

Strategic Directions for COTA 2006-2011

Position Paper

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**COTA Strategic Directions
Strategies and Tasks (Year One)**

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COTA SA Profile November 2006

Strategic Directions for COTA 2006-2011: Position Paper

1. Introduction

In May 2006, COTA SA embarked on setting strategic directions for the next 5 year period. This process is intended to:

- Provide the Board and organisation with a clear vision for the future
- Strengthen COTA roles and functions in South Australia
- Identify potential national roles for COTA SA
- Identify clear strategic directions and strategies for the next 5 years.

In order to achieve these outcomes, COTA engaged consultant Gael Fraser of Lizard Drinking to manage a process involving the COTA Board, Policy Council and staff in sessions which have considered the challenges which the organisation faces as well as potential opportunities for the future. Member and sector stakeholder groups have also participated in sessions to consider what the future might look like for COTA SA.

A two day workshop involving all COTA staff, some Board/Policy Council members and the consultant produced a strategic directions framework which has since been tested with internal and external stakeholders before being endorsed by the Board. To set the context for that workshop, Professor Graham Hugo presented a briefing on the key demographic issues and trends facing South Australia in relation to its older population.

This paper outlines the central ageing related issues which South Australia faces. As the major peak body for seniors in this state, COTA will play a significant role and consequently has determined a strategic response to the state and national challenges which lie ahead. Section 3 of this paper summarises the results of the stakeholder consultations and the broad demographic and policy matters raised by Professor Hugo. Section 4 outlines COTA's future directions and possible organisational structure for the period 2006-2011. A more detailed version of the framework document with initial tasks is included at Appendix 1.

2. Background

COTA SA is recognised as a strong and effective organisation which provides significant leadership on ageing issues as well as delivering a range of programs and services.

COTA SA is South Australia's peak senior's organisation with an individual membership of around 20,000 and over 250 senior's organisations' members with a combined membership of more than 60,000. In addition COTA SA has 80 associate members who are aged care providers, local government bodies, health units and other service and educational institutions. COTA's membership networks and programs are state-wide.

COTA SA was incorporated in 1957. During this time COTA has been involved in establishing a wide range of aged sector organisations. Currently its key roles are:

- Policy and advocacy - centrally engaged in every major aged related State Government policy over the last 20 years
- Programs and services - COTA manages a range of services and programs delivered in SA and interstate
- Representation - seniors' interests are represented by COTA in a wide range of State and Commonwealth government forums, non- government bodies, consumer advisory groups, research bodies.

COTA has contributed significantly to the support and development of the non-government ageing sector in SA.

3. Issues for the future

South Australia faces a number of social and economic challenges as its population proportionately ages. At the same time many individuals are considering their own approach to being older as well as caring for older members of the community. There are a range of significant issues which the State must come to terms with and these include amongst the most pressing: care and service delivery for the older aged cohort, housing and living arrangements for the increasing numbers of single households, income and workforce issues linked to a growing state economy and increased service demands.

3.1 Stakeholder meetings

There were two major stakeholder sessions held in late July. Participants considered a number of topics in these sessions including the challenges which face COTA, the nature of COTA's constituency, opportunities for COTA, and the priorities for COTA over the next 5 years. Issues raised at these meetings were considered by staff and Board members in framing new directions for COTA. The challenges, opportunities and priorities all intersect and reinforce COTA's determination to take a deliberate role in shaping future state and national policy.

Challenges

Participants in the stakeholder sessions discussed a range of challenges which face South Australia. These include but are not limited to:

- a) *Workforce planning and participation:* With the ageing of the workforce and the growing demand for skilled workers in almost all job areas, there is a need to do considerable planning about the contribution of older workers to the various industry segments. This planning will include job design, keeping workers in the work place, retaining and passing on intellectual property, retraining, encouraging return to work and part time work arrangements. The aged services industry itself is suffering from a shortage of key workers in a range of areas and this phenomenon is being faced by communities across Australia. There are significant demand and supply issues here which have implications for the nature of the skilled and unskilled workforce, including immigration criteria and the impact of service choices on the needs and demands of older people.

