

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# THE AGE OF CHANGE

## AFTER A LIFE'S WORK, A LIFE IN THE RED

Today, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria Chief Executive Officer, Ms Sue Hendy, called on candidates for the November 27 state election to demonstrate how they will respond to the impact of the rapidly rising costs of life's essentials – food, water and energy.

“Over the past ten years, food prices have risen by 41 percent while electricity is up 52 percent, rates 83 percent and health services 64 percent,” Ms Hendy said.

“We can expect significant price and cost increases in future, as the state modernises its energy assets, makes the transition to renewables and pays off costly water infrastructure.”

“At the same time, the price of food and fuel will rise due to predicted global shortages.”

Ms Hendy said the utility bills of pensioners and low income seniors make up a higher proportion of their spending because they can't afford energy and water efficient appliances, or access to government schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

“It's the low-income groups, such as pensioners, who are least able to cope with rising living costs.”

With prices of many essential items rising significantly faster than CPI, concessions have never been more important to ensure pensioners and low income household can afford the basic necessities of life. Seniors in private rental accommodation are even more vulnerable.

“Last week the United Nations named Australia as having the second best quality of life on earth but, right now, low income seniors are being forced to compromise on life's bare essentials.”

“After a lifetime's work to ensure Victoria is among the world's top places to call home, many older citizens are staring at the power bill with fear in their hearts.”

In the lead up to the 2011 election, COTA is appealing all political parties to commit to an age-friendly Victoria. To ensure the needs of older people are addressed in policies and programs and to alleviate the cost of living pressures for people on low incomes, COTA is calling on politicians to:

- Address the energy efficiency of older people's housing as a priority
- Ensure affordability of essential services and, in particular, provide effective utility concessions
- Increase the cap on rate concessions, so that older people can afford to stay in their homes and stay connected to their communities.

Ms Hendy said an ageing population is the biggest unprecedented demographic and societal change in Victoria this century.

“By next year, one in five Victorians will be aged 60 or over, a ratio which is expected to grow to one in four by 2021,” Ms Hendy said. “That's a lot of increasingly engaged, frequently overlooked voters.”

*For more information on age-friendly policy initiatives, or to join the campaign, Victorians can go to [www.cotavic.org.au](http://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 or 0430 561 600**  
Please see **Media Backgrounder** for information on the issues seniors face.