

COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

Third
09

NEWSLETTER

President's Welcome

They tell us that we had a warm start but winter has well and truly come along with the usual surge of winter ailments. The presence of Swine Flu has added another element. This compounds the already difficult task of accessing medical services with many stories of people waiting for services or simply giving up.

It is estimated that Canberra is around sixty doctors below what is required. This is part of a worldwide shortage and training doctors, or other health professionals, is a lengthy process. This in no way infers that they are slow learners but, rather, training to the level that we require generally takes from four to ten years or more.

All health professionals are involved in undertaking a wide variety of tasks. Some of these do not require the level of training or skill of the professional group currently undertaking this work. There is a significant challenge, exacerbated by the general labour force market conditions, in best delivering future health services.

It is positive to see the ACT Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services is conducting an 'Inquiry into access to Primary Health Care Services'. The focus is: 'the shortage of practicing GPs and the closing of smaller practices in suburban areas'. The terms of reference for the inquiry are available at:

<http://www.legassembly.act.gov.au/committees/index1.asp?committee=115&inquiry=772> GPs are a very important aspect of healthcare which must be considered. However, we also need to consider the effectiveness of all sections and overall health outcomes.

This year, COTA General Meetings have focussed on more effective approaches to the provision of health services. We looked at organ transplants and home pharmaceutical assessments. In coming General Meetings we hope to explore other aspects of health service delivery. For example, will changing the boundaries and educational approaches provide possible benefits in the form of better health outcomes for the community?

Nurses deliver a wide range of health services. Heather Austin will outline the contribution of Nurse Practitioners at the COTA General Meeting on 4 August. This is likely to be a key determinant of the nature and provision of future health services. It will probably impact on all COTA members either directly or indirectly. With this in mind, it would be good to both see you and hear your perspective at our meeting at 2.00pm in the Hughes Community Centre.

Elizabeth Grant AM



COTA GENERAL MEETING

4 August 2009 at 2pm

Hughes Community Centre

Heather Austin
Deputy Chief Nurse

The contribution of Nurse Practitioners in meeting health outcomes

Bus stop at Canberra Eye Hospital at Symonston.

Following representations, COTA approached TAMS (Department of Territory and Municipal Services) about providing a sheltered bus stop at the Canberra Eye Hospital in Symonston.

Currently there is no bus stop but there is a stop a distance away. Unfortunately this current location does not lend itself to the construction of a shelter or a seat.

TAMS is negotiating to move the bus stop from the current location to the Canberra Eye Hospital where the site may allow for construction of a shelter with seating at the bus stop.



ActewAGL

COTA (ACT) is proudly supported by

COTA Submission on the Pension Reform Bill 2009

The government has responded positively to long standing calls by COTA for the single pension to be increased to two-thirds the couple rate to ameliorate the inequitable situation for single age pensioners. We have also been calling for an increase in all age pensions and improved indexation provisions.

Four current allowances have been rolled into the Pension Supplement increasing single pensions by \$2.49 (total single payment now \$336.68). Couples receive no increase in base rate but an extra \$5.07 each per week as the Pension Supplement (total now \$507.50).

COTA believes that the couple pension should have also been increased and the single pension increased further. In addition, as the Harmer Report notes, the private rental market for pensioners remains dire and the government's efforts to increase public housing are welcomed.

The Pension Reform package represents a significant improvement for Singles and also a great breakthrough in getting real pension reform on the public policy agenda. However there is disappointment that the increases are not greater and that private rental has not been better addressed.

Concern about the cost of the age pension needs to be put in perspective alongside, for example, the actual cost to the taxpayer of superannuation concessions and their equity.

The Peer Education Program new topic ... More than Medicines – living well.

Our trained volunteer peer educators will lead participants through information about medicines, using interactive activities and encouraging feedback and questions.