- b) *Income security issues:* Current Commonwealth policies will continue to impact on an ageing population. A relatively low level of superannuation savings compared with longer life expectancy indicates that poverty amongst older South Australians will grow significantly over the next decades. The potential for older workers to continue in the workplace at least part time is a matter for immediate policy attention in the State's formal workforce planning activity.
- c) *Stereotyping older people:* There was considerable discussion about how COTA might work to overcome stereotypes of older people. In turn this will contribute to changing community and business perspectives. There is no doubt that the vast number of older South Australians who are active in their communities, support their families through child and elder care as well as those who chose to stay in the workforce present many opportunities to reframe the notion of what "ageing" means.
- d) *Service demands for the older ageing (85+) group:* Service providers who contributed to the stakeholder sessions reinforce the message that this state is facing very high service demands from the older ageing group. We will need to conceptualise better and more sophisticated responses to these demands as a broader community.

In summary there were a huge number of issues raised in these discussions and participants commented on the potential for COTA to be more visible in relation to advocacy, using on evidence based research. There was also support for COTA to continue working collaboratively with ethnic and indigenous communities.

COTA's constituency

The discussion about who is COTA's constituency suggested that there should be a number of different foci. People aged 65+ are an obvious focus, and within this group those 80+ have no other organisation focused on their consumer interest. People aged 50+ many of whom are employed are another focus, and this cohort includes automatically those people who have no interest in the concept of "ageing" being applied to them but may have for example worries about their parents. These are very broad cohorts on which to focus.

There was agreement that there exists some ambiguity about the concept of constituency applied to COTA and that perhaps COTA ought to live with that. It may well be the case that there are different "categories" within a broader constituency for COTA-initiated programs and business services; for example: members, consumers, clients and participants and that these relate to particular activities.

Opportunities for COTA

Stakeholders had a wide ranging discussion about the opportunities for COTA in its future work. Considerable emphasis was placed on the potential research/knowledge management and policy roles both separately and as they intersect. Clearly the extent of the issues facing us over the next decades will require clear positions from governments and business in terms of how they respond to an ageing community.

There was a strong view that COTA should maintain its focus more broadly on ageing issues rather than only aged care issues although clearly the latter becomes a subset of several

policy directions. The following opportunities identified for COTA's attention link strongly to the next section on priorities

- a) *Positive ageing focus:* Groups placed strong emphasis on COTA's role in reinforcing positive models of ageing. In particular the changing workforce requirements and likely engagement or reengagement with the workforce, as well as the keep fit programs and services are important to the broader community and relate to the economic and social rewards for both individuals and our society as a whole. There is a strong view that COTA has a significant role to play in developing a positive philosophy on ageing.
- b) *Connections with business:* Participants connected COTA's need to make stronger links with business to the various dimensions of workforce planning, retention and recruitment especially in the current environment of increasing skills and labour market shortages.
- c) *Policy development:* Participants put considerable emphasis on the importance of contributing to good government policy and communicating ideas which emerge from sound research and best practice examples of policy frameworks and services.
- d) *Take a stronger voice:* There was agreement that COTA has a key role in influencing policy at a national level as well as enhancing its state role. While there was recognition of the importance of balancing the services and advocacy roles with a contribution to policy development, there was a clear sense that this work should be focussed on influencing national ageing directions because COTA SA has strong legitimacy in this role.

Priorities

There are always many tasks for COTA and these include ongoing programs and services. Four priorities consistent with the identified challenges and opportunities emerged from discussions and these included:

- Strengthen COTA's voice both at the state and national levels
- Target disadvantage
- Ensure COTA's medium to long term viability
- Focus on systemic policy change

3.2 Ageing in South Australia: Graham Hugo

Professor Graham Hugo presented a detailed overview of ageing in South Australia at COTA's strategic planning workshop in July. The major topics he considered were the demographic issues associated with ageing, the key changes which are emerging in an ageing population, the social issues and policy implications. These are summarised below.

Demographic issues

The main drivers of demographic ageing in Australia are increased longevity, the "Baby Bust" - or decrease in fertility, the baby boom having delayed the ageing of Australia's population and the complex impact of immigration. Expectations of life have increased considerably

over the last century. The ABS views on the future of mortality pose two assumptions in its latest projections:

- *medium assumption*: life expectancy at birth will reach 84.9 years for males and 88.0 years for females by 2050-51, and remain constant thereafter
- *high assumption*: life expectancy at birth will reach 92.7 years for males and 95.1 years for females by 2050-51 and remain constant thereafter

These different mortality assumptions produce significantly different effects on the South Australian aged population over the periods to 2021, 2041 and 2051. In turn there are different views on future mortality. On the one hand there will be substantially increased longevity and on the other, reduced longevity as a result of the impact of obesity.

