



# **Budget Submission 2009-2010**

**to the  
South Australian Government**

**January 2009**

# **C o n t e n t s**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary – Commitments Sought</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Submission – Details and Rationale</b>	<b>7</b>
1. South Australian Strategic Plan	8
2. Whole of Government Approach to Ageing	8
3. Concessions	9
4. Essential Services	11
- Advocacy support for the community sector	
- Electricity and gas price controls for small retail customers	
- Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme (REES)	
- Regulation of water as an essential service	
5. Transport	16
- Public transport	
- Community transport	
- Transport to maintain the health of older people	
6. Home and Community Care Funding	22
7. Health	23
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>25</b>
COTA Seniors Voice	

## Introduction

South Australia has often been at the cutting edge of social change and we have the opportunity to be so again in relation to ageing. South Australia needs to harness the resources its older population provides as older citizens will be in the majority over the years and decades to come. It is time to rethink attitudes to ageing and to older people and their participation in society.

Common perceptions of ageing see it as a bell curve where the person is born, grows through childhood and into adulthood in a positive upward trend, then sometime after 60 years we start to decline and trend downward (down the 'slippery slope') until death. COTA Seniors Voice believes this is the wrong paradigm for ageing. We see life as an ever upward trend with people growing and learning continually from birth until death.

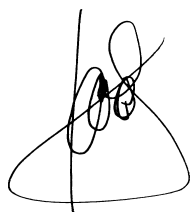
Older people make valuable contributions to our society – as grandparents, volunteers, employees, employers, friends, neighbours and as repositories of our society's wisdom. Many older people have as many goals and ambitions in life as younger people, and they strive to achieve these throughout their life. However ageist attitudes both fail to acknowledge this and also mitigate against many older people maintaining as active and contributing roles as they otherwise could.

As with any population cohort in contemporary society, older people - particularly those on low incomes - may need enablement through government initiatives to maximise their participation and contribution. This is especially the case in terms of leadership in positive discrimination to counteract the widespread and pervasive ageism of our society.

At this specific time the SA government needs to:

- elevate the participation of older South Australians to an explicit target or series of targets in the South Australian Strategic Plan;
- initiate a whole of government approach to population ageing that both minimises risks and takes advantage of opportunities;
- introduce a fair and sustainable concessions system in South Australia and cooperate with the Commonwealth Government to effect Australia-wide access to transport concessions;
- ensure that essential services remain affordable and well regulated within the context of effective measures to deal with climate change;  
ensure that public and community transport in SA is affordable and accessible for the whole population.

By taking these steps the South Australian government will enable the greater contribution of older citizens, which will reward the state handsomely both now and in the years to come.



**Ian Yates AM**  
**Chief Executive**

# **Executive Summary**

# **Commitments Sought**

## **1. South Australian Strategic Plan**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 1.1 *To elevate 'participation by older South Australians in the community' from a developmental target in the 2007 South Australian Strategic Plan to an actual target in the next Plan.*

## **2. Whole of Government Approach to Ageing**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 2.1 *To initiate a whole of government approach to population ageing which sees:*
  - *a coherent, systemic, and comprehensive response to population ageing developed for South Australia in consultation with all interested stakeholders;*
  - *individual Ministers taking carriage of ageing issues that fall within their portfolio responsibilities;*
  - *the Office for the Ageing (OFTA) co-ordinating this approach across Government, monitoring progress, reporting quarterly to government and community interests, and through legislation being accorded the necessary authority to act in this way; and*
  - *adequate resourcing is provided to ensure that this is achievable, both for individual departments and for OFTA.*

## **3. Concessions**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 3.1 *As an interim measure to immediately increase local government, energy and ESL concessions by 25% to make up for eroded value over time.*
- 3.2 *As an interim measure to ensure that ALL concessions are indexed at 1 July each year by the same factor as State taxes and charges are increased.*
- 3.3 *To deliver a concession system for older South Australians that is fair, sustainable and defensible and retains its real value over time.*

## **4. Essential Services**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government,*

- 4.1 *To fund an essential services advocacy support officer based at SACOSS at a cost of \$80,000 per year, on an ongoing basis.*

