



COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

First

09

NEWSLETTER

President's Welcome

Late last year I noted that generally more difficult circumstances are likely in 2009 and it is not just because we are one year older. However, I would like to start the year with some good news.

You may not be aware of the broader application of Seniors Card travel benefits as much of the media missed the press release in early January. It stated 'Seniors around Australia are now able to access concession fares on most interstate public transport systems as a new national scheme begins to rollout'. The Commonwealth is funding the ACT and other governments to provide Seniors Card travel concessions to residents of other states. As a consequence, ACTION buses now recognise government Senior's Cards. I believe that WA is the only state where ACT Senior's Card may not be recognised, at this time, for public transport concessions.



This is good news as reciprocal travel concessions have been the single largest concern for Seniors Card holders and also generate the most calls to COTA. We have actively raised this issue, in submissions regarding the ACT Budget and in our contact with Ministers, for more than a decade. COTA Over 50s has also carried this issue at the federal level.

This is a welcome start to 2009 and will reduce uncertainty and confusion for travellers. Access to transport concessions will also provide more consistent treatment to older people across Australia.

Organ donation has the potential to provide significant benefits to individuals and the community generally. There is generally a high level of notional support within the community for organ donation. However, it appears that the actual level of organ donation is low. The COTA (ACT) Policy Council worked on this issue in 2008. Mr Rudd and the Federal Government have also recognised organ donation as an area where significant advances are required and established the Australian Organ and Tissue Transplantation Authority this year.

The fundamental question is whether we, in the ACT, need to be more proactive and what changes are required if effective organ and tissue donations are to be of broader benefit. Our first COTA General Meeting for 2009 on 3 March will have a medical expert, a donor and a beneficiary of a live organ donation. The focus will be on the practical issues and consideration of people intimately involved. I encourage you to come and participate as I expect the presentations to be both enlightening and challenging.

Elizabeth Grant AM


COTA GENERAL MEETING

3 March 2009 at 2pm
Hughes Community Centre

An organ donor, an organ recipient and a medical specialist will consider **"Organ Donation – Should we do more?"**

This should present some fascinating perspectives. Come along to listen and have your questions answered.

Reach for the Stars in Seniors Week

We can spend a little extra time looking up and considering the stars as 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy. 

'Nurture Ageing, Stay Active' provides NASA as the theme for Seniors Week which runs from 15 to 22 March in both New South Wales and the ACT. Seniors Week provides a range of events, concerts, activities and opportunities. Over seventy organisations and groups offer insight into their activities and the opportunity to try something new or something forgotten.

The Chief Minister officially opens the week at a breakfast on Monday morning and supports two concerts on Wednesday 18 March. The challenge for Seniors is to reach for the stars - at a concert, performance, presentation, on a walk or other outing. You may even become a star yourself.

This Newsletter contains a summary of Seniors Week events. Additional activities are still being included. The full program will be included in *The Canberra Times* on 1 March in the Seniors Week supplement. Copies will also be available in the COTA office. The latest changes will be available in the program at www.cota-act.org.au.



ActewAGL

COTA (ACT) is proudly supported by

Did you know?

Community Forums on Positive Ageing

The ACT Office for Ageing is hosting three public forums to gather views to assist in the development of a strategic plan on positive ageing. The development of the plan, in partnership with the Ministerial Council on Ageing, aims to foster social inclusion. Key areas include health and wellbeing of older Canberrans including disability issues; housing and accommodation; support services; transport; and work and retirement. The plan will assist in the development of policies and programs that will enhance the quality of life for older Canberrans. The dates are:

- Friday 6 March 9.30 to 12.30 @ Kippax Uniting Community Centre, Holt
- Tuesday 10 March 9.30 to 12.30 @ Vikings Club, Greenway
- Thursday 12 March 9.30 to 12.30 @ the Ainslie Football Club, Ainslie

For further information contact the ACT Office for Ageing on 6205 3113 or www.ageing.act.gov.au

Chief Minister Congratulatory Letters

The Chief Minister can send personally signed letters of congratulation to mark significant milestones. Letters can be prepared to mark 50th wedding anniversaries or 80th and subsequent birthdays – for yourself or someone you know. Contact Mr Chris Wilson in the Chief Minister's Support and Protocol unit on 6205 3031 or email with at least two weeks' notice to govtsupport@act.gov.au

Donate your old spectacles

You can donate your old spectacles and help Lions International recycle them for those in need. A pair of spectacles can change a person's life in the third world. See the donation box in the COTA (ACT) reception area.

