



Your right to age well in Australia

with **IAN YATES** COTA chief executive

COMMENT

policy: LATE in 2011 we saw developments that bode well for better ageing policy and reform of aged care.

The Federal Government's Panel on the Economic Contribution of Senior Australians presented its final report to Treasurer Wayne Swan.

It contains 36 recommendations that set out an urgent and achievable agenda for action that will make Australia a better place in which to be ageing.

These cover giving ageing policy much greater clout and priority; the urgent need for co-ordinated action by all governments on affordable and appropriate housing; measures to improve mature age workforce participation; enhancing lifelong learning and support for volunteering; tackling the barriers to seniors' greater use of the internet; and the need for major action against age discrimination.

COTA's recommendations to the panel covered all these areas and we are very pleased to see them accepted and put on the agenda of both federal and state governments.

The panel's very first recommendation was that the Federal Government appoint a Cabinet minister responsible for a whole-of-government strategic approach to getting the best value from an ageing

population. That very day the Prime Minister announced that the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing and Minister for Social Inclusion, SA's own Mark Butler, would be appointed to Cabinet. Quick work indeed!

In the reshuffle the Prime Minister also appointed a Cabinet-level Minister for Housing, anticipating the panel's sixth recommendation to do just that.

Mark Butler's elevation to Cabinet should also augur well for promised action on aged care reform in 2012.

Recent announcements demonstrate that our aged care system is out of date and needs urgent reform.

For our rapidly ageing population to have the chance to age well we need to start preparing our future now.

If reform doesn't start in the 2012 Budget the Government will be forced into sticking more expensive and inadequate Band-Aids on a system that is starting to haemorrhage.

Rolling out the Productivity Commission's reform package will set us on the road to an aged care system that provides greater choice of better quality support and care, with dignity, and will enlist aged care providers in preparing for this future with a clear sense of direction.▶▶