Our new topic covers:

- How to become a more active partner in the management of your health
- How to make lifestyle changes to benefit your health
- How to seek and evaluate independent medicine information
- Specific information about managing diabetes, chronic pain or hypertension

Please note that if you wish to have a 'More than Medicines' presentation, the 'Quality Use of Medicines' session is a prerequisite. To book your session contact Christine Spicer 6282 3777.

Executive Notes



It seems a long time ago but it was 12 May that the Federal Budget was delivered.

I represented all the COTAs at the 'lock up' of the Department of Health and Ageing. Other COTA members were allocated to Treasury and various briefings. I hope that you have obtained relevant Budget details, however, I had some very strong impressions I wanted to mention.

Firstly, a few areas of need were identified in the Budget and initiatives focused strongly on these areas. This appeared to be a consistent approach across portfolios. In health the focus is on:

- The Hospital system
- Cancer care
- Rural and remote care, and
- Workforce issues.

Secondly, the Budget included a large number of cuts or savings as part of this focus. The sum of these 'cuts' often approached the expenditure on the initiatives or 'headline' items.

To give one example, accompanying the well publicized withdrawal of support for IVF was an increase in support for midwives and maternity care. This helped shift the balance of services towards support in rural and remote areas.

This approach was also applied to other budget areas. The increase in the single Age Pension reflected the need which COTA has been highlighting for many years. However, the level of the pension for couples and the overall adequacy of the Pension was not addressed. Increased Age Pension funding requirements will at least be partially offset by changes to the 'tapper' rate, in future part pensions will cut out at relatively lower income levels.

Another common feature of the Budget was that many groups were insulated from the structural changes which will apply to new, rather than existing beneficiaries.

I question what the longer term implications of these Budget changes are. First, it seems that the Government is dedicated to significant reforms. Secondly, the reforms are primarily aimed at focusing on areas of well identified need. Thirdly, these changes will generally have a larger impact over time as current recipients are largely insulated from the immediate effects.

Similarly, the theme of COTA General Meetings has been to look at health areas where we believe that emerging need could potentially overwhelm services if appropriate changes are not made. I think it will highlight the challenges we face in health.

Book of Scams

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has published "**The Little Black Book of Scams**", identifying some modern scams designed to part you from your money. A copy of this booklet is available on request from the COTA office. Scamwatch can also be accessed via the website: www.scamwatch.gov.au

In the Frame

Penny Charles



Penny Charles was born and grew up in Sutherland, Sydney with her brother and parents. Her father was a teacher and her mother, a homemaker. After school Penny went to Sydney Teacher's College and later attained a BA in English and Anthropology.

Penny worked as a teacher in Sydney high schools before moving to Canberra in 1974. She married and had three daughters who are now pursuing various interests in Sydney, Canberra and South Africa.

Penny used her teaching experience to pursue a career in developing school curriculums and writing professional development programs for teachers. She also worked on the development of set criteria for the recognition of overseas qualifications in Australia and, conversely, the recognition of Australian qualifications overseas.

Penny retired four years ago but has continued to participate on school boards and did a course in architectural drawing. She married Colin five years ago.

At COTA Penny has produced the long-awaited 19th Directory of Services which provides easy access to a broad range of services and opportunities for community involvement. This challenged Penny's technical skills and gave her an insight into the many services and resources available in the ACT for older people. The Directory is expected to be available at the General Meeting and also on the website. Penny has also produced a series of brochures which cover specific types of services.

Penny and Colin have just left for a tour of the UK and Germany. Upon return they plan to settle in the Hunter region, to build a house and get involved in another local community. Penny enjoys gardening, dancing and drawing house plans. She also encourages her children to travel the world so she has somewhere to stay when she embarks on her own travel adventures!