- 4.2 *To maintain the price regulation regime for small electricity and gas customers in South Australia, regardless of the findings of the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) Review of Effectiveness of Competition in Retail Electricity and Gas Markets in SA.*
- 4.3 *To introduce measures to assist older people on low incomes to actively participate in the REES and to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and appliances.*
- 4.4 *To bring water within the regulatory domain of the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA).*
- 4.5 *To expand the Energy Industry Ombudsman of South Australia's jurisdiction to include water and to resource this role appropriately.*

## **5. Transport**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 5.1 *To review the present transport system in SA, develop and promulgate a comprehensive State Transport Plan to meet the needs of all South Australians into the future, especially the needs of older people who have different transport requirements than school and paid employment, and who do not necessarily drive themselves.*
- 5.2 *To adopt the policy that seniors can travel on public transport between the hours of 9am and 3pm daily free of charge.*
- 5.3 *To fund Local Government Councils to provide a comprehensive high quality, affordable system of localised community transport that responds to the needs of older South Australians, including those who live in regional SA.*
- 5.4 *To extend the existing Roam Zones to include morning hours, and the concept be extended to other areas with a high proportion of older people.*
- 5.5 *To adequately resource and facilitate transport for older people to travel to and from preventative, rehabilitative and acute health services, locally and remotely, in metropolitan and regional SA; and to provide these in conjunction with health services/professionals.*
- 5.6 *To modify the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) to allow it to support older South Australians who live within 100kms of their medical specialist but outside metropolitan Adelaide, and to allow for upfront payment of costs for those with substantial and/or frequent travel costs.*

---

## **6. Home and Community Care Funding**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 6.1 *To maintain funding levels for HACC services and HACC-type services in the lead-up to the potential transfer of the Home and Community Care program to the Commonwealth Government as part of COAG reforms.*

## **7. Health**

*COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government*

- 7.1 *To resource the measures included in the “Health Plan for Older People 2008-2016” to ensure that implementation of the Plan is successful and results in improved health services and experiences for older South Australians.*
- 7.2 *To invest in the early redevelopment of the Repatriation General, Modbury, QEH, Noarlunga and Hampstead Hospitals to enhance their capacities to meet the challenges of an ageing population in line with the role identified for them in the “Health Plan for Older People 2008 – 2016”.*
- 7.3 *Within the scope and context of 7.2 to commit to the physical redevelopment of the Repatriation General Hospital within the next term of government.*

# **Submission**

# **Details and Rationale**

## 1. South Australian Strategic Plan

South Australia's Strategic Plan 2007 includes targets on a broad range of important matters. It does not however contain one related to ageing. COTA Seniors Voice remains disappointed about this. 'Participation by older South Australians in the community' was included on the 'developmental' list and it was indicated that items listed here "may warrant inclusion of a specific target in the plan but where no appropriate data are currently available to measure progress. This list also indicates that appropriate data may become available over the next couple of years to enable the inclusion of a specific target at some point in the future."<sup>1</sup>

### COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government

#### 1.1 To elevate 'participation by older South Australians in the community' from a developmental target in the 2007 South Australian Strategic Plan to an actual target or series of targets in the next Plan.

## 2. Whole of Government Approach to Ageing

Jeanne-Philippe Cotis, Chief Economist of the OECD said in March 2005 that: "Over the next couple of decades nothing will impact OECD economies more profoundly than demographic trends, and chief among them ageing."<sup>2</sup>

We know that by 2051 almost 31% of the State's population will be over 65 years and the over 85 population will have increased fourfold.<sup>3</sup> With this magnitude of change facing us, South Australia needs to adopt a systemic and comprehensive approach to population ageing. The only way that we can plan adequately to take advantage of the opportunities this situation provides, as well as deal with the challenges, is to adopt a whole of government approach.

<sup>1</sup> Government of South Australia (2007) *South Australia's Summary of Targets 2007*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Professor Graeme Hugo "The Ageing of South Australia's Population: Challenges and Opportunities" 2 December 2008 .

<sup>3</sup> Population Projections: Australia 2002 – 2101, (2005) Australian Bureau of Statistics (as reported in the SA' Government's "Improving with Age – Our Ageing Plan for South Australia")

COTA Seniors Voice believes that the Office for the Ageing (OFTA) should be charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating such an approach on behalf of the SA Government, with individual portfolios responsible for initiatives within their purview, and that they all should be resourced appropriately to carry this out.

