

COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

Second
09
NEWSLETTER

President's Welcome

The first quarter of 2009 has been extremely busy with a highly successful Seniors Week. The Volunteers, Staff and many businesses have contributed to this. Despite the difficult time for many Clubs, seniors have benefited from the generosity of The Labor Club, Ainslie Function Centre at Ainslie Football Club, The Auditorium – Vikings Club all supported events. The RMC Band, North Ainslie Primary and the many other artists must also be thanked, not only for their performances but also for all of the effort that goes into the training and practices. Another encouraging aspect of Seniors Week was the number of organisations and businesses that opened their doors and made a special effort. You could dance, sing, drum, paddle, exercise, walk, fly a plane or participate in a wide range of activities. The opportunities to learn were also varied. An encouraging feature was the number of individuals and groups that used Seniors Week to both give something back to Canberra and also to donate proceeds to a charity. It is encouraging to be part of these events.



Looking forward, COTA is currently undertaking two major tasks. First, we have just signed the Seniors Card Directory contract. Intensive work has been undertaken on the contract since the beginning of 2009. The publication is scheduled to be distributed by the end of June.

The other is the Directory of Services for the Ageing. ACTEWAGL and the ACT Department of Health have supported COTA to provide information to seniors. This will be produced as both a comprehensive Directory and a series of pamphlets for people who only want specific information.

The recent General Meetings have had particularly interesting topics and speakers. We have been attempting to present issues which have both individual and broader policy relevance. The coming focus is on medication. Improved usage and more active involvement in the management of medications are supported by COTA through the Peer Education program which provides speakers to community groups. This will be presented at our meeting on 5 May. Rick Lord has a background in pharmacy and pharmacology and undertakes medicine reviews within Aged Care Facilities and the community. I expect his information to be particularly interesting for people on multiple medications.

My background in pharmacy heightens my interest in the area of more effective use of medications. If you have an area of interest, which may also have a broader policy relevance to seniors, please let the Executive Director know. I am looking for interesting and relevant issues for coming COTA meetings. I hope to see you at our presentation at 2.00 pm on 5 May.

Elizabeth Grant AM

COTA GENERAL MEETING

5 May 2009 at 2pm
Hughes Community Centre


Are you: - taking more than five medicines each day
- been recently hospitalised
- concerned or confused about your medications
- sometimes forgetful and don't take your medication

Rick Lord - Pharmacist (for over 40 years) and pharmacologist will discuss *"Home Medicines Reviews - How to ensure effective use of medications"*.

Rick will speak about this Government-sponsored scheme and the need for our active involvement in medication usage.

Come and hear about this great service and opportunity!

Seniors Week Expo Thank You from Palliative Care Society

A quick note to thank you for the Expo at the Kingston Bus Depot. 

It was a big day for COTA's calendar and you must be pleased with the outcomes. It was lovely to see young children dancing and singing to the elderly. I thank COTA for providing the occasion for the Society to make a presence in the community. Bless you and everyone at COTA for the good work.

Regards,

Maggie Bloxwich – ACT Palliative Care Society Inc.



ActewAGL

COTA (ACT) is proudly supported by

Did you know?

To Reduce the Effects of Fraud you can:

1. Have only your initials (not your first name) and last name included on chequebooks. Thieves will not know if you sign your cheques with your initials or your first name but your bank will.
2. Instead of signing the back of your credit cards write "PHOTO ID REQUIRED".
3. Put a work phone number on cheques instead of a home phone and a PO Box or work address.
4. Photocopy the contents of your wallet - both sides of licence, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.
5. Carry a photocopy of your passport when travelling.
6. Have the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy to cancel credit cards immediately.
7. File a police report immediately. This proves to credit providers you were diligent and is a first step toward an investigation.

COTA (ACT) Directory of Services for The Ageing

The new, keenly awaited COTA *Directory of Services for the Ageing in the ACT* is due out shortly. It will provide older people, carers, health professionals and service providers with a handy booklet containing organisations and services for the ageing in the ACT. Pamphlets are also being prepared on the most used services for older people. The *Directory* will be available on the COTA website providing a simple entry to the complex array of useful activities and services. For more information, contact Penny Charles at COTA on 6282 3777 or email: pcharles@cota-act.org.au.

Canberra Retirement & Lifestyle Expo

The Expo will be held from 15 to 17 May in the Budawang building, EPIC from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Come and visit COTA on stand 119.

COTA Staff and members of The Board preparing for Seniors Week ...



Executive Notes



Last week our family had a medical emergency. Actually my wife cut tendons in her foot and emergency surgery was required. This provided plenty of time to consider all manner of things.

Over the last four years I have spent thousands of hours in hospitals and so this has provided additional background information.