Centrelink Financial Information Seminars

Free education and information seminars are being run by Centrelink. Average seminar duration is two hours:

- 17 February at 6pm "Age Pension and your Choices", Southern Cross Club, Woden
- 18 February at 6pm "Understanding Retirement Income Streams", Southern Cross Club, Woden
- 17 March at 2pm "Understanding your Pension", Pilgrim House, Canberra City
- 18 March at 2pm "Accommodation Options in Retirement", Pilgrim House, Canberra City
- 1 April at 6pm "Retirement Reality & Investment Choices", Southern Cross Club, Woden
- 2 April at 6pm "Running your own Super Fund", Southern Cross Club, Woden

Bookings are essential: call 136357 or email fis.seminar.bookings@Centrelink.gov.au

Volunteers Needed!

Can you or someone you know spare a few hours per week? COTA (ACT) desperately needs volunteers to perform reception or administrative work. All training is provided.

Please contact Tracey Jay in the COTA office on 6282 3777 if you can help.

Executive Notes



Frantic activity associated with major public events is a feature of the first quarter of the calendar year. Seniors Day at the Royal Canberra Show is on 27 February. Seniors Week will be from 15 to 22 March this year.

This involves advertising, promotion and the overall co-ordination of the program. In addition, COTA is responsible for the Chief Minister's breakfast, major concerts and the Seniors Day expo.

The publication and distribution of the Seniors Card Directory is another major activity scheduled for the first half of 2009. The delay in this work is most untimely but has been brought about by difficulties in obtaining sponsorship and funding, despite efforts over the last twelve months.

Peer education efforts, public talks, participation in groups and consultation will also be part of our activity in 2009. The Finance and Lifestyle Survey, which you received with your last COTA Newsletter, has been well received. For many politicians it validated their electoral experiences. They now realise that issues are significantly more deep seated than just coming from a few disgruntled constituents.

Falls, sickness, relocation and retirement eroded our volunteers in 2008. COTA volunteers undertake administrative tasks including data entry and preparing for events, as well as, helping direct people, provide information or even give a cup of tea. The work can be casual or regular. Please contact COTA if you are interested in volunteering in any of these areas.

The financial market 'meltdown', reduced employment, lower business and investment confidence and increased pharmaceutical charges are recent significant developments. On the other hand, the Federal 'Christmas bonus' has been welcomed by many older people. COTA is responding with a supplementary survey concerning these recent changes. The supplementary questions have been sent to those who provided contact details when they returned the Finance and Lifestyle Survey last year. About 330 supplementary surveys have been distributed. Over 200 were returned in the first week.

I am looking forward to our first general meeting as Graham McKenzie is one of the speakers. I have known Graham since my children were in Primary School. Graham was the Headmaster and I was P&C President. Graham and his wife, Leslie, now have even more in common; they share a pair of kidneys. I am sure this has been well considered and is not a simple process so I will be interested to hear of their experience.

The second speaker, Margaret Hamilton, responded to a television show by donating one of her kidneys. Doctor Carney, a local medical specialist is our third presenter. The perspectives will be quite different but, I expect, very interesting.

Paul Flint
Executive Director

About Seniors 50+

www.aboutseniors.com.au

This website supplies relevant information, links, resources and fun relating to seniors in Australia. Have a look to get the latest updates on issues about retirement, veterans, pensioners, Centrelink benefits, superannuation, carers, aged care, community groups and government initiatives.

In the Frame

Vivienne Sinderberry

Vice President COTA Board

Vivienne was born in Port Kembla and moved to inner Sydney at the age of three. Her parents owned a grocery store in Newtown. She went to school at Sydney Girls' High and then trained as a school teacher.



Vivienne taught for about seven years. She married Keith and had three children. In "those days" women had to resign when they became pregnant.