## **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

### **2.1 To initiate a whole of government approach to population ageing which results in:**

- **a coherent, systemic, and comprehensive response to population ageing developed for South Australia in consultation with all interested stakeholders;**
- **individual Ministers taking carriage of ageing issues that fall within their portfolio responsibilities;**
- **the Office for the Ageing (OFTA) co-ordinating this approach across Government in close collaboration with Cabinet Office, monitoring progress, reporting quarterly to government and community interests, and through legislation being accorded the necessary authority to act in this way; and**
- **additional resourcing is provided to ensure that this is achievable, both for individual departments and for OFTA.**

## **3. Concessions**

COTA Seniors Voice again seeks the development by the State Government of a rational, fair and sustainable concessions policy which addresses both maintenance of the real value of concessions and longer term issues of equity and sustainability. This includes utilising an Essential Services Index to maintain the real value of such concessions to people on low fixed incomes.

COTA Seniors Voice understands that a planned review of concessions to be undertaken by Revenue SA with input from the Department of Families and Communities has been scrapped. We are extremely disappointed to learn this. Such a review is imperative. Its terms of reference should include consideration of the rationale for concessions, the criteria for eligibility, and mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of real value over time.

Concessions are rarely increased and therefore lose their real value over time. In an economic environment where the cost of living is skyrocketing particularly in relation to the basics (petrol, food, energy, housing) and older people (particularly singles) are struggling on the age pension, the value of concessions needs more than ever to keep pace with rising costs.

COTA Seniors Voice is repeatedly contacted about the complexities and inequities within the system of concessions that are the responsibility of the State Government.

Given that the Government doesn't want to review and deliver a concession system that is fair and targets assistance to those in most need, we suggest instead that the Government make up for the losses experienced by concession recipients and increase the real value of concessions in line with actual increases in costs.

- The maximum council rate concession increased from \$150 to \$190 per year from 1 July 2001 and has remained at this level. Housing values have increased significantly over the intervening seven years and so too have rates, and there is a significant case therefore for increases in this concession to keep pace with costs. COTA Seniors Voice understands that rates have increased 63% across South Australia in the period 1998 to 2008. Clearly this concession needs to be increased to reflect real values and then be maintained over time.
- The Emergency Services Levy concession has not increased since its inception in 2000 – it remains at \$40.
- The energy concession of up to \$120 has applied since November 2003 when it was increased from \$70. Energy costs have increased substantially in the last five years and the real value of this concession has been substantially eroded.

COTA Seniors Voice acknowledges that the Government has listened and taken recent action in relation to water concessions.

- The State Government has increased water concessions from 1 July 2008 in line with the new water pricing structure. It has also introduced water remissions for tenants in both private and public tenancies and to Commonwealth Low Income Health Care Card holders. COTA Seniors Voice supports these measures but notes again no commitment to maintain the real value of this concession over time.

## **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

- 3.1 As an interim measure to immediately increase local government, energy and ESL concessions by 25% to make up for eroded value over time.**

- 3.2 As an interim measure to ensure that ALL concessions are indexed at 1 July each year by the same factor as State taxes and charges are increased.**
- 3.3 To deliver a concession system for older South Australians that is fair, sustainable and defensible and retains its real value over time.**

#### **4. Essential Services**

Essential services such as electricity, gas and water have become of much greater significance for older people over recent years. Costs have risen dramatically over that period and concessions have lagged behind. The effective access of many older South Australians to essential services has been compromised and is at risk of being further compromised.

It is in that context that COTA Seniors Voice makes the following recommendations.

##### **Advocacy Support for the Community Sector**

Despite the essential nature of utilities, there is currently no support available to consumer groups in South Australia to enable consistent engagement in pricing, standards and other utility issues. This is despite energy regulators conducting consultation processes that are predicated on there being informed groups able to represent the various issues associated with the provision of utilities.

We note that in Victoria, there are 3 community based organizations who receive State Government funding to engage in energy issues, these being the Victorian Council of Social Service, Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre and Consumer Action Law Centre. In New South Wales, PIAC, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre has funded positions to work on utility issues while in both Queensland and Western Australia, State governments provide specific funding to the South Australian Council of Social Service to engage on essential services issues, particularly energy. The Queensland Council of Social Service has recently received about \$250,000 for their utilities work.

While the significant ad hoc engagement on energy issues in South Australia by some dedicated individuals based in various agencies has been very useful, it is no substitute for funding to enable ongoing engagement by people with greater specialist knowledge employed to work on essential services issues.

