

MEDIA RELEASE

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THE AGE OF CHANGE

THE FIRST STEP TO AN AGE-FRIENDLY VICTORIA

COTA applauds the State Government for its commitment to increasing accessibility and adaptability of homes in Victoria with introduction of regulatory measures which will have significant benefits for older people with mobility and activity limitations, as well as their families and broader community.

“With these regulations, the Victorian Government is establishing the benchmark for the rest of Australia. We applaud the pro-active stance the Government has taken to meet the growing needs and challenges associated with our ageing population,” said Ms Sue Hendy, CEO of COTA Victoria.

“The lack of appropriate housing and the high costs involved in adapting existing housing are significant contributors to loss of independence, social isolation, and reliance on community and aged care services among older Australians,” she said.

“The need to address these issues is becoming more urgent as we face a significant increase in our aged population.”

COTA identifies the provision of adequate and appropriate housing as a human rights issue. The availability of suitable housing is essential if older people are to ‘age well’ and ‘age in place’.

“Appropriate and affordable housing is fundamental to both the physical and the mental health of seniors, and is a crucial determinant of the effectiveness of the health and care systems,” said Ms Hendy.

“This is an important step in moving to a society that is age-friendly, and one that is committed to enabling seniors to be active participants in their communities.”

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%). Currently only 4 per cent of Victorian homes are accessible.

The benefits of including accessibility and adaptability features into new housing will benefit not only older people directly, but will also impact on their family, networks of friends and supports, and their communities –

- It will mean that older people with mobility or core activity limitations will be able to visit friends, neighbours and families; and
- It will mean that older people living in new housing will be more visitable by family members and friends who have mobility or core activity limitations, or who have young children in prams and strollers, enabling them to continue to participate in family and social activities
- It will have benefits for older people who have fluctuating conditions, such as arthritis and Parkinson’s disease, enabling them to live more inclusively with their injuries, or chronic condition. People who are impaired temporarily, such as when recovering from surgery or illness will be able to return home earlier, and recover in more comfortable and familiar surroundings
- It will enable support and care services to be delivered in the older persons home more easily and to better effect; and under safer conditions for the care workers.

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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