Leading the Way: A Vision for Support and Care of Older Australians

Every older Australian deserves the dignity and independence of choosing their care and support services. COTA is seeking a reform of this critical aspect of ageing which is often lacking this fundamental principle. The underpinning principles should:

- Enable active, contributory and optimising lives backed by available and affordable support
- Be based on equity and fairness that allows real consumer choice to meet the aspirations, needs and preferences of a diverse population
- Allow access to friends and/or family to assist in decisions relating to care, and
- Be committed to quality improvement, evaluation and research

Reform will require the involvement of Commonwealth government, aged care providers, finance and service experts and especially aged care consumers, advocates and representatives. It needs to:

- Be high priority, well resourced and focussed on a positive imagery of ageing
- Separate support and care provisions from accommodation choice to enable flexible options in a range of contexts
- Provide transparent financing arrangements for accommodation choices
- Allow for a well-resourced aged care assessment service and financing that is equitable and consistent throughout Australia and is provided irrespective of financial incapacity
- Provide a community aged care system that is benchmarked, consumer focussed and needs based rather than quota based
- Be more responsive and flexible in relation to respite, temporary, transition and rehabilitation services
- Continue to accredit ethical aged care providers in a range of living options without discrimination
- Continue to improve the support provided to family, friends and community carers in a diminishing population of such carers
- Ensure that staff are respected, skilled, qualified and properly trained to improve attraction to the profession
- Improve quality of care through well supported research and ongoing knowledge transfer
- Address public infrastructure improvements such as housing, transport, design and access to information to maximise support for older Australians

These principles are contained in a wide range of national COTA policy documents. Please provide your thoughts and feedback prior to its consideration for formal adoption.

COTA National Policy Councils Forum - "Social Inclusion By Design"

The forum was addressed by Dr John Falzon and Professor Helen Bartlett with a DVD address by Senator, the Hon. Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion. They clearly illustrated that social inclusion is more than a message or a policy. It must facilitate inclusion for all Australians, especially those marginalised by:

- alienation through advancing technology.
- declining physical capabilities with implications for transport, mobility and communication.
- separation from friends and colleagues as ageing peers die or are less involved.
- relegation to aged care facilities, often far removed from their usual environment...with loss of social, professional, commercial and family ties.
- poverty and economic isolation for many pensioners.

COTA aims to ensure that Government policy caters for the changing needs of our ageing.

Aged Care Assessment Program (ACAP)

A number of changes affecting aged care were made in December 2008 and generally come into effect on 1 July this year. Changes were made to the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the *Aged Care Principles*.

These changes relate to the eligibility for approvals, the lapsing of some approvals and the reassessment of approvals. These changes are expected to:

- Improve the timeliness of ACAT assessment by reducing the number of unnecessary assessments;
- Ensure that ACAT reassessments are only conducted for people who genuinely need them; and
- Improve the equity of access for some forms of flexible care by allowing a person to access care at a lower level in the community.

Further information is at <http://www.health.gov.au/acats>

The Changes are positive for many older people as they reduce the need for repeat assessments if support services are not immediately used and also increase support options.



Get involved in *beyondblue's* OBE Campaign... 'Over B..... Eighty!'

In a constructive approach to mental health *beyondblue* is inviting people to share their stories about positive ageing in the "Over B.....Eighty!" (OBE) campaign.

If you are interested in sharing your story, please write a short letter about what keeps you mentally and/or physically healthy in 100 words or less and send it with a phone number to:

***beyondblue* OBE campaign**

PO Box 6100, Hawthorn West, VIC, 3122

Or email: OBES@beyondblue.org.au

Or call Bonnie Vincent or Sue Gherdovich on 03 9810 6100.

For more information on mental health disorders and help services, call the *beyondblue* information line on **1300 22 4636** or visit the website www.beyondblue.org.au

PAUL FLINT'S ROTARY AWARD

Next time you come into the COTA office ask to see THE TROPHY (Vocational Excellence Award – For outstanding support for Senior Citizens in the ACT).

Some 50 Rotary clubs from Bombala to Yass, including those across Canberra, form Rotary District 9710. It was at the annual Governor's Changeover that these clubs presented Paul Flint with the Vocational Excellence Award.