---

As a minimum, one full-time project officer needs to be funded, to be based at SACOSS, at a cost of \$80,000 p.a. (including on-costs).

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **4.1 To fund an essential services advocacy support officer based at SACOSS at a cost of \$80,000 per year, on an ongoing basis.**

### **Electricity and Gas Price Controls for Small Retail Customers in SA**

The Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) is responsible for rules and policy advice in relation to national energy markets. COAG Ministers agreed the AEMC should review the effectiveness of retail competition in electricity and gas retail markets in each jurisdiction except WA.

The AEMC is currently conducting a review of this nature in SA. AEMC released its review findings on the effectiveness of competition in the retail electricity and gas markets in SA on 19 September 2008. The Commission has found that :

“... competition is effective for small electricity and small gas customers in South Australia, although competition is relatively more intense in electricity than in gas. However, in making this finding the Commission has identified some structural limitations that are affecting the ability of small gas customers in regional areas to access the full benefits of competition.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Given that the Commission has found that competition is effective for small customers, it is now required to provide advice to the SA Minister for Energy on ways to phase out price controls in SA. COTA Seniors Voice, along with a wide range of community sector organisations, is concerned that should price controls be removed this will disadvantageously impact on vulnerable consumers. People on low incomes, including many older South Australians, will have very limited ability to absorb any subsequent increases in the price of essential services, particularly in a volatile economic environment where other items such as food, petrol, housing, and water prices are also increasing. If you add to this the Federal Government's Carbon Emissions Trading scheme to be introduced in 2010 which will also increase living costs substantially, COTA Seniors Voice is most concerned that any removal of price controls will create extreme hardship for vulnerable South Australians.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **4.2 To maintain the price regulation regime for small electricity and gas customers in South Australia, regardless of the**

---

[1] AEMC (2008) Review of the Effectiveness of Competition in Electricity and Gas Retail Markets in South Australia – First Final Report (19 September 2008) - page ix

---

**findings of the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC)  
Review of Effectiveness of Competition in Retail Electricity  
and Gas Markets in SA.**

**Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme (REES) – Assistance for Low  
Income Households**

The government's Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme (REES) will commence on 1 January 2009. Under the scheme energy retailers will be required to achieve targets for delivery energy audits to low income households and implementing energy efficiency improvements in households (including low income households).

The scheme provides for energy efficient activities to be approved by the Minister for Energy for implementation under the Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme. Currently the menu of items includes :

- lighting activities
- showerhead activities
- activities for the early retirement of refrigerators and freezers
- water heater activities
- ceiling insulation activities
- draft proofing activities
- internal window treatment activities
- external window treatment activities

COTA Seniors Voice supports the thrust of this measure which is to cut greenhouse gas emissions and improve residential energy efficiency. It will also place households in a better position to accommodate changes required when the Commonwealth Government's carbon trading scheme comes into operation, expected to be in 2010.

However, COTA Seniors Voice is concerned that low income households, particularly single aged pensioners, will be unable to afford to undertake many of the approved activities. Replacement of water heaters, addition of insulation, purchase of a new refrigerator or freezer and addition of window treatments can be very expensive and for those pensioners surviving from one pension day to the next these will not be possible without assistance from government. Many older South Australians live in dwellings that are not well maintained simply because they cannot afford to do so, and it is often these dwellings that are not energy efficient.

COTA Seniors Voice also believes that costs incurred by energy retailers in administering and delivering the scheme will result in flow-on increases in the cost of energy. This too will hurt low income seniors.

## **COTA Seniors Voice therefore calls on the South Australian Government**

### **4.3 To introduce measures to assist older people on low incomes to actively participate in the REES and to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and appliances.**

#### **Regulation of Water as an Essential Service**

The provision of electricity and gas to South Australian households is overseen by legislative provisions that provide basic consumer protections such as:

- explicit and clear contract terms and conditions;
- actions for non-payment including explicit and clear hardship/credit management policies, supply restriction and disconnection policies, and access to customer assistance programmes;
- internal complaint handling and dispute resolution- requirements to have internal escalation processes for complaints and timeframes for response to complaints;
- billing issues/payment terms and conditions/"time to pay" – mandated instalment plans and payment options for customers, redress for wrong bills, bills with errors (for example due to meter reading mistakes), under and over charging;
- access to independent dispute resolution – in the event of failure of internal complaints systems to provide redress, in both Victoria and NSW the energy industry ombudsman schemes have been expanded over recent years to include water businesses. More than 50% of water related complaints in those states relate to water billing issues; and
- obligations on entering and vacating premises.

