

IT'S TIME FOR AN AGE-FRIENDLY VICTORIA

Today, Council on the Ageing Victoria (COTA) officially launched its *Age of Change* campaign, to place the serious issues facing older Victorians on the agenda of political candidates in the lead up to November's state election.

“Despite the major parties being in full election mode, we've seen very little on the key issues of accessible housing for low income pensioners, rocketing energy prices and age discrimination,” said Executive Director, Sue Hendy.

Over the past month, COTA has been mobilising its member base, supporting volunteers as they organise locally.

“Through our member campaign and during the Seniors Festival we've received strong support from older Victorians and their families, acutely aware of the issues affecting their friends and relatives,” she said.

COTA is focusing its efforts in electorates with a higher percentage of people over the age of 60, calling on older Victorians and their family members to be *Agents of Change* this election. Key electorates include Northern Metropolitan, Southern Metropolitan, Eastern Victoria as well as inner city marginal seats.

The number of Victorians aged over 60 is expected to grow from 1 million in 2010 (19% of the population) to 1.4 million in 2020 (23%)¹, representing a key voting public.

Ms Hendy said COTA is demanding three areas of priority action for the next government.

“Every Victorian knows the pain of rising energy and water bills, but few can afford it less than seniors on low, fixed incomes.

“Older people need concessions for basic living costs such as water, gas and electricity including the subsidised transition to renewable energy sources in the home.

“State government stimulus fuelled the housing boom which has made rates too high for too many older Victorians. Forced to sell, too many can't even afford rents which have followed housing prices skyward.

“Old is not what it used to be. Stronger for longer, older people are ready to contribute in the workplace and the community but institutionalised discrimination holds them back, holding the state back from its productive potential.

“We need to honour the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. That means a review of existing government policies, training for government staff and a public education campaign to end discrimination against older Victorians,” Ms Hendy said.

COTA Victoria urges candidates to release policies – and name projects – that consider the needs of older Victorians, supporting active, equitable, inclusive and sustainable ageing from 2010 forward.

“Older Victorians have been through many eras of change. It’s time for the state’s political candidates to show how they can change too by shaping an age-friendly Victoria,” said Ms Hendy

For more information on age-friendly policy initiatives, or to join the campaign, Victorians can go to www.cotavic.org.au or call 9655 2127.

Since 1951, COTA has been the voice of Australian seniors and the peak representative body of older individuals and organisations representing seniors. COTA is a non-profit organisation committed to human rights, social justice and the eradication of ageism – our mission is to mobilise older people and those who work with them, to age well in a just society.

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For all media enquiries, please contact Sanna Nyblad 03 9416 0010

*Please see **Media Backgrounder** for information on the issues seniors face.*

1 Ageing in Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, State Government of Victoria, 2010.