Since Paul became the Executive Director of COTA (ACT) in 2004, the organisation has grown in strength, many projects expanded and many new projects undertaken, all of which contribute to the betterment of ACT seniors.

In receiving this award Paul was recognised for his outstanding contribution to seniors in the Canberra community. In particular for the unique position of trust he has with the ACT government and the NRMA Trust, each of which values his sound common sense advice. On receiving his award Paul stated, "Everyone at COTA deserves this award – we are all working hard to improve conditions for seniors."



Did You Know? ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS)

TAMS Phone 13 2281 (Canberra Connect) **Web** www.tams.act.gov.au

GPO 158 CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601, Macarthur House, 12 Wattle Street, LYNEHAM

ACTION Buses: Phone 13 17 10 **Email** action@act.gov.au **Web** www.action.act.gov.au

ACT NOWaste: Phone 13 22 81 **Email** no.waste@act.gov.au **Web** www.tams.act.gov.au

City Rangers: Phone 6207 7132 **Email** city.rangers@act.gov.au **Web** www.tams.act.gov.au

Domestic Animal Services: Phone 6207 2424 **Email** dogcontrol@act.gov.au **Web** www.domesticanimals.gov.au

Mobility Parking Scheme in Canberra: Phone ACT Parking Operations 6207 7200 **Road User Services** 6207 7117
Email parking.operations@act.gov.au **Web** www.rego.act.gov

Roads ACT: Phone 6207 2500 **Email** roadsact@act.gov.au **Web** www.rego.act.gov.au/parking/parkingmobility

Road User Services: Phone 13 22 81 **Email** roaduserservices@act.gov.au

Sharps Hotline; City Rangers: Phone 13 22 81 **Email** city.rangers@act.gov.au

Volunteering ACT Award – Margaret O’Beirne



Congratulations to Margaret who was the winner of the (ACT Community South) NRMA Insurance Volunteer of the Year 2009 Award. COTA (ACT) is very proud of you! We appreciate your participation in COTA activities and efforts for other groups such as the Stroke Association.

THINGS TO DO:

1. Book a ‘Quality Use of Medicines’ session
2. Provide feedback on the Vision for Older Australians
3. Contribute to the *beyondblue* OBE campaign
4. Volunteer for the Falls Study
5. Attend a lunchtime forum

Falls Study - Volunteers Wanted

Researchers at the University of Canberra are looking for volunteers to participate in a balance study that involves a home exercise program. If you are over 60, have had a fall in the past year and are interested please call 6201 5843.

[Some COTA members have already commenced this activity and are having fun with this challenge.]

Find a Bargain

We are replacing tables and chairs in Room 3 at the Hughes Community Centre. The following are available for purchase:

Tables – fixed legs	\$20.00 ea
Tables – folding legs	\$25.00 ea
Chairs – stackable	\$2.00 ea
Computer Table	\$35.00 (one only)

Please contact the COTA Office to get your bargain.

Guidelines for H1N1 Influenza management in Residential Aged care Facilities

With swine flu now being classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation, residential aged care facilities need to ensure they minimise possible infection in residents. Normal precautionary measures should be undertaken. These include the exclusion of staff and visitors who are suspected of possible infection; enhanced monitoring of residents for signs of infection; increased education about infection control techniques for both residents and staff; quarantining of infected residents; and, screening of new residents. All suspected cases must be referred to the Public Health Unit for further advice.

Symptoms include fever and fatigue, joint pain, lack of appetite, headache, coughing, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhoea. The virus can be spread through respiratory droplets and physical contact. Further information can be obtained from the Influenza Hotline 180 2007 or www.flupandemic.gov.au

If you are considering a visit to a nursing home or aged care facility please consider the possible implications of your visit. If you have any flu-like symptoms deferment is preferable until you are completely well to reduce the chance of transmitting infection to this vulnerable group in our community.