In the South Australian energy sector (electricity and gas) these matters are dealt with in the Energy Retail Code and other related codes. A parallel Water Retail Code based on customer and stakeholder input and public consultation would be overseen by an independent regulatory body.

The Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) was established in 2002 with the objective of the protection of the long term interests of South Australian consumers with respect to the price, quality and reliability of essential services (initially electricity).

Under the Essential Services Commission (ESC) Act 2002, ESCOSA performs the following functions :

- regulates prices and performs licensing and other functions under relevant industry regulation Acts;
- monitors and enforces compliance with and promotes improvement in standards and conditions of service and supply under relevant industry regulation Acts;

- makes and monitors the operation of, and reviews from time to time, codes and rules relating to the conduct of operations of a regulated industry or regulated entities;
- provides and requires consumer consultation processes in regulated industries and assists consumers and others with information and other services;
- advises the Minister on any matter referred by the Minister;
- administers the ESC Act;
- performs functions assigned to the Commission under this or any other Act;
- in appropriate cases, prosecutes offences against this Act or a relevant industry regulation Act.<sup>4</sup>

ESCOSA is a well respected regulatory agency within SA and COTA Seniors Voice calls on the Government to include water within ESCOSA's area of responsibility. Water is a key essential service in South Australia and fits well within the regulatory role of the Commission. As water security and cost becomes of more concern to South Australians, greater demands will be made for improved transparency of water administration, delivery and pricing.

The Energy Industry Ombudsman of SA (EIOSA) and his staff investigate and resolve disputes between customers and electricity and gas companies. This is an important service for South Australian essential services customers. However, EIOSA's jurisdiction is currently limited to electricity and gas.

As noted above, other jurisdictions have seen an advantage in enabling dispute resolution in relation to all essential services – for example the Energy and Water Ombudsman in Victoria.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

**4.4 To bring water within the regulatory domain of the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA).**

**4.5 To expand the Energy Industry Ombudsman of South Australia's jurisdiction to include water and to resource this role appropriately.**

## **5. Transport**

### **Public Transport**

The availability of a high quality public transport system is a critical issue for older people. Transport difficulties or distance from services was the main

---

<sup>4</sup> ESCOSA website

reason cited by over half (54%) of those people aged 85 years and over who have difficulty accessing service providers – this is a finding of the “Older Australians at a Glance” research<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, when COTA Seniors Voice conducted extensive community consultations in late 2007 on behalf of the Office for the Ageing (OFTA) we found that lack of appropriate, affordable and responsive transport was one of the key issues raised by older people across the State. Lack of transport was noted as having a major impact on older people’s ability to access services and to remain independent. Country participants were particularly disadvantaged, often having to drive themselves long distances for medical appointments and treatment.<sup>6</sup>

COTA Seniors Voice acknowledges the announcement in the 2008 State Budget of \$2 billion to improve the State’s public transport system over the next decade, including:

- Electrification of the major northern and southern rail lines;
- Purchasing 50 new electric trains and refurbishment and conversion of the majority of the existing trains to electricity from diesel;
- Extension of the Glenelg tram services to the Entertainment Centre and then on to Port Adelaide, Semaphore and to a newly refurbished AAMI stadium at West Lakes;
- Provision of extra trams to meet the existing demand and then boost the fleet for the future network;
- Acquisition of 80 extra buses providing up to nine million extra passenger journeys over four years as well as replacing more than 130 of the existing fleet; and
- Investing in a new state-of-the-art ticketing system.

These measures, while welcomed, will take time to implement and are not specifically targeted at older people and their needs.

We know that the South Australian population is ageing and that the proportion of the population who are in the older group is increasing. By 2051 almost 31% of the State’s population will be over 65 and the over 85 population will have increased four fold.<sup>7</sup> In this environment it will be important for the State to have a public transport system of very high quality and reliability.

---

<sup>5</sup> Older Australians at a Glance (2007) Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing and the Australian Institute of Health and Ageing; p17

<sup>6</sup> COTA SA (2008) Consultations on In-Home Services for Older people – Final Report to Office for the Ageing (OFTA) for 2008 – 2011 Home and Community Care Triennial Plan.