I was particularly impressed by the caring nature of the staff. Staff offered to help when they were on their break, leaving work or when it was not their area of work. For example, an off duty orderly went to considerable effort to find a wheelchair.

All the staff appeared professional, efficient and hard working. Setting surgical priorities according to medical needs is right and necessary. Operations for severed tendons should be deferred when head injuries arrive.

I also must say that our timing could not have been worse; there was a significant backlog of people requiring surgery as a result of accidents during the Easter break.

My overall impression was one of people waiting. Waiting in corridors, in rooms, in foyers and alcoves. We started the waiting process as early as 6.00am and continued on that day until 10.00pm.

The processes don't seem to be supportive of the staff and facilities. It seems that the worst task that staff have to undertake is to tell a patient to 'come back tomorrow' for treatment. Nobody enjoys this experience. Patients and supporters are particularly frustrated when this occurs after an eight hour wait, and it is even more difficult after a fourteen hour stint.

There are two issues here. The first is the impact on the patients. The second issue is the resources which are used apparently without positive results. In our experience, up to forty per cent of patients were sent home after being prepared, cared and monitored during the day.

The fundamental question is: can we develop more effective systems which use fewer resources and are more supportive of the staff and patients.

This problem is not unique to the acute care system. I had a similar experience when called for jury duty. Thousands of hours of effort by community members were required to provide sixty person hours of duty. People faithfully wait, and for many, there is not positive outcome. Organising and maintaining these individuals consumes many resources while providing little satisfaction to those waiting.

The queuing system seems to reflect methods of last century rather than what is currently possible and appropriate. I am interested to see how widespread this issue is and would like to hear your experiences.



**ONE OF THE
MANY STALLS
AT THE
SENIORS
EXPO!**

In the Frame

John Wightman

COTA volunteer

John Wightman is one of the COTA front desk volunteers. In addition, many of the newsletters and other mail outs are arranged by John. We felt it was appropriate to recognise his input to COTA and this occurred during Seniors Week.



Senator Humphries, when making the presentation, commented "John's dedication is illustrated by the additional activities when he assists COTA. If another volunteer is absent, John will often come into the office for a short period to undertake priority tasks. This will be either before or after his other voluntary activities or commitments.He is invaluable in 'oiling' these COTA activities and ensuring quality outputs."

John's response follows:

I would like to thank COTA (ACT) for giving me an award for my very few years of volunteering with them. I have often thought that awards of this nature should go the other way; that is, the volunteer should be the one giving the award to the agency that they work with. In my opinion, the volunteer gains far more benefit out of volunteering than the agency which provides the work.

In my own situation with COTA I have found the work to be very stimulating. It keeps the brain active without overtaxing it, yet at times, the tasks can be challenging.

One area in COTA that impresses me is the responsibility given to volunteers, indeed encouraged, to provide advice to clients once volunteers have gained the necessary knowledge and experience. Not only does this "keep them on their toes" but it does wonders for morale and of course increases their usefulness to the organisation. In gaining this experience, I have never been made to feel a burden in the many questions and advice that I have asked and sought. It has always been warmly given.

Comradeship is another strong aspect of working with COTA. Over time the volunteer achieves a strong sense of belonging. Expressions such as "my work", "the organisation that I work with" and "my boss" become second nature when discussing with friends what I am doing in my retirement.

Indeed the broad scope of activities that COTA encompasses relating to the elderly in our community ensure that the volunteer gains a vast array of knowledge and experience that is not available in other organisations and will stand him/her in good stead for the rest of his/her life.

Government Tax Bonus

If your 2007-08 taxable income was \$100,000 or less and you paid tax, you may be eligible for the tax bonus payment. Your eligibility and the amount you are paid will be based on your individual 2007-08 tax return and depends on:

- your 2007-08 taxable income not exceeding \$100,000
- your 2007-08 adjusted tax liability is greater than zero (you paid tax)
- you lodging your 2007-08 tax return by **30 June 2009** or by the deferred date granted to you by the Tax Office, and
- you are an Australian resident for tax purposes.

How much is the payment?

\$900 if your taxable income is up to and including \$80,000, \$600 if taxable income is from \$80,001 to \$90,000, and \$250 if taxable income is between \$90,001 and \$100,000.

Frequently asked questions

Q: What if I haven't lodged my 2007-08 tax return?

You must lodge your 2007-08 tax return by **30 June 2009**, unless you were granted you a deferred lodgement date before 18 February 2009.

Q: When will the tax bonus be paid?

Payments are being sent out over six weeks to the 7.6 million people who lodged last year's tax return.

Q: When will I be paid if I lodged after 27 March 2009?