Current and future fertility shapes the percentage of population in older age groups. Thus we can see from Hugo's analysis the fall in the Australian fertility rate over the century from 1901 to 2004. The post war baby boom from 1946 to the early 1960s was followed by the baby bust in the early 1960s and 1970s to reach a more or less stable period from the late 1970s into the early 1990s. We are faced now with the notion of further decline in fertility rates.

Australia is a country of migration with 23% of the population born overseas. Without post war migration the Australian population would be 12 million. Post war migrants are a major element in the current growth of the aged population with 10.9% of Australian-born aged 65+ and 17.7% of overseas-born aged 65+.

By 2012, the number of people aged 65+ in South Australia will outnumber those aged 15 or less. In Australia as a whole this will not happen until 2019. However while the 65+ population in South Australia increases by 107% percent between 2001 and 2031 (from 211,868 to 437,416 – an extra 225,548 people!) it increases by 142% percent in Australia as a whole (from 2,388,464 to 5,779,353).

Over the next 25 years in Australia, the numbers of those aged 65+ will double and the proportion of population aged 65+ will double. In South Australia the proportion of the population aged 65+ reaches 26.5% in 2031, up from 15.3% today.

Social issues

Characteristics of the older population will change and where older people live will change. This changing spatial distribution together with generally low mobility amongst aged populations is crucial for service delivery planning. These are important elements in planning services at the local level and the operationalisation of many programs to support "At home not in a home" policies.

Consequently there is an increasing and steady mismatch of the older population and services. This is leading to a need to "retrofit" communities with the necessary services. This question of "fit" will result in a need for more mobile services, more innovative neighbourhood design and innovative services. There are also issues for country areas where what is required (as in the metropolitan area) is a mix of independent and institutionalised living.

Policy implications

The baby boomer cohort presents qualitative differences which will shape future policy determinations:

- they have a different attitude to working at an older age
- more of them live by themselves
- they have different housing aspirations
- they are more ethnically heterogeneous
- they have different health problems, live in different areas and have fewer children
- they are more mobile
- they are better off economically but there is more inequality in the group

Together with the overall ageing of the workforce, we will see a change in balance between retirees and new entrants. There is already a shifting demand for different types of workers and an unfavourable intergenerational balance. In South Australia there is evidence of a tight labour market which could prove to be a constraint on the state's growing prosperity. There are unmet demands for both skilled and unskilled workers in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. These will be exacerbated as new projects come on line and increasing numbers of workers retire. There is a need to both long and short term strategic policy which attends to:

- the need to increase productivity
- the role of immigration especially in the short term
- the increased age at retirement
- increased participation rates at younger ages
- training implications

The conclusions of an OECD review suggested three approaches to encouraging workers to remain in the workforce including:

- incentives for older workers to continue working
- incentives for firms to retain and hire older workers
- helping older workers to remain in jobs or find new jobs

Positive ageing models all acknowledge the necessity for planning and preparation at individual, family, community and government levels. Hugo highlighted three key concerns that must translate into policy responses: the workforce planning and employment issues as these might impact on economic growth, potential levels of poverty, the need to reconsider our urban design and living arrangements to accommodate both the rise in single households and the growing mismatch of the location of ageing populations with relevant services and the growing unmet demand for appropriate care to be available for the older aged.

There is a need for a comprehensive strategy which encompasses demographic, labour force, economic, financial and social security policies at both state and national levels.

4. COTA SA: Future directions

4.1 Position statement:

COTA protects and promotes the wellbeing of older people

4.2 COTA's role and function

COTA is the leading advocate for older South Australians. Its functions include:

- Policy development and advocacy
- Knowledge development and dissemination
- Innovative program and service delivery
- Peak body for age sector organisations

COTA SA also plays a key role in developing effective national platforms for older Australians.

4.3 Strategic Directions

The COTA Board has endorsed the following strategic directions for the next five years. Each of the four directions has a strategy statement and a set of proposed outcomes at both state and national levels.

Attachment 1 is the full version of the directions statement including the agreed tasks for year One. Tasks have not been developed beyond year one at present as many will depend on the results of them.

