



# COTA Victoria Annual Report 2010 – 2011

[www.cota.org.au](http://www.cota.org.au)

## President's Report

For 60 years, COTA Victoria has advocated for the recognition of the human rights of older people. The organisation was born into the period when the naming of rights seemed to be at least one answer to the terrible events of the first half of the 20th century when economic depression, wars and revolutions had plunged much of the world into a slough of despair. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared in 1951 by the very new United Nations, shone a light into the future, away from that dark period.

In Australia there was a new interest in ageing, mostly expressed in the development of aged care services. COTA was one of the first organisations to hone its focus on this group of people. It has not shifted its gaze for these 60 years. It remains an organisation committed to policy development and advocacy for older people.

Recognition of human rights takes many forms. This year COTA has enthusiastically agreed that its CEO, Sue Hendy, continue with her role as a roving director of the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and that she be COTA's Australian representative on a UN working group looking at the human rights of older persons, particularly whether an international covenant on these rights is a good idea.

At home in Victoria, COTA has advocated for the continuation and strengthening of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV), of which COTA Vic is

one of four partners, has informed our work in this area. The right to be free of abuse is so obvious, but it is not the actual situation for some Victorians.

Rights also underpin COTA's work on eradicating ageist practices, whether in legislation and regulations, in media, in the provision of services, even in the way we, as a community, talk about or label older people. This requires us to be alert to ageism and to be energetic in eliminating it. So, thanks for the alertness and energy of both staff and volunteers.

This has not been an easy year for staff. They have had to contend with uncertainties that come from the ending of some projects before others are in place. We have worked hard at seeking to expand our funding base to make the future more secure. Special efforts have been put into recruiting more members, for the opinions, ideas and actions which members bring. The policies which COTA puts to government and to relevant agencies are based on the opinions, ideas and interests of our members and the wider community of older people.

Because there is scarcely an issue in society which is not of interest or concern to older people, the range of areas covered by COTA committees, staff and volunteers is ever-expanding. The sorting out of priorities is not easy. However, COTA has been doing this for 60 years and can claim the experience and wisdom which come with ageing.

**Janet Wood**  
**President**

## Board members

Janet Wood - President

Elizabeth Jensen - Vice President

Ian Jungwirth - Treasurer

Lynette Moore

Bob Barron

Regina Perton

Patrick Moore

Alva Purkiss

Russell Green

## Policy Council

Bob Barron - Chair

Sue Healy

Marion Lau

Margaret McLaren

Janet Wood

Bill Darby

Elizabeth Jensen

Patrick Moore

Debra O'Connor

Lorraine Wheeler

## Treasurers report

The final result is a surplus, despite constant pressure on our budget. This surplus came about due to interest income exceeding initial expectations and a staff position remaining unfilled during part of the year. In addition, a number of contracts came to a conclusion which has placed pressure on the current year, however Management has reorganised some aspects of administration to reduce costs.

Apart from the items above, we have experienced a fairly stable financial year and the organisation continues to undertake important work within its financial constraints.

The following table has been provided to give an overview of the key income and expenditure items of the organisation for the 2010/2011 year and a

comparison with the prior year's results.

The table highlights the result from ordinary activities before depreciation. This shows a surplus of \$129,000, an increase on last year's result by \$71,000. The operating result after depreciation is a surplus of \$60,669 compared to \$3,915 last year. Please refer to the financial statements and notes enclosed with this Annual Report for a more detailed explanation of the financial position as summarised in the table. At balance date, COTA's net asset position is \$773,791. In conclusion, the reserves currently provide an adequate safeguard against unexpected significant future costs or sudden decline in income.

Another productive year and a special thank you to the finance team for their ongoing dedication and hard work in managing the finances of COTA.

KEY RESULTS	10/11	09/10	Variance
<b>Income</b>	<b>000's</b>	<b>000's</b>	<b>000's</b>
Govt Grants	2,587	2,453	134
Investment Income	95	60	35
Program fees	2	14	(12)
Membership Income	285	313	(28)
Other Income	34	34	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,003</b>	<b>2,874</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	1,782	1,702	80
Other operating	1,092	1,114	(22)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,874</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>58</b>
Total Ordinary Operating profit/(loss) before depreciation	129	58	71
Less Depreciation	(69)	(54)	(15)
<b>Total Operating profit/(loss) inc depreciation</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>

Ian Jungwirth  
Treasurer

## CEO's report

COTA has continued to focus on its Vision: to contribute to a just, equitable and humane society in which older people are able to age with dignity and purpose.

To achieve our vision, it is essential we work closely with many organisations. Our work could not be achieved without these relationships and I would like to acknowledge them: funders, collaborators and colleagues alike: Senior Victorians, Department of Health, Municipal Association of Victoria, beyondblue, National Prescribing Service, Sport & Recreation Victoria, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Melbourne University, Monash University, Perpetual Trustees, Wicking ANZ Trust, Loddon-Campaspe and Eastern Community Legal Services, PILCH, Norton Rose Australia, Human Rights Law Centre, Ageing Affinity Group, Lord Mayors Charitable Fund, local governments across Victoria, VCOSS, Australian Human Rights Commission, National Ageing Research Institute, WHO, Dr Alex Kalache, YMCA Victoria, Department of Environment and Sustainability, Commissioner Kate Auty, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Help Age International and the International Federation on Ageing.

The work of the organisation as a leader and advocate for older people and their issues continues to get stronger and receive more recognition in the aged, health and community sectors and in government. This is due to the dedication of the skilled team of COTA staff and volunteers alike.

However, we continue to further develop the organisation and its capacity to respond to the needs and interests of older people. This includes the appointment of a Volunteer Co-ordinator, which has enabled us to ensure we manage our 120-strong VolunteerTeam more effectively. We have also built a new website with the capacity to utilise electronic and social media to communicate more broadly with members, older people and those interested in older people.

COTA has continued to link with International organisations, particularly through my participation in the International Federation of Ageing (IFA) Board. This has enabled us to connect to the global discussions on age discrimination, the Age Friendly cities and the sharing of information on good practice for policies and programs.

Of course there are always challenges and struggles for a not-for-profit organisation. Funding is one of these and ensuring the programs that we believe are important continue, requires constant attention and vigilance. Despite these challenges we have managed to keep all our programs in place and reach out to more people this year than in the past. Over 60,000 people, in different ways, and been in the media on more topics than in previous years. I would like to thank everyone: staff, volunteers, members and partners for their support.

**Sue Hendy**

**CEO**



Chinese Focus group City of Yarra

# Policy Council and its work

COTA's Policy Council, comprising Board members, CEO and other interested seniors, governs our policy directions and activities. The Council meets monthly to share information, monitor the work of policy working groups and staff, and decide our policy positions.

At its annual planning meeting for 2011, the Policy Council determined to continue work on the two strategic priorities that were its primary focus in 2010:

- **Human Rights**
- **Climate Change (including *Green Sages*)**

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Human Rights agenda has included action at state, national and international levels. These have included:

- Submission to the Victorian Human Rights Charter and ongoing discussions with the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, to increase the level of focus on older people
- Discussions with the Australian Human Rights Commission on age discrimination and ageism, and welcomed the appointment of the Age Discrimination Commissioner Susan Ryan
- Attendance at meetings of the National Human Rights Action Plan base line study, Action Plan development and the Consolidation project at the federal government level
- Involvement in the United Nations Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) including the participation at the UN meetings as a COTA Australia delegate and International Federation on Ageing (IFA) board member
- Briefing the COTA Australia National Policy Council on the national and international activities
- Convening the Human Rights Network and hosting resource material on our website.

We have been influential in raising issues regarding the rights of older people in all these arenas, but more work is required to achieve substantial change for older people.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND OLDER PEOPLE

In July 2010, COTA received funding from the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability to implement the *Green Sages* project. COTA is concerned about the impact that climate change is having on older Victorians, and is seeking a policy framework to address this issue.

Senior Victorians are potentially contributors, casualties and campaigners in relation to climate change. The COTA *Green Sages* Project addresses three key questions in this context:

- What are the likely impacts of climate change on older Victorians?
- How can the State Government best address the challenge of managing these impacts?
- How can older Victorians respond to these challