

# COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

Second

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NEWSLETTER

## President's Welcome



I am pleased to report that I represented COTA (ACT) at the strategic planning meeting for COTA Over 50s. This very positive meeting was hosted by COTA (South Australia).

It is a larger than anticipated task to re-establish the national organisation, COTA Over 50s, after a gap of around five years and with one additional member.

The key sentiment of the meetings was the importance of working effectively together and the need for us to be effective at the Federal level in order to be able to actively ensure that issues for older people in the states and territories are appropriately addressed.

Areas where we are working together include: a review to improve the national structure for policy and advocacy work, establishing national projects and policy programs, exploring cooperative approaches to build and benefit members, develop protocols for working collaboratively on state, territory or multi level issues and also to work to finalise a number of the remnants from COTA Australia. One important issues is the treatment of historical material.

The National Policy Council is meeting to develop policies for our federal initiatives. I am most grateful that our ACT Policy Council are working to provide input and policy direction.

Rod Templar, the Chair of the ACT Policy Council, and myself will represent you at these meetings in Canberra.

A forum on affordable housing initiatives is being run in conjunction with the National Policy Council. The Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot will open the COTA Over 50s Affordable Housing Forum. Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek and Professor Hal Kendig will address the forum.

Snippets from Seniors Week:



Finally, I hope that you have noted Volunteers Week. Congratulations and thanks to all volunteers, both the many who assist COTA and, equally, the far larger number of members who contribute to other worthy community causes. Thanks and well done.

Elizabeth Grant AM

## COTA GENERAL MEETING

10 June

Something for you to think about!

## Promoting Better Ageing: Keeping Your Mind From Ageing

Professor Kaarin Anstey, Director of the Ageing Research Unit, Centre for Mental Health at the Australian National University will outline research results and the implications.

Practical hints for driving and ageing generally.

**Hughes Community Centre, 2.00pm on 10 June 2008**

Please phone 6282 3777 and indicate your attendance.

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## THE ACT BUDGET: Issues for SENIORS

Broadly speaking, the budget appears to be friendly and forward looking, addressing issues of specific concern to Seniors, as well as embracing general issues with likely benefits for the Senior population. It should be noted that some of the subject areas have long been targeted by COTA (ACT).

Some of the more obvious benefits to Seniors occur in the areas of Housing, Health, Transport and Labour Force or Skills development.

The **Housing Allocation**, whilst aimed at the community in general, has specific benefits for Seniors which include:-

\*The release of new Retirement Village sites at the rate of 150 units per year for the next four years.

Two former school sites have been nominated as the likely sites for these developments.

\*Waiver of stamp duty on property transactions where Seniors are genuinely downsizing and relocating to more favourable locations.

\*Government incentives to attract low cost private rental housing to the ACT market.

The **Health Plan** looks at a major overhaul of the Public Health System involving:-

\*A \$4.2 million commitment over 4 years to Seniors for health care needs.

\*An extension of major programmes ranging from The ACT Equipment Loan Scheme to cardiac, oncology and palliative care.

\*An extra 20 beds and extended service delivery across a range of medical and health care areas will have obvious benefits for Seniors.

**Transport** promises include major infra structure overhauls to improve, make more friendly and better integrated transport systems (easy access buses).

At a personal level there is an ACTION GOLD card giving free ACTION bus transport to over 75 year olds to encourage their use of buses, a "transport on demand" bus service and continuation of travel concessions on ACTION services for Seniors travelling in peak periods.

**Labour Force/ Skills Shortage.** The budget commits \$4.2 million to the process of increasing the skilled workforce, particularly in the health arena, which includes the critical areas of disability, aged and (we believe) dental care. This does not include the \$4.2 million mentioned above for extended age care services.



When you don't work hard enough at COTA

## Federal 2008 Budget

### – comment from COTA Over 50s

The nest egg in Wayne Swan's Budget has some commendable initiatives for Australia's future. But in terms of the current needs of older Australians it is only good in parts.

The inadequacy of pensions remains the single biggest impediment to the wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of our citizens. The cost of living is soaring and the pension bumps along on the bottom. A token change to the way pensions are indexed will nowhere near address the cost of living gap. There is a lot of talk in the Budget about providing a buffer against the vagaries of international uncertainty. Pensioners could do with a buffer against the vagaries of daily living price hikes.

We asked on Budget night, where is the government's response to the Senate report on the living costs of older Australians? Where's the review of pensions that the Senate and every other serious analyst has called for? We are glad that Finance Minister Tanner has heeded that call and said that a review of pensions will be part of the proposed review of the tax system.

The Health Minister has publicly reiterated the connection between poor dental health and serious illness. Let's see some more dental health action that would actually deliver net benefits to older Australians and substantial savings to taxpayers. Older Australians will no doubt benefit incidentally from the health and hospital reforms and other worthwhile initiatives. And many will be grateful that the Rudd government seems to be taking its responsibilities to future generations of Australians. Our grandchildren will benefit greatly, and that is very pleasing.

But if you're a retiree on a fixed income, or a pensioner barely getting by, you won't feel any different today than you did the day before Wayne Swan stood up in parliament and said he would deliver what our nation needs at this time of international turbulence, and high inflation at home".



A Scooter enclosure has been built with funds raised by Gwen Davies from COTA for a lady that has multiple disabilities. The scooter is now fully protected from the elements & both the scooter & owner live happily ever after!

## Did you know?

Seniors Day was a good venue to gain information. We asked a number of stall holders what were the most frequently asked questions and also their response.

### **ComSuper:**

**www.comsuper.gov.au**

**Question:** What do you do for the different schemes?

**Answer:** Explained how we processed the benefit applications and generally described our administrative role especially with PSS, CSS, PSSAP.

### **Cactus & Succulent Society:**

**www.cactusact.org**

**Question:** What cactuses successfully grow outside in Canberra.

**Answer:** *Astrophytum ortamun*, *Coryphantha* species and *Eriocactus leninghausii*.

### **Community CPS Australia:**

**Phone 132585**

**Question:** What is a Credit Union?

**Answer:** A credit union is a group of people who join together to pool their savings and make loans to each other at reasonable rates of interest, with a sensible approach to fees and other account keeping charges.

### **Relationships Australia:**

**Phone 1300364277**

**Question:** Who are your clients?

**Answer:** Our services are available to individuals, couples or families who are dealing with beginning a new relationship, having relationship difficulties or ending a relationship. The staff work with clients on issues such as relationship, family, or social difficulties, communication skills, family violence, separation, property settlements.

### **William Cole Funerals:**

**Phone: 62533655**

**Question:** Who can enter into a plan?

**Answer:** Anyone can enter into a pre-paid funeral plan, regardless of age or state of health.

### **Dawn Drifters:**

**Phone: 62824450**

**Question:** How much is a balloon ride & how long does it take.

**Answer:** Flights are \$250pp on weekdays & \$300.00 on weekends and public holidays. We meet at Rydges Capital Hill Hotel, the flight takes approximately 45 minutes & the whole tour takes 3 to 4 hours.

### **Calvary Silver Circle:**

**Phone: 1300660022**

**Question:** How can this organisation help me?

**Answer:** The company provides a range of services to support people. The service enables thousands of people of all ages and care requirements to remain in the community and maintain their lifestyle of choice. We achieve this by providing personal care, home care, respite, companionship, home maintenance and modifications and providing personal alarms.

## Executive Notes



Associate Professor Kaarin Anstey is the director of the Ageing Research Unit within the Centre for Mental Health at the Australian National University. You may have met Kaarin if you have been involved in the work with older drivers at ANU.

In addition, Professor Anstey attended both the ACT and Federal 2020 Summits where she raised issues and concerns of older people in our community. The topic will be "Promoting better ageing: keeping your mind active". I expect that this will include some hints on how to delay or reduce the impact of dementia and how to improve driving ability. These are special areas of interest for Professor Anstey. This week the ACT Budget was released. The reverse side of this page contains a summary of some of the key initiatives for older Canberrans. The free bus travel for all people over seventy five years of age, has evolved from road safety work that COTA undertook. This initiative is to start on the 1 July and will provide an additional option for many. COTA has been encouraging policies that make it easier to move to more appropriate accommodation. It is encouraging to see a sales tax incentive for pensioners. We hope that this program may lead to broader sales tax and planning initiatives. The wider community benefits from adjustments to more appropriate accommodation. Finally, I would like to encourage you to meet us at the COTA General Meeting as, I am sure it will provide hints and challenges.