Strategy 1: Advocacy and Policy Development

COTA will be an effective advocate for our constituency by developing sound and sustainable policy and engaging consumers and other stakeholders in this process.

State Outcomes:

- Effective channels for consumer engagement
- Effective channels for other stakeholder engagement
- Ageing will be integrated into planning by State Government and other key organisations.
- COTA will influence key State policies and strategies on public policy issues affecting older South Australians.

National Outcomes:

- A national policy platform which advocates effectively for older people's interests
- Effective channels for consumer engagement across states and territories
- Effective channels for other stakeholder engagement across states and territories
- In partnership with others, will influence key national policies, strategies and plans.

Strategy 2: Business Development

COTA will further consolidate and develop its business development activities to strengthen its long term financial viability and enhance its capacity to fund new initiatives.

State Outcomes:

- COTA SA relationship with IMS is placed on sustainable, commercial basis
- Increased revenue opportunities through increased individual memberships and subsequent product sales (e.g. insurances)
- Increased revenue generating products for members or by endorsement
- A recognised consulting arm is generating income

National Outcomes:

- IMS is run for benefit of all COTAs and their members
- Viable commercial partnerships are developed
- A recognised consulting arm is established

Strategy 3: Innovative Program and Service Delivery

COTA will maintain and develop innovative programs which are responsive to the needs of its constituency.

State Outcomes:

- Consolidation and growth of COTA peer education programs
- Recognised peer education resource centre (broader than COTA)
- Every Generation program further developed on more sustainable basis
- Clubs program continues adapting to evolving community needs
- New programs are developed which respond to new needs of older people
- A venture capital fund is established to support innovative and pilot programs

National Outcomes:

- National program leadership in peer education
- Establish a platform to provide programs nationally
- A venture capital fund is established to support innovative and pilot programs with partners

Strategy 4: Systems Development

COTA will ensure it has systems in place to support its organisational functions and activities.

State Outcomes:

- COTA SA has a high quality web site
- COTA SA has a highly functional membership system
- Risk Management Plans are developed
- Support systems are properly resourced with sufficient back up capacity
- Accommodation requirements of the strategic plan are met
- Strong new branding developed for all strategic directions building on strength of “COTA”

National Outcomes:

- High quality web site
- Intranet
- Unified phone system
- Ensure support system meets national needs
- New branding reflects decisions on national platforms

5. COTA’s Structure

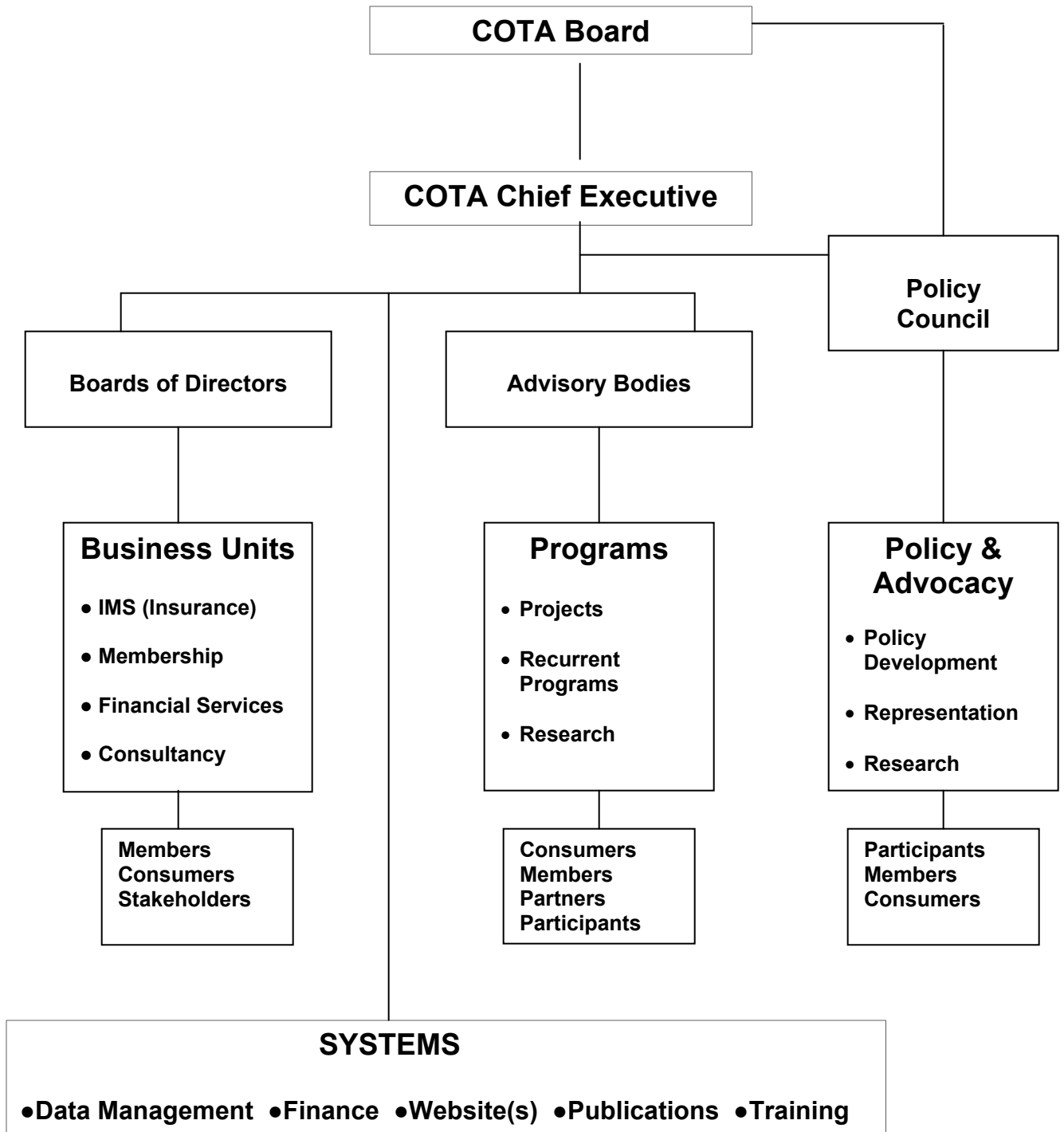
COTA SA will put in place a different structure which reflects its overall developmental strategy. The new emphasis will be on developing self sufficient business units which work to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their focus, in a matrix fashion.

The planning workshop discussed the need for a structure which will have teams built around functions. It may be useful to have a subsidiary model which has discrete business units reporting to a relevant Board, with the COTA Board having overall governance responsibility for the units’ performance. This structure would facilitate the ability to build alliances around common purpose both within and external to South Australia.

In any case once COTA’s overall function, directions and structure have been agreed each unit will prepare a business plan which takes into account both current responsibilities and budget and proposed work over the next 5 years.

The following diagrammatic representation of a new structure is illustrative of the principles of a future model but should not be taken as definitive. Decisions about Business Units and Advisory bodies, for example, will only be taken after many of the Year One Tasks have been implemented and outcomes assessed.

An initial step toward a new structure is the adoption at the 2006 AGM, of a revised Constitution incorporating the Board and Policy Council structures developed during the COTA National Seniors merger.



ATTACHMENT 1

COTA Strategic Directions Strategies (5 Years) and Key Tasks (1 Year)

Position statement

COTA protects and promotes the wellbeing of older people.

COTA's role and function

COTA is the leading advocate for older South Australians.

Its functions include:

- *Policy development and advocacy*
- *Knowledge development and dissemination*
- *Innovative program and service delivery*
- *Peak body for age sector organisations*

COTA SA also plays a key role in developing effective national platforms for older Australians.

Strategy 1: Advocacy and Policy Development

COTA will be an effective advocate for our constituency by developing sound and sustainable policy and engaging consumers and other stakeholders in this process.

State Outcomes:

- **Effective channels for consumer engagement**
- **Effective channels for other stakeholder engagement**
- **Ageing will be integrated into planning by State Government and other key organisations**
- **COTA will influence key State policies and strategies on public policy issues affecting older South Australians**

National Outcomes:

- **A national policy platform which advocates effectively for older people's interests**
- **Effective channels for consumer engagement across states and territories**
- **Effective channels for other stakeholder engagement across states and territories**
- **In partnership with others, will influence key national policies, strategies and plans**

Strategy 1: Advocacy and Policy Development (continued)

