

MEDIA RELEASE

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THE AGE OF CHANGE

HOMELESS AT 70? IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE.

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 alarming threat of homelessness among older Victorians, particularly older women.

“Over the next decade we can expect 419,000 older Victorians to need appropriate and assisted housing in our State.

“There are seniors on the government waiting list who’ve been waiting 20 years for a decent home,” Ms Hendy said.

In its most recent report, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute estimates a 115% increase in the number of people aged 65 and above living in low income rental housing to 2026. There are currently approximately 200,000 people (of all ages) on the waiting list for government and non-profit (GNP) housing.

COTA (Vic) says the most cited reason for older people moving into public housing is that they cannot afford private rental. Ms Hendy pointed to the fact that every time the RBA raises interest rates it’s a sign that inflation is rising too fast. The group most impacted are low income seniors but it never registers in the heightened debate now raging across Australia.

“Every Victorian renter knows the pain of dramatic rental increases, and every property owner knows the pressure of sky-rocketing council rate payments and loan repayments.

“Imagine facing huge rent and rates increases on a pension or low fixed income, with absolutely no capacity to earn more?”

“Seniors have become collateral damage in the economic stimulus programs of governments eager to boost the housing industry,” she said.

Ms Hendy said that, often, non-government low rental housing on the private market is not appropriate for older Victorians. The little housing available is run-down and lacks the basic design features needed for older people, such as easily accessible bathrooms, heating and cooling, and open plan living areas where cupboards and other amenities are within easy reach.

“With around a quarter of Victoria’s population aged over 60, seniors are not a minority population.”

“Candidates need to outline policies and projects that provide older Victorians with accessible, affordable, well-maintained and secure housing, or risk losing a large number of Victorian voters.

“It’s time for an age-friendly Victoria,” Ms Hendy said.

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 or 0430 561 600
Please see **Media Backgrounder** for information on the issues seniors face.

Links: <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/p20170/>