The family lived overseas for several years in Wellington (NZ) and Paris due to Keith's work with IBM. They returned to live in Canberra in 1975. In the early 80's the decision was made to move to their farm in Junee, where they had already established a sheep and cropping operation.

Vivienne led a hectic life while on the farm. From the late 80's she worked with the NSW Farmer's Association, Chaired the Education Committee and the Rural Training Council of NSW. She helped form the Australian Federation of Agricultural Women in addition to setting up the NSW Rural Women's Network.

In 1998 they sold the farm and returned to Canberra where two of their children were then living. As often happens, careers took both families to London, taking the four grandsons with them. Their other son farms in Condobolin.

Vivienne intended to play golf in Canberra. However in 2000 Kitty Peisley persuaded her to join COTA about which she initially had a very blinkered view. This did not last long as she soon realised the importance of COTA to Canberra seniors. She became a member of the Policy Council and became the COTA representative on the ACT Hospice Society. Because of the increasing workload arising from her involvement in COTA, Vivienne has reluctantly resigned from the Society. Three years ago she became the COTA representative on the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (MACA). After being invited to join the COTA Board a year ago she was elected Vice President after the recent AGM.

Vivienne's contributions to COTA keep her very busy. However, she does enjoy travelling and visits her children and grandchildren in the UK every year. She does also fit in the occasional game of golf!

Are you paying too much tax on your super?

Many superannuants with ComSuper are paying too much tax on the 'tax free component' of their retirement pay. This is due to a change to the laws relating to **pre-1983 undeducted contributions**.

From 1 July 2007 the undeducted purchase price (UPP) became a part of the tax free component. ComSuper does not have a record of these figures but the Tax Office does. Those affected:

- a) had pre 1983 undeducted contributions, **and**,
- b) had been claiming, up to 2007, a deduction for undeducted purchase price (UPP), **and**,
- c) had **not** elected to withdraw undeducted contributions.

To determine if you are affected you need to do the following:

1. Phone the ATO Super Hotline on 131020 and ask for a letter stating the amount of your 'pre-1983 excess contributions'. You will need your tax file number.
2. When this is received post a copy to ComSuper, PO Box 22, Belconnen, ACT, 2616 requesting recalculation of the 'tax free component'.
3. ComSuper will recalculate your pension to increase the value of your Tax Free Component and issue you an amendment letter.
4. Submit the ComSuper amendment letter with your tax return, or if too late, with a letter requesting amendment of your return to: ATO Amendments, GPO Box 5056, Sydney, NSW, 2001. You should also show your tax agent if you have one.

See the ComSuper website for more information:

www.dfrdb.gov.au/latestnews/deduct.html

New Rebatale MRI at NCDI Deakin

National Capital Diagnostic Imaging (NCDI) has installed a new Medicare funded MRI at Deakin. The new unit is Australia's first high definition MRI and will perform higher quality and faster scans. It is the only private MRI scanner in Canberra that allows a Medicare rebate. Pensioners qualify for the Medicare rebate if they have been referred by a specialist. The charge is \$80 (or \$120 if contrast is required). Simply present your Medicare card and Pension card and mention these when booking. The standard non-rebatale fee is \$320 so this represents a significant saving for older people.

Contact Tony Dempsey at NCDI for more information on 6214 2223 and discuss this with your medical specialist if you are being referred for an MRI.

Getting the Tax Bonus to You:

The Taxation Office is working to pay the Australian Government tax bonus from early April 2009. The bonus is, however, contingent on the legislation being passed through Parliament. The payments are determined by people's 2007-08 tax return and most eligible people don't have to do anything. If you want to provide bank account details or to find out more call 1300 686 636 or log on to www.ato.gov.au

CONGRATULATIONS - Australia Day Honours

Two of our members received honours in the recent Australia Day awards:

Mr Alan Foskett, a member of our policy committee, received an OAM for service to the ACT community through the preservation and documentation of the history of the region.

Mr Howard Grant, a long-term member of COTA (ACT), received an OAM for service to the community through the Canberra Woden Lions Club.

We congratulate both for their outstanding effort and are thankful for their contributions to COTA.