<sup>7</sup> Population Projections: Australia 2002 – 2101, (2005) Australian Bureau of Statistics (as reported in the SA’ Government’s “Improving with Age – Our Ageing Plan for South Australia”)

COTA Seniors Voice therefore calls on the State Government to develop and implement a comprehensive State Transport Plan to meet the needs of all South Australians, but including in particular those older people who do not go to school or work and who have limited access or capacity to drive themselves.

Further, we would expect a State Transport Plan to include the transport provided by Local Government and ensure that this is responsive to the more localised needs of older people. We are impressed with the breadth and comprehensive nature of the “Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2006 – 2012” and commend this to the SA Government. A strategy of this nature for SA would be supported by COTA.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.1 To review the present transport system in SA, develop and promulgate a comprehensive State Transport Plan to meet the needs of all South Australians into the future, especially the needs of older people who have different transport requirements than school and paid employment, and who do not necessarily drive themselves.**

COTA Seniors Voice notes with great interest media reports that the Carpenter Government in Western Australia announced during its election campaign that it will be offering free travel on public transport for seniors during the day.<sup>8</sup> COTA Seniors Voice is very supportive of this initiative.

COTA Senior Voice encourages the Rann Government to adopt a similar policy. This would encourage seniors to participate in the community to a greater extent, would reduce social isolation, and would greatly assist those solely reliant on the age pension to make ends meet. It may also serve to increase the incidence of volunteerism among seniors and boost their already substantial contribution to our broader society.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.2 To adopt the policy that seniors can travel on public transport between the hours of 9am and 3pm daily free of charge.**

The SA Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure has introduced “Roam Zones” in a number of areas in metropolitan Adelaide. These roaming bus services allow passengers to be picked up and dropped off at places that are not regular stops along an established route, making it easier for them to access medical centres, shopping centres and other facilities.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> 891 ABC Radio Adelaide (2008)11am Tuesday 26 August 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Minister for Families and Communities “Connecting to the Future - The Strategic Agenda

COTA Seniors Voice congratulates the SA Government on this initiative and agrees that it has scope to assist older people to continue to live independently in the community. However, COTA Seniors Voice is concerned that some roam zone buses only operate in very limited hours in the afternoon and/or operate after 7pm at night. While it is difficult to generalise about the travel patterns of older people, it is probably the case the many would be most mobile in the morning and their travel would decline in hours of darkness, particularly in winter months.

Older people are also potentially fearful of other bus passengers seeing where they live, particularly if they live alone, so may not wish to be dropped at their home address. People in this situation may choose to be dropped off at a point near their home. COTA Seniors Voice assumes that this is possible under the current arrangements.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.3 To extend the existing Roam Zones to include morning hours, and the concept be extended to other areas with a high proportion of older people.**

### **Community Transport**

Some Local Councils provide transport in the form of a community bus service to local residents to allow them to undertake appointments and do their regular shopping. This is an invaluable service where it exists. However, this type of service is not and cannot under current arrangements be consistent across Local Government areas in SA. COTA Seniors Voice believes the State Government should fund Local Government to provide localised community transport to residents on a regular basis, within an over all State Transport Plan.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.4 To fund Local Government Councils to provide a comprehensive high quality, affordable system of localised community transport that responds to the needs of older South Australians, including those who live in regional SA.**

### **Transport to Maintain the Health of Older People**

Access to appropriate transport is inextricably linked to older people's capacity to get the health care they need. There is a considerable body of overseas research and understanding in Australia that the current lack of transport is a

barrier to good health. The Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing concluded that appropriate transport for older people to access health care are 'not optional but essential'.<sup>10</sup>

Older people cannot get to or from both local and distant health services. It is difficult for people who do not drive themselves to get to General Practitioners, to allied health services, to diagnostic services and pathology services for one-off tests and for management of chronic disease. Older people fail to use routine and preventative health care services because they cannot afford or gain access to appropriate transport. Over and above the cost of the service, many older people do not go to dentists because transport is an additional problem for them.

COTA Seniors Voice conducted a survey of members in April/May of this year and in response to the open-ended question "what could be improved or changed to give you better health care?" transport was raised by a number of respondents.<sup>11</sup>

COTA Seniors Voice understands that the DNAs ('did not attend') recorded in the state's health system in relation to medical appointments is now approximately 40%. Lack of reliable and timely transport is a significant contributing factor to this statistic. This is a significant inefficiency and cost to a health system already struggling to meet the demands placed upon it.

