



*The People for People over 50*

**Submission to  
Australian Government  
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs  
Citizenship Task Force**

**AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP**

**Consideration of the merits of introducing a  
formal citizenship test**

Submission  
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## **Council on the Ageing ACT COTA (ACT)**

COTA (ACT) is a not for profit ACT independent consumer organisation concerned with advocacy, policy development and analysis, research, project management and information dissemination. Its work is to protect and promote the well being of all older people.

COTA (ACT):

- Represents the rights and interests of older people to governments and oppositions.
- Works with government, non-government and industry sectors to ensure that policy and decision-making processes include the rights and interests of older people.
- Develops programs to assist older people connect with services and resources.
- Promotes the positive contribution, wealth of knowledge and experience that people over 50 have to offer the community and workforce.

In developing policies COTA (ACT) adheres to four basic principles:

- Maximising the social and economic participation of older Australians.
- Promoting sustainable, fair and responsible policies.
- Protecting and extending services and programs that are used and valued by older Australians.
- Focus on protecting against and redressing disadvantage.

COTA (ACT) develops policies based on recommendations from and consultation with individual members and member organisations. Research is undertaken into key issues identified by members.

COTA (ACT) participates in a range of Government bodies, committees and reference groups, industry bodies and importantly, consumer representational forums.

## AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

### Consideration of the merits of introducing a formal citizenship test

COTA (ACT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper written by Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, titled '*Consideration of the merits of introducing a formal citizenship test*'. COTA (ACT) provides comments on the following question:

**Question 16** – If a formal citizenship test were to be introduced, should certain groups (for example older people or long term residents) be exempt?

COTA (ACT) considers that if a formal citizenship test were to be introduced then **older people over the age of 50 should be exempt** from the test. People over 50 years are the group represented by COTA (ACT).

Following are the reasons for exemption of over 50s from any formal citizenship test:

- The discussion paper outlines the continuing pressures on the citizenship policy including the need to establish new sources of labour from diverse backgrounds due to the impact on the aging population. It is acknowledged that people applying for citizenship, who are over the age of 50 years, may still participate in the Australian workforce. However, their tenure in the workforce will be time limited.
- Most people over the age of 50 who are likely to reside or continue to reside in Australia are often in Australia for reasons other than work. For some people they come because of family or community reasons, not for the financial gain of working in Australia.
- Long-term residency should also be a consideration for exemption. Many older people, have lived in Australia legally for well over 20 years, COTA agrees that these people already have sufficient ties to the Australian community and for many have direct family members who are next generation Australians.
- Canada, United Kingdom and the United States all have exemptions for older people.

Addition of a formal citizenship test will not benefit the community in relation to older people and will have significant deleterious effects.