Seniors Week 2009 (15 – 22 March 2009)



Events to look forward to include:

- 15 – 22 March, Life's Reflection, photographic exhibition at the Canberra Centre.
- 16 March, Chief Ministers Breakfast, 7.00am, Ainslie Function Centre, Ainslie Football Club.
- 16, 18, 20 March, Tours of Bywong gold mining Town.
- 17 March, Woden Seniors Card and Games Day.
- 18 March, Chief Ministers Seniors Concerts, 10.00am and 1.30pm, The Auditorium, Vikings football club, Erindale.
- 19 March, **Seniors EXPO**, 9.30-3.30pm at the Old Bus Depot, Kingston
 - 95 stalls and entertainment
 - Citizenship Ceremony
 - Guided tours of Canberra Glassworks (special wheelchair tour @ 11.00am)
 - COTA presentation – Quality Use of Medicines
 - ANU Music Education Program
 - COTA presentation – Beyond Maturity Blues
 - Recognition Awards
 - Canberra Old Time Dance
 - Outreach Singing
 - Silver Soles Cloggers
 - Fusion Dance
- 20 March, The Great Debate, 1.30pm, Old Parliament House.
- 21 March, Elvis "One Night With You", 2:30 and 7:00pm, The Ginninderra Labor Club, Lhotsky St, Charnwood, 6258 8618. Gold coin donation.
- 22 March, Shannons Wheels Expo, Lawns Old Parliament House.

There are over 191 organisations and groups undertaking activities during Seniors Week and fifty per cent more store holders involved in the Seniors Day expo. A program is available on www.cota-act.org.au as well as from the COTA (ACT) office in Hughes after publication in the Canberra Times on Sunday 1 March. They will also be available in *The Senior* magazine and will be distributed to shopping centres, public libraries, government shopfronts and participating organisations. Keep your eyes open for them.

Things to do:

1. Attend a Seniors Week event.
2. Contact COTA on 62823777 to book a guest speaker for your club or social group.
3. See www.cota-act.org.au for more information.



Thank you to our Seniors Week sponsors!

- * Ainslie Football Club Function Centre
- * The Auditorium, Erindale
- * The Charnwood Labor Club
- * *The Senior* magazine
- * Goodwin Village
- * The ACT Government



TheSenior

Did you get your Christmas bonus?

Over 4 million Age Pensioners, Disability Support Pensioners, Carers, Widow Pensioners and Veterans' Affairs recipients received a bonus payment from the Federal Government on either 14 October or 8 December 2008.

The payment of between \$1000 and \$2100, depending on eligibility, was made to provide immediate financial help prior to a comprehensive reform of the pension system. What did you do with yours? Contact Centrelink if you require further advice on 132 300.

Organ Donation

COTA (ACT) has recently adopted a position on organ donation. This recognises:

- the need for a review of organ donation and transplant procedures, and
- the need to greater recognise the numbers of intending donors whose desire to donate is never realised.

Additionally, COTA recognises that financial incentives may contribute to reducing the waiting list for kidneys. It's classification as "income support or maintenance" or "payment for kidneys" for loss of income during convalescence is to be determined. The position paper has been circulated for consideration by COTA in all states and territories. The results will be incorporated at local and federal level into the organ donation review.

Help needed...

1. Brindabella Gardens is seeking volunteers for one-on-one activities with the residents. If you would like to spend time with someone on a regular basis contact Penny at Penny.Anning-Clarke@anglicarecg.org.au
2. Jindalee Aged Care in Narrabundah is seeking a person to lead a men's group for some of the residents. Contact Evan at evan.hadkins@jindalee.org if you can help.

Seniors Card – travel concessions

Seniors around Australia are now entitled to concession fares on most interstate public transport systems outside their home state in a new national scheme. When fully operational, over three million Australians who hold seniors cards will benefit. The scheme will make it more affordable for seniors to visit friends and families outside their home state.

The scheme has commenced in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Discussions with the Western Australian and Queensland governments are continuing. From 1 January 2009 Queensland began offering concessions on its urban public transport to interstate concession holders. http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/seniors_fares_04jan09.htm

THE AUDITORIUM