Many older people defer seeking medical assistance and then become so ill that they are transported by ambulance to an acute care facility, a cost that would be offset by investment in transport to health care early in the illness.

Assistance is available disparately for people to travel for acute and specialist care from rural and remote areas, and in some cases for people living within metropolitan areas. Specific transport is provided for veterans and for people with disabilities to travel locally. Various programs offer taxi subsidies, access to public transport, and community transport options for older people and their carers.

Recent work by the National Aged Care Alliance<sup>12</sup> documents the shortcomings of existing programs and assistance for older people seeking transport to get to and from health care services, as well as the increased demand for such transport that is resulting from changes to health care policy and service delivery.

The Alliance proposes that:

- Resources for transport be factored into the delivery of all components of the health care system to older people including primary health care,

---

<sup>10</sup> House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing Inquiry Into Long Term Strategies to Address the Ageing of the Australian Population over the next 40 years, March 2005

<sup>11</sup> COTA SA (2008) Health Survey in *myCOTA* magazine.

<sup>12</sup> National Aged Care Alliance (2007) "*Transport and Access to Health Services for Older Australians - A Position Paper Prepared by the National Aged Care Alliance*".

rehabilitative care, community care and acute care services. Additional health sector funding will be required to provide this transport. Existing transport programs, services and subsidies may be reviewed or resources reallocated; however, there are not currently resources within health systems that can provide transport services to meet the needs of older people accessing health care; and

- Public and community transport services, and programs provided through the private sector, require reorganisation so that transport is available for people to get to health care; ie. to meet the needs of the large and growing proportion of our population that is older, as well as servicing the needs of people who travel to work and to school.

This may include the provision of taxi vouchers to older people expected to attend medical appointments. GP's or other health professionals could provide these to older people at the same time as issuing a referral to a specialist or writing a pathology request form.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.5 To adequately resource and facilitate transport for older people to travel to and from preventative, rehabilitative and acute health services, locally and remotely, in metropolitan and regional SA; and to provide these in conjunction with health services/professionals.**

The Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) aims to make specialist medical services more accessible to rural South Australians by assisting with the cost of transport and accommodation expenses. It does this by partial reimbursement to eligible patients on the production of original receipts for relevant expenses.

The scheme is restricted to patients who are required to travel more than 100 km (one way) to their nearest medical specialist. PATS therefore discriminates against people who are nearer than 100km from a medical specialist but who live outside metropolitan Adelaide and for whom public transport is either not accessible or not affordable.

Furthermore, having to find the money to pay for the transport and accommodation in the first place causes financial hardship for many older people, especially those solely reliant on the Age Pension and those who have to make frequent trips to their specialist because of their medical condition.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

#### **5.6 To modify the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) to allow it to support older South Australians who live within 100kms of their medical specialist but outside metropolitan**

**Adelaide, and to allow for upfront payment of costs for those with substantial and/or frequent travel costs.**

**6. Home and Community Care Funding**

Established in 1985, the Home and Community Care (HACC) program is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments. The State Government provides 38% of HACC Program funding in SA, with 62% provided by the Commonwealth Government. In addition, the State Government also provides a significant level of unmatched funding (outside of the HACC Review Agreement) for a range of HACC-type services. In 2006/07 this additional State expenditure was an estimated \$44.6 million.<sup>13</sup>

At its 3 July 2008 meeting in Sydney the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on:

“... fixing the intersection of aged care and disability services, roles and responsibilities...”<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, at its 2 October 2008 meeting in Perth:

“...COAG agreed to progress reforms to roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and States and Territories for community and residential aged care services for aged people, community and residential care for people with disabilities and community care and support services for people with mental illness. These reforms will help build seamless service systems to meet better the needs of the aged, people with disability, people with mental illness and their carers on a national basis.”<sup>15</sup>

COTA Seniors Voice supports any initiative that results in improved service provision and support for older people. We have actively supported the proposed transfer of full responsibility and funding for HACC to the Commonwealth but will be very interested to see the detailed transition plans and arrangements supporting the reform of Commonwealth/State roles. COTA Seniors Voice would participate on any Reference Group established to assist Government in working through these details to ensure the smoothest transition to the new arrangements for older South Australians.

COTA Seniors Voice will also watch with interest in the interim period to see that State Government funds currently meeting the needs of older South Australians for HACC services and HACC-type services are maintained.