Key Tasks	Year 1
<p>South Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild Policy Council membership and strengthen its processes • Strengthen consumer organisations forum • Re-establish service providers forum • Strengthen consumer engagement channels (eg. branches, regional forums) • Strengthen COTA’s consumer representation system • Undertake headline public activities (e.g. forums, media events, speeches) • Develop specific public policy initiatives around key strategic issues (eg. affordable housing, transport, workforce, elder abuse, health) • Improve policy content of magazine • Improve communication channels for dialogue with stakeholders (eg. interactive website, electronic policy bulletin)
<p>Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin developing new national platform: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define criteria - Develop options - Identify and consult with potential partners - Monitor progress against criteria - Report and discuss progress with stakeholders • Consumer focused federal election statement supported by a broad range of consumer organisations • Be a leading contributor to other stakeholder election policy and budget statements (e.g. NACA, Carers, Alzheimers)

Strategy 2: Business Development

COTA will further consolidate and develop its business development activities to strengthen its long term financial viability and enhance its capacity to fund new initiatives.

State Outcomes

- ***COTA SA relationship with IMS is placed on sustainable, commercial basis.***
- ***Increased revenue opportunities through increased individual memberships and subsequent product sales (eg. insurances)***
- ***Increased revenue generating products for members or by endorsement***
- ***A recognised consulting arm is generating income***

National Outcomes:

- ***IMS is run for benefit of all COTAs and their members***
- ***Viable commercial partnerships are developed***
- ***A recognised consulting arm is established***

Strategy 2: Business Development (continued)

Key Tasks	Year 1
<p>South Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase individual membership by 7,800 • Agree organisation vehicle for COTA membership (either State or National; COTA or IMS or new body) • Prepare business plan and launch consulting arm (SA only or National) • Magazine production costs are 50% met by advertising end year 1 • Develop capacity for generating income from website • Work with IMS to increase revenue from insurances
<p>Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a range of potential business partners and business opportunities • Develop capacity for generating income from website • Develop at least three viable commercial partnerships

Strategy 3: Innovative Program and Service Delivery

COTA will maintain and develop innovative programs which are responsive to the needs of its constituency.

State Outcomes:

- *Consolidation and growth of COTA peer education programs*
- *Recognised peer education resource centre (broader than COTA)*
- *Every Generation program further developed on more sustainable basis*
- *Clubs program continues adapting to evolving community needs*
- *New programs are developed which respond to new needs of older people*
- *A venture capital fund is established to support innovative and pilot programs*

National Outcomes:

- *National program leadership in peer education*
- *Establish a platform to provide programs nationally*
- *A venture capital fund is established to support innovative and pilot programs with partners*

Strategy 3: Innovative Program and Service Delivery (continued)

Key Tasks	Year 1
<p>South Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review peer education resource centre and develop a business plan for peer education • Review Every Generation • Review Clubs Program and submit revised Clubs 3 year Plan to HACC • Review Strength for Life to enable program to be sustainable • Review and identify ongoing sources of funding for other existing or extended programs • Develop a business model for new programs including objects, criteria, partners, risk management and funding • Identify potential new program areas • Develop business plan for capital venture fund
<p>Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a process to engage states and territories in a national peer education program • Develop options for a national platform & decide model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National subsidiary body - Federated structure - Franchise

Strategy 4: Systems Development

COTA will ensure it has systems in place to support its organisational functions and activities.

State Outcomes:

- *COTA SA has a high quality web site*
- *COTA SA has a highly functional membership system*
- *Risk Management Plans are developed*
- *Support systems are properly resourced with sufficient back up capacity*
- *Accommodation requirements of the strategic plan are met*
- *Strong new branding developed for all strategic directions building on strength of "COTA"*

National Outcomes:

- *High quality web site*
- *Intranet*
- *Unified phone system*
- *Ensure support system meets national needs*
- *New branding reflects decisions on national platforms*

Strategy 4: Systems Development (continued)

Key Tasks	Year 1
<p>South Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop web site as high priority • Work with IMS to purchase and customise a membership system • Revise Policies and Procedures manual • Update training and development programs • Review support systems and develop business plans • Identify accommodation needs and scope options • Develop procedural manual for Programs and Projects data base • Develop Risk Management Plan • Develop new SA branding and launch
<p>Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop web site – perhaps with national partners • Scope potential based on different structural models for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts system - Intranet - Phone system • Identify national accommodation needs and scope options • Scope and decide national branding

This document is a work in progress and subject to further development and amendment by the Board. This version issued by authority of the Chief Executive on 17 November 2006.

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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)
- Continenence 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