over 200 seniors organisations members with a combined membership of more than 60,000. In addition COTA SA has around 80 associate members who are aged care providers, local government bodies, health units and other service and educational institutions. Our membership networks and programs are state-wide in scope and practice.

COTA SA was incorporated in 1957. Over its nearly 50 years life COTA SA has launched, often in collaboration with others, a wide range of aged sector organisations. Some of these are:

- Voluntary Care Association – now Aged and Community Services SA
- Meals on Wheels SA
- Over 60s Education Association
- VOTE – Voice of the Elderly (later merged into COPARP)
- Associated Seniors Citizens Clubs of SA
- University of the Third Age
- Over 60s Radio (later merged into Radio 5UV)
- Continnence Foundation
- Carers Association SA
- Council of Pensioners and Retired Persons – COPARP (now merged into COTA)
- Aged Rights Advocacy Service – ARAS
- SA Retirement Village Residents Association - SARVRA
- Seniors Information Service – SIS
- Seniors Education Network
- Council of Aboriginal Elders SA

The Aged Rights Advocacy Service and the Seniors Information Service are both directly auspiced by and supported by COTA SA and co-located with COTA. SIS also holds all four Commonwealth Carelink regional contracts in SA. SARVRA is also supported by and co-located with COTA.

COTA SA is recognised by the SA Government as the peak consumer organisation in ageing, and as a leading advocate on ageing issues. COTA receives “peak body” funding to provide advice to government on ageing issues, to facilitate representation on government bodies, and to raise awareness of ageing issues in the community.

1. Governance

COTA SA has a dual governance structure with a Board responsible for statutory, financial and operational matters and a Policy Council which decides public policy directions and positions. The Board of up to nine members is predominantly directly elected by and from the membership, with provision for co-options to positions such as Treasurer. The current Officers are *President* - Mr Jim Giles AM; *Vice President* - Mrs Anne Megaw; *Treasurer* - Mr Graeme Hodge BEc, CA, CPA, MTIA, JP; and *Executive Director* - Mr Ian Yates AM, BA, MAICD.

The SA Policy Council comprises up to 21 members drawn from both the individual and organisational membership of COTA SA. Following the termination of the merger with NSA it will become a directly accountable body with new membership taking office in 2007. All former NSA members are continued with the Policy Council. The current Chair is Mrs Barbara Garrett MBE, who is retiring at the end of 2006.

The Policy Council oversees and approves a wide range of policy materials including an annual State Budget Submission, a State Election Statement, an annual State Policy Document; submissions to advisory bodies and parliamentary, departmental and statutory authority inquiries.

2. Policy and Advocacy

COTA SA has been involved in the development of every major ageing-related State Government policy over the last two decades. In some case it has been the prime mover in the policy being initiated (e.g. "Ageing – A Ten Year Plan for SA" released in 1996). Some of these include:

- Retirement Villages Act Reviews (several since 1989)
- Health of Older Persons Policy (1994)
- Housing Options for Older People (1995)
- Ageing – A Ten Year Plan for SA (1996)
- Promoting the Health & Well-being of Older People: Health Promotion Directions (1998)
- *Moving Ahead* – A Strategic Plan for Human Services for Older People in SA (1999)
- Strategic Directions for Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (2002)
- *Better Choices Better Health* – Report of the SA Generational Health Review (2003)
- *Supported Independent living* – Strategic Directions for Housing Older People (2003)
- *Prosperity through people* – A Population Policy for South Australia (2004)
- South Australia Works (SA government policy on Learning to Work programs) (2004)
- Improving with Age – Our Ageing Plan for South Australia (2006)

COTA SA meets very regularly (at least bi-monthly) with the Minister for Ageing and the Minister for Health. We meet a couple of times a year with the State Treasurer; and at least annually with the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education; the Minister for Housing; the Minister for Energy; and the Minister for Transport.

3. Representation

One important channel for presenting seniors' interests is COTA representation on a wide range of Government and non-Government bodies. In 2005 Officers, Volunteers and Staff represented COTA SA on over 60 bodies as listed in the Annual Report. Without listing all those here the following give a flavour of our representational roles.

Some of the State Ministerial Advisory committees or high-level Departmental Advisory bodies on which COTA SA was represented in 2005 and 2006 include:

- Ministerial Advisory Board on Ageing
- Department of Health/Department of Families & Communities Peak Bodies Forum
- Energy Consumers Council of SA
- Essential Services Commission Consumer Advisory Committee
- Health Reform Implementation Steering Committee
- Home and Community Care Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Housing Council Community Sector
- Passenger Transport User Committee
- Accessible Transport Advisory Panel
- Premier's Advisory Council on Women
- Retirement Villages Act Advisory Committee
- South Australian Health and Medical Research Advisory Council
- SA Dental Service Oral Health for Older People Advisory Group
- SA Dental Service Consumer Advisory Panel
- Supported Residential Facilities Advisory Committee
- Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group
- Women's Health Advisory Council

In addition COTA SA was represented on consumer advisory groups, research steering committees and special purpose advisory bodies. Some examples include:

- Chronic Disease Self Management Committee
- Department of Transport Fitness to Drive Taskforce
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital Consumer Advisory Council
- RDNS Consumer Reference Group
- Royal Adelaide Hospital Consumer Advisory Committee
- Steering Committee "Factors that make Housing more Suitable for Older People"
- University of SA - Exploration of Care Transitions of Older People Project

Within SA COTA contributes to Commonwealth consultation through regular meetings with the State Manager and Assistant Manager (Aged Care) of the Department of Health and Ageing and through involvement in, for example:

- Aged Care Accreditation Standards Liaison Group
- Aged Care Planning Advisory Committee
- Centrelink Consumer Consultative Committee
- Industry Consumer Union Liaison Committee
- National ACROD Committee on Ageing and Disability
- National Survey of Adult Oral Health Community & Professional Advisory Committee
- Veterans Aged Care & Health Advisory Committee

COTA SA plays a leading role in support and development of the non-government sector in SA, including through membership of, for example

- Australian Association of Gerontology SA Committee
- Elder Friendly Communities Committee
- Health Consumers Alliance SA
- Grandparents Forum
- Healthy Ageing Industry Cluster Steering Committee
- Local Government Aged Care Workers Forum
- Northern Collaborative Project Steering Group
- SACOSS Board and Policy Council
- SACOSS Health Policy Advisory Group
- SACOSS Employment Policy Group
- State Advisory Council Volunteering SA Inc.

4. Programs and Projects

COTA SA runs a varied portfolio of programs and service directed to seniors and seniors issues. We have been a pioneer in development of peer education; support services to local seniors groups, and consumer participation in aged care. Among our programs are:

Networking Clubs in the Community

This program supports clubs with information & resources including:

- * Management issues (e.g. constitutions, complaint resolution, managing risk)
- * Developing ideas & information for club programs & grants
- * Promoting higher club profile & membership in local communities
- * Encouraging healthy activities
- * Assisting club exchange activities & visits (intercultural, intergenerational)
- * Accessing technology e.g. computer skills & equipment
- * Facilitating ongoing links with local community services
- * Providing Quarterly Clubs on the Move Bulletin magazine
- * Trained Club Liaison Volunteers (assist clubs on a negotiated basis)

Peer Education Program

Trained volunteer peer educators are available to conduct presentations at Seniors clubs and groups across South Australia. There are a variety of topics available on issues relevant to older people with topics regularly updated. Speakers are provided free of charge to groups, bookings are essential. Current topics include

- * Quality Use of Medicines
- * Falls prevention - *Moving Right Along*
- * *Sweet Dreams* - healthy sleep and the non drug management of insomnia
- * *Beyond maturity blues* – depression awareness

Strength for Life

This program is working with fitness facilities to increase the number of quality, strength training programs available to people aged 50 years and over. Strength for Life programs are safe, effective and accessible to a wide range of over 50s and available at a growing number of fitness venues. The project encourages older people to engage in strength training for the benefits to both health and lifestyle.

'Get Going Stay Active'

Get Going Stay Active encourages older people to keep active. Clubs and community groups are encouraged to provide physical activity classes at low cost. COTA supports groups by linking organisations and instructors to programs. Assistance is also provided to refer people graduating from rehabilitation into appropriate existing classes, or alternatively to start new classes if there is a demonstrated need. Classes include Tai Chi, dance fitness, light exercise/ weights, aqua fun, walking groups, balance and chair exercise.

Mature Age Employment Project

This project promotes strategies to support the recruitment and retention of mature age employees. COTA is working in consultation with several key employment organisations to develop appropriate resources to support small business initiatives in this area.

5. Every Generation

Every Generation is the SA version of other States' Seniors Weeks. This is a Statewide celebration for the month of October that focuses on acknowledging the worthwhile contributions by the 'over 50's age-group ' in our community. It is inclusive of all ages, cultures and lifestyles. Many clubs and groups work throughout the year towards these celebrations.

This program continues to support new and exciting opportunities and encourages the development of healthy lifestyles promoting positive ageing attitudes in our community.

Every Generation includes over 400 local and regional events during October, plus a Gala Launch, and Awards program and Awards Ceremony, Seniors Expo and other events from year to year. All are auspiced by COTA with support from State Government and corporate sponsors.

6. Volunteer Program

More than 100 volunteers are regularly involved in a broad range of activities that support the work of COTA. Volunteers play an important role in programs, projects, administration, Board and Policy Council.

7. COTA National Seniors Merger

For five years from early 2001 COTA SA played a leading role in the planning and implementation of the national merger between the Councils on the Ageing (COTAs) and National Seniors Association (NSA). The merger was fully implemented in SA well ahead of other States and Territories and proved its worth in all respects. COTA SA provided key leadership in the design and management of the national Policy, and Programs and Projects, divisions of the merged body, including management and financial systems support.

Regrettably the merger terminated in late 2005 when NSA announced its withdrawal. This was after serious breaches of the Merger Agreement by NSA Officers within COTA National Seniors in key areas of governance, HR management, funding of programs, delegations policy, policy and program management and the name of the new organisation. NSA refused to negotiate on any of these matters as required by the Merger Agreement and universally terminated joint activities in late 2005. This led to the destruction of many aspects of former national COTA functions. Despite many efforts it was not until late August 2006 that NSA entered into formal legal mediation negotiations on de-merger arrangements. An agreement was reached in this regard but in late November has still not be fully implemented by NSA.

8. Moving On

COTA SA is now moving on from the aborted merger. A new individual membership program has been launched in conjunction with Insurance and Membership Services; the COTA SA magazine has been re-launched as *myCOTA*; and a new Board has been elected by the members with a strengthened Policy Council to take up its role shortly with support from strengthened Seniors Organisation and Service Provider Forums.

A major strategic planning exercise was undertaken over several months of 2006 which has enabled COTA SA to set new goals and directions for the next five years. This will include both a strengthening of its traditional service and advocacy roles in SA and decisions about options for new national platforms in the future.

17 November 2006