Lunchtime Forums 2009 - Hughes Community Centre

Tuesdays 12:15-1:45pm. Cost \$1. Free tea and coffee provided. Bring your own cup.

7 July “China’s Economic Development – Australia’s Future?” Speakers: Prof Ligang Song (College of Asia and the Pacific) and Dr Anita Chan (ANU).

14 July “Will the new jail be effective for our community?” Speakers: James Ryan (ACT Corrective Services) and Jane Caruana (Victims of Crime).

21 July “Can Aborigines liberate themselves or must we liberate them?” Speakers: Jack Waterford, AO (Editor, The Canberra Times) and Gordon Briscoe, AO (Research School of Social Sciences, ANU).

28 July “Advances in Health research: tinnitus, diabetes, stem cell research”, (John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU Medical School).

4 August “Resettling Refugees in Canberra”, Speakers: Kate Scandrett, (Refugee Assistance) and James Atem Mayen (Sudanese refugee).

11 August “Affordable Tourism for Seniors in Australia”, Speakers: Bill Healey (AHA) and Joseph Griffiths (Aust Tourism Industry Council).

If you have a topic or would like to actively participate in arranging a forum please contact Paul Flint at COTA (ACT).

COTA Travel Insurance for Seniors

More and more Australian seniors are travelling and need travel insurance they can rely on. COTA Travel Insurance can help by providing policies that cover the things you need at competitive prices. The main reason seniors, and most other people want travel insurance is that health problems overseas are not only more likely, but can be extremely expensive.

Our health is often more at risk when we travel, especially in less developed countries with poor quality drinking water and unfamiliar foods. Overseas climates can be quite different too, especially if you're travelling to the northern hemisphere and going from summer to winter or vice versa.

A handful of countries have reciprocal arrangements with Australia. This means travelling Australians get limited, free health care in return for their citizens getting access to Medicare in Australia. But for most countries, health care costs definitely won't be covered without travel insurance. This means that if something goes wrong and you need health care – a doctor, an ambulance or even hospital – you'll have to pay out of your own pocket. Some countries, such as the USA, Canada, Japan and many European countries are much more expensive than others.

Many seniors ask us how pre-existing medical conditions will affect their travel insurance. With COTA Travel Insurance your age and the existence of pre-existing medical conditions doesn't mean you won't get travel insurance. In many instances we are able to offer cover for pre-existing conditions. You will be asked to tell us about the health conditions you're already aware of and these will be assessed by medical experts to determine what cover will be available.

COTA Insurance will also cover for flight cancellations, theft, loss of belongings and personal liability – among many other benefits. If you are planning a number of trips in a 12 month period, consider taking out a Frequent Traveller Insurance Policy. It can offer additional savings compared to a Single Trip Insurance Policy.

The seniors' travel insurance we offer is less expensive than the policies travel agents offer because travel agents put a lot of effort into trying to sell you travel insurance, because they make a lot of money from it! Make sure you check with COTA Travel Insurance on 1300 1300 50 – our seniors' travel insurance is reliable and competitively priced.

EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL – WHAT'S YOURS?

Do you want to share a little of your personal history with family and future generations? Maybe your life as a child or even what your family home was like. Have you ever made a difference? You may have met royalty or somebody famous. Or anything else that you may want to have written about.

I can help you by recording your story in audio and print for you to keep and share. Please contact Beverley Lawrence on 6251 5181.



Peer Education Training in Cooma 1st July 2009.
More Information in the next newsletter.



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Family Studies

A CALL TO GRANDPARENTS

**Do you have a grandchild aged 2–10 years whose parents
have separated since January 2004?**

If so, the Australian Institute of Family Studies invites you to participate in an important new research project in connection with the family law reforms.

For information about the project and access to the survey go to:
www.aifs.gov.au/grandparentstudy by Saturday 25 July, 2009.

All responses will be treated privately and confidentially.