If you lodged a return after 27 March 2009 and you are eligible, it will take longer to process the payment. You can expect payment about four weeks after you receive your refund or notice of assessment.

Q: How will I know that I have received my tax bonus payment?

You will receive a letter with a cheque attached or advice that it has been deposited into your bank account.

Q: What if I haven't got my payment by 16 May 2009?

- check your eligibility (you will need your 2007-08 notice of assessment)
- check that you have lodged your 2007-08 income tax return
- check that you gave the correct bank or address details on your return
- check if the payment is with your tax agent - phone the ATO on **1300 686 636** from 16 May.

Q: Do I have to declare my tax bonus on my 2008-09 income tax return?

No. The tax bonus payments are tax free.

Q: Will the tax bonus be used to pay off my tax debt?

No. Your payment will not be used to offset other tax debts.

Q: Will the tax bonus be paid to deceased estates?

If a person dies after 30 June 2007 and their tax return for the 2007-08 year has been lodged by them or on their behalf before 30 June 2009 or by the deferred date granted before 18th February 2009, a tax bonus payment will be made to the deceased estate provided the eligibility criteria are met.

Q: Do my franking credits affect my eligibility?

When working out your eligibility, please note that the law treats franking credits the same as any other tax offset.

Imputation or franking credits are sometimes known as franking tax offsets.

COTA IS GOING ELECTRONIC – JOIN UP FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN ...

Subscribe via the COTA website: www.cota-act.org.au to have updates and newsletters sent to you electronically.

The first 25 people to subscribe to electronic communication will receive a double pass to see *IS ANYBODY THERE?* to be released in cinemas on 4 June. Please lodge your address, phone, email and membership numbers.

Is Anybody There? tells the surprising, touching story of this odd couple - a boy and an old man - facing life together, with Edward learning to live in the moment and Clarence coming to terms with the past.



INTRODUCING THE COTA (ACT) BOARD

The new COTA (ACT) Board was voted in at the last AGM. There are a number of people you may not be aware of:



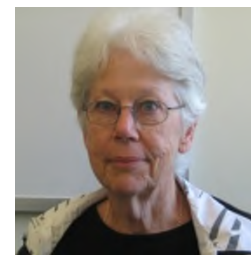
Elizabeth Grant AM – President



Vivienne Sinderberry - Vice President



Gary Johnson – Treasurer



Ann Wentworth AM



Rod Templar



Ralph Cartwright



John Ling



Rebecca Tetlow

COTA Presentation on Organ Donation

The last General Meeting featured three guest speakers addressing the subject of organ donation and transplantation. Each presented a different perspective; donor, recipient and physician.

Dr. Gavin Carney demonstrated a pragmatic view of the changing dynamics of supply and demand of organs:

- The demand for kidneys is increasing at an exponential rate.
- The waiting list is relatively stable BUT this is due to the death of patients awaiting donors, not because we are transplanting more kidneys.
- With safer cars and roads, and improved workplace safety, the traditional source of viable organs is rapidly declining.

The need for financial compensation to enable potential altruistic donors was discussed.

Mrs Margaret Hamilton of Wagga Wagga, NSW, demonstrated the human face of the “altruistic” donor and also the transplantation process. Margaret said it is within each of us to make life changing or life saving contributions to the health and welfare of others in our community. She believes that her preparation for donation of a kidney benefited her as she lost weight and increased her fitness.

Mr Graham McKenzie was the recipient of a kidney donated by his wife. Graham’s kidney problem is hereditary and his children and most grandchildren are also susceptible. After diagnosis, his health was monitored until dialysis was imminent and he received his wife’s kidney. Graham’s health immediately improved. His family illustrates that there will always be those among us dependent on a diminishing supply of donated organs.

Thus we need to make existing retrieval systems far more effective. More importantly, we need to encourage new supplies. COTA (ACT) believes that financial support would assist this process.

Braidwood Seniors Group

I thought that I would outline one recent issue – the Braidwood Seniors group. The primary concern is that the local Council amalgamations in New South Wales have had a deleterious effect on local communities who have often organized and delivered services to older residents. These amalgamations have had the dual effects of moving the centre of decision making and also diverting Council focus to decision making and administrative issues rather than social issues in the community.

A couple of weeks ago I addressed two meetings in Braidwood. COTA was invited as it was seen as primarily a lobbying organisation. The group at Braidwood is attempting to establish a “men’s shed”, improve transport, address rural social isolation and improve access to health services. They wish to establish a ‘Seniors Club’ with the main purpose of lobbying for and organizing improvements.

Those trying to establish this Club believe that associating with state and national organisations is a desirable feature. Thus we are looking at their association with both COTA (ACT) and COTA (NSW) to offer maximum assistance. About fifty people requested they be part of the new organisation and a number of businesses and organisations offered support. Possibly more importantly, sufficient people volunteered to establish an organizing committee.

My overall assessment was that it is very dry in Braidwood. This is true in many ways and people are doing it very tough – I hope that we can encourage them to succeed. They desperately need the services and support.

Paul Flint



SCHOOL CHILDREN SINGING AT THE SENIORS EXPO

Macular Degeneration Awareness Week

24 - 30 May 2009

The Macular Degeneration Foundation has a strong focus on early detection, risk reduction and treatment of Macular Degeneration (MD). Raising awareness of the disease and its potential impacts is the key objective of the Foundation.

The macula is the central part of the retina which processes all visual images and is responsible for the ability to drive, see colours clearly, read and recognise faces. Macular Degeneration results in central vision loss. Difficulty with reading, distortion and distinguishing faces occurs or dark patches or empty spaces appear in the centre of vision. The major risk factors for Macular Degeneration are age, smoking and a family history of the disease.

Eating a healthy diet that includes the antioxidants (green and gold foods such as spinach and corn) and omega-3s, controlling weight, exercising regularly and not smoking will help reduce the risk of developing MD.

Macular Degeneration Awareness Week is an opportunity for all Australians to have their eyes tested (making sure the macula is checked), to understand the symptoms of MD for early detection and to start making simple, everyday dietary and lifestyle changes.

For information about MD, contact the Foundation on 1800 111 709 or www.mdfoundation.com.au.

THINGS TO DO:

The Australian Government has launched its annual **free flu vaccination program** for people over 65. It is recommended to have the vaccination close to the flu season – usually April to October. In 2007, there were 2,623 deaths attributed to influenza and pneumonia. Minister for Ageing, The Hon Justine Elliot MP urged Australians over 65 to get the free influenza shots to protect themselves from potentially life-threatening winter illness.

Driving and Dementia

Researchers at Latrobe University are keen to obtain information on the critical issues of carers supporting individuals with dementia who are demonstrating a decline in driving ability. The information will be used to support an application for funds and will build on two previous pilot studies completed in 2005 and 2008.

Data will be collected by completion of a mail-out questionnaire and/or a semi structured telephone interview of carers. The program is awaiting confirmation of funding before it commences.

COTA is supporting this important issue which may face many of us or those close to us. You may obtain additional information from COTA on 6282 3777.

THE MULTICULTURAL AGED CARE SEMINAR –

Presented by Rev. Prof. Elizabeth MacKinlay, Director, Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies, Charles Sturt University

WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2009

Depression and Dementia in Later Life in Residential Aged Care and the Wider Community

WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2009

Supporting Older People in Aged Care in their Faith, Practices And Customs

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY

Issues Related to End of Life Care and Spirituality

For information contact: Ailsa Turrell – 6205-4794, email:

ACTHealthCPP@act.gov.au

ANU Eye Study: Seeking volunteers of the 3rd Age

ANU scientists are working with *Seeing Machines*, an ANU start up company to develop a rapid, more accurate test for glaucoma.

Volunteers with healthy eyes (spectacles ok) and good general health are needed.

Volunteers receive a comprehensive set of tests and a refreshment voucher from the local café. Please contact the study co-coordinator Maria Kolic on **6285 5814** for more information or email maria.kolic@anu.edu.au.

New Cemetery for the ACT?

The Chief Minister has announced consultations regarding the need for a new cemetery. The Government is seeking feedback on:

- The community's need or desire for a new cemetery;
- Options concerning the design and type of cemetery; and
- The suitability of the preferred location, (south side of Mugga Lane and Long Gully Road).

You can also contribute by:

- Completing an online community survey on www.tams.act.gov.au or a hard copy can be obtained from all ACT Government Canberra Connect Shopfronts and ACT Public Libraries;
- Information fact sheets are available from Government Shopfronts, ACT Public Libraries or online; and
- Attending a community information session (date to be confirmed).

For more information on ACT Cemeteries please visit www.canberracemeteries.com.au

**THE SENIORS
CONCERTS
AT THE
AUDITORIUM
WERE VERY
POPULAR**



Learn, Empower and Educate

Meet new people, learn new skills and share your knowledge.

COTA (ACT) trains people who are aged 50 years plus using a peer education model to talk to other people aged over 50 about healthy ageing.

Training will equip you to run interesting, informative and interactive sessions for social and community groups. Subjects include being a more active partner in managing your health, depression in older people and preventing falls.

Please call Christine Spicer for an information pack on 6282 3777 or e-mail cspicer@cota-act.org.au. For further information on the Peer Education Program please see www.cota-act.org.au