

# COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

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NEWSLETTER

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## President's Welcome



The close of 2007 stood in contrast to much of the year. There was little community debate on many important issues for older people. This applied for most of the year. Only in the last week or so of the election did many health, housing and transport issues come to the fore.

COTA (ACT) worked hard to stimulate this debate. During this process, and also through our other activities, we identified a number of areas, which we feel, need further developing. Two housing examples are resident funded retirement villages and affordable housing.

The recent widespread and sizeable house price increases have implications across the sector. However, one area has been particularly affected. People with modest assets, who do not own a home are often trapped in the private rental market.

Our Housing Options Adviser has been approached by a number of people, in these circumstances, facing considerable difficulty.

COTA (ACT), at the local level, and COTA Over 50s, at the Federal level, have worked together on this issue. We have also approached many key players to ascertain their views on affordable housing issues.

Our first General Meeting, on 4 March, will look at 'Affordable Housing: Challenges and Issues for the Future'. COTA is developing a targeted policy that is capable of being implemented and be effective in addressing an area of real need. Some very good work has been undertaken.

Rod Templar, a well known U3A presenter, will outline the issues and direction of our work on affordable housing. Rod has some particularly valuable insights as he worked in the Federal housing policy areas, as well as, the Defence Housing Authority. The ACT Commissioner for Housing has been another relevant role that Rod has undertaken.

I look forward to seeing you at the general meeting.

Elizabeth Grant AM

### COTA GENERAL MEETING 4 MARCH

#### Affordable Housing: Challenges & Issues for the Future.

Hear from Rod Templar, Chair of the ACT Policy Council and Brenton Holmes, the National Policy Officer of COTA Over 50s.

Rod, on a Fellowship, studied affordable housing in North America and Europe.

Hughes Community Centre, **2.00pm on 4 March 2008**  
Please phone 6282 3777 and indicate your attendance.

#### Grand Party in the Park Sunday 6 April, 11am – 2pm

Eddison Park, Woden  
Free event for grandparents and grandchildren with lots of fun entertainment.

[www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au) or 13 22 81

#### Dates for your Diary.

22<sup>nd</sup> February, Seniors Day at the Royal Canberra Show.

4<sup>th</sup> March at 2.00pm, COTA General Meeting in Hughes Community Centre

23<sup>rd</sup> March, Seniors Week Program inserted in the Canberra Times

6-13<sup>th</sup> April, Seniors Week

## COTA at the Retirement and Lifestyle Expo

Within ten minutes of opening, COTA had a steady flow of enquiries concerning membership, insurance, Seniors Card and a wide range of interesting topics.

The volunteers and staff were kept busy and by Sunday afternoon the stand was 'cleaned out' of bags and literature.



### Seniors Day

Old Bus Depot, KINGSTON

Thursday, 10 April, 9:30am – 2:30pm

Health Information and Tests  
Lifestyle Centre  
Financial Assistance  
Entertainment  
Free Sausage Sizzle  
**Entry is Free**

### Did you know?

FIDO provides financial tips and tools, warnings about financial scams, free searches for unclaimed money in bank accounts, life insurance or shares.

FIDO is the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC's) website, [www.fido.gov.au](http://www.fido.gov.au)

If you are thinking of travelling around Australia and want to work, contact National Harvest Labour on 1800 062 332 or

[www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail)

ParaQuad sells consumables such as catheters and incontinence products to assist independent living. Profits help support services to people after spinal cord injury. Ph 8741 5650 or

[www.paraquad.org.au](http://www.paraquad.org.au)

This information was gleaned at the Retirement expo.

## In the Frame

Sue Jordan



For the last eighteen months I have been the Seniors Week Manager at COTA and lately, I have also been looking after Seniors Card. I have loved the work and have also loved working

with the fantastic volunteers. They are so good at supervising me! So, why am I leaving COTA??

Before I came to COTA, after a little dalliance on the side, I was at St John's Care – a small welfare agency in Reid. It does the most remarkable work. It is part of St John's Church, but unfortunately, it is not well known, unless you are in financial difficulty. It is not funded by the ACT Government, but it does receive a very small amount of emergency relief funding from the Commonwealth Government. It is mainly supported through donations of food etc by several of the Anglican Parishes in Canberra. It is amazing, much can be achieved with so very little.

I left at the end of 2005 when I was physically and mentally tired. Being at St John's Care is like running a small grocery shop. Each day you need to move lots of stores and you also become involved with clients. You are desperate to help them, but really there is so little you can do. It is really like putting a band-aid on a very deep cut. It helps for a minute or two but it does not stem the flow of blood. Sometimes it is all that is needed.

Last year I had two incidents that made me reassess what I had done at St John's Care and perhaps why I was there. In August, I was walking through Belconnen Mall, when I heard the shout of "Hey Sue". I turned and saw a young man who had been a client in 2004, when I was at St John's Care. I had worked with Tim (not his real name) for about 15 months. He was a lovely larrikin and we got on well, but unfortunately he had a drug problem. When he first came to St John's Care he needed a bit of help with food. It was probably a few days before he received his payment and he was a bit short.

Then he needed a bit more help, because he was breached (no money, but Centrelink do pay for accommodation) so we needed to feed him for a few weeks. Next, he lost all benefits and became "homeless". The pits – you have to carry your swag around with you all the time and as soon as you put it down, it is stolen. We helped Tim with blankets, every couple of days, clothes and different food. Food that could be heated on a BBQ in Commonwealth Park. It was hard for him but we supported him when we could.

Then he disappeared – first for a few days which turned into weeks, then into months. At that stage I had two choices – either Tim was dead or he had been arrested and I hoped it was the latter.

When I responded to his shout last August, Tim was pulling up the sleeves of his jumper to show me that he was clean. He was extremely lucky – he had been put into a drug rehabilitation program that worked. Tim now wanted to thank St John's Care for keeping him alive and supporting him through those very dark times. St John's Care did not have the ability to get him off the drugs but it was able to show that we cared for him and, most importantly, he was treated with kindness and respect. The kiss that Tim gave me was very special.

When the offer came, I could not refuse to go back to St John's Care.

I have loved my time at COTA. Paul, the Staff and the Volunteers are fantastic. You would be amazed at how much our small organization achieves.

Thank you - Sue