<sup>13</sup> Office for the Ageing (OFTA) “Home and Community Care Triennial Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11” – p3

<sup>14</sup> “Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Communique – 2 July 2008” –p5

<sup>15</sup> “Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Communique – 2 October 2008” – p3

## **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

### **6.1 To maintain funding levels for HACC services and other community-based services in the lead-up to the potential transfer of the Home and Community Care program to the Commonwealth Government as part of COAG reforms.**

## **7. Health**

South Australia is experiencing growth in its older population and this presents challenges for our health system. While many people remain healthy for a long time, ageing brings with it changes in physical and mental abilities as well as an increased risk of developing chronic diseases and other age related diseases. South Australia's health system will need to be re-engineered to meet the needs of its ageing population. The State Government has responded to this challenge with the development of the "Health Plan for Older People 2008-2016". The Plan heralds, among other things,

- a greater focus on preventative health measures, early intervention and restoring health quickly following illness or hospitalisation,
- improved hospital care for older people,
- use of interdisciplinary teams to work with older people and their families to ensure that the right care is delivered in a timely fashion by the right professionals in the right location, and
- that workforce strategies are employed to ensure that there are appropriately skilled and knowledgeable staff working in a range of health settings across the state, and there are adequate numbers to achieve prompt, quality health care as and when needed.

## **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

### **7.1 To resource the measures included in the "Health Plan for Older People 2008-2016" to ensure that implementation of the Plan is successful and results in improved health services and experiences for older South Australians.**

The "Health Plan for Older People" links with "South Australia's Health Care Plan 2007-2016" and includes an integrated service model for older people that spans the continuum of care. It references major hospitals, special purpose and general hospitals, country community hospitals and the array of other health services and supports available to individuals experiencing a health event.

In this model, hospitals such as the Modbury, the QEH, Noarlunga Hospital, Hampstead, and the Repatriation General Hospital have important roles to play in the evaluation, care and rehabilitation of older people. In order to successfully fulfil these roles these hospitals will require enhancement of their capacities to meet the challenges of an ageing population. The RGH in particular, while a specialist older person's facility, operates from premises that as a whole are well out of date, inefficient to operate and not user friendly.

### **COTA Seniors Voice calls on the South Australian Government**

- 7.2 To invest in the early enhancement of the Modbury, QEH, Noarlunga, Hampstead and Repatriation Hospitals to build their capacities to meet the challenges of an ageing population in line with the roles identified for them in the State Health Plan and the "Health Plan for Older People 2008 – 2016".**
- 7.3 In particular, within the scope and context of 7.2 to commit to the physical redevelopment of the Repatriation General Hospital within the next term of government.**

**Developed by the COTA Seniors Voice Policy Council  
Authorised by Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive, COTA Seniors Voice  
45 Flinders Street, Adelaide 5000 Ph: 08 8232 0422  
Email: [seniorsvoice@seniorsvoice.org.au](mailto:seniorsvoice@seniorsvoice.org.au)  
Web: [www.seniorsvoice.org.au](http://www.seniorsvoice.org.au)  
January 2009**

## Appendix

### COTA Seniors Voice

COTA Seniors Voice is recognised as a strong and effective organisation providing significant leadership on ageing issues at state and national levels. COTA Seniors Voice also delivers a range of programs and services to seniors.

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

The organisation (then called 'The Older People's Welfare Council' and later 'Council on the Ageing' or 'COTA') was incorporated in 1957, and changed its name to COTA Seniors Voice in 2008.

The key roles of COTA Seniors Voice are:

- Policy and advocacy - centrally engaged in every major State Government policy related to ageing or seniors over the last 20 years, including the 'Ten Year Plan', 'Moving Ahead' and 'Improving with Age'.
- Representation - seniors' interests are represented by COTA Seniors Voice in a wide range of State and Commonwealth government forums, non-government bodies, consumer advisory groups, research bodies.
- Programs and services - COTA Seniors Voice manages a range of services and programs delivered to seniors and seniors' groups within South Australia and in other states
- Sector development - COTA Seniors Voice has established a wide range of aged sector organisations including Seniors Information Service, Aged Rights Advocacy Service, Aged & Community Services SA & NT, Carers SA, Aboriginal Elders Council of SA and many others. It promotes adaption and development of local seniors organisations throughout SA
- Member services – COTA Seniors Voice provides its 20,000 members with access to a range of special benefits including discounts, insurance, financial services, day trips and a magazine.