Yours sincerely

Paul Flint

Executive Director



Volunteers from COTA (ACT) were recognised at a Lunch on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008. Each volunteer received a certificate of appreciation & a newly released Camellia aptly named "Volunteer"

Quote: "Volunteers who have the privilege of working at COTA would agree that they get far more benefits out of working there than they

## In the Frame Margaret O'Beirne

Margaret was born in East Melbourne and grew up in Footscray. For Margaret, a feature of her childhood was that you walked to school by yourself, went to the shops or caught a bus by yourself because you could. We played cricket across the street without getting run over, did lots of reading and listening to the radio as we did not have TV. Lots of sport, including tennis and softball was played. Similar to many in Melbourne, Margaret watched Footscray (Western Bulldogs) play football and spent hours at the MCG watching cricket.

Although Margaret trained as a stenographer she subsequently joined the RAN as a WRAN. Margaret describes her time in the Navy as 'had a great time, and enjoyed service life'. However, in those days women had to leave the services when they married and Margaret was no exception.

John and Margaret had three children. John was initially in the Navy and later was employed by Foreign Affairs so the family spent time travelling overseas on postings to USA and twice to the UK. They moved to Canberra in the early 80s and Margaret joined DFAT for 11 years before retiring in 1994.

Margaret has tried all sorts of voluntary work, a guide at Old Parliament House, nursing home visiting, Southpaw Stroke Club and Stroke Association and COTA to list just a few.

The connection with COTA goes back to 1994. Margaret worked in the COTA library, then the front desk for quite a few years and also served on the Board for several years. Margaret now works with COTA on special events like Seniors Week, Seniors Day at the Show, etc.

When talking of volunteering, Margaret indicated 'I now do the ones I enjoy. Mostly because I enjoy it. The best thing about being retired is that you can really do just what you like.'

Margaret has been a blood donor for over 40 years, in Australia and also in UK and USA. Recently, Margaret has donated plasma and platelets via Apheresis allowing her to donate more frequently and help save more lives. See box for more information.



## You can be even more special .....become an Apheresis donor

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service is currently seeking donors who may be interested in making apheresis donations.

### What is involved?

Donating platelets or plasma takes approximately 1-1.5 hours via the Apheresis process. Whole blood is drawn from one arm into a sterile collection kit inside a separating machine. The machine separates the blood, so that the platelets and plasma are collected. The other blood components (red and white cells) are returned to the donor through the same line.

### Who can donate?

Donors should be between 18 - 60 for the first donation. Donors can continue up to the age of 80 years with your GPs approval. Donors must weigh over 50kgs.

### Uses of plasma and platelets

The bulk of plasma is sent to CSL for fractionation and 13 different products can be made from plasma donations. These include products to treat people with haemophilia, liver and kidney disease, burns victims and some cancer patients. Platelets are a clotting agent and are given to patients having cancer treatments or who have had a large haemorrhage. We are aware that not all people are able to donate Apheresis but we do encourage members to donate blood on a regular basis if possible.

**Facts:** One in 3 Australians require blood,  
One in 30 donate.

PH: 131495

**COTA GENERAL MEETING:  
2.00 pm on 10 June at the Hughes  
Community Centre  
Promoting better ageing:  
keeping your brain active**

## Lunchtime Forums 2008

**Tuesday 12:15-1:45 pm, Hughes Community Centre**

**Cost \$1.00 Free tea and coffee provided. You need to bring your own cup.**

**3 June** "Is 80 the new 50? Recent Changes in Gerontology"

**10 June** "All you wanted to know about the new Russia but were afraid to ask"

**17 June** "The Road to Public Office" Speakers: Jack Waterford, Richard Mulcahy and John Persinger

**24 June** "The Pacific Islands: - Recent Developments and their Implications for Australia"

**1 July** "Delicious Tales of Tea and Coffee": Brewing a better Cuppa, with practical

**8 July** "Questacon - An Australian Icon" Speaker: Dr Michael Gore

**15 July** "Recent Changes in Taxation - aspects Seniors should know" Speaker: Ms Pauline Jones (ATO)

**22 July** "Should I move - financial and personal psychological issues?"

**29 July** "With Peak Oil and Greenhouse Gases, how will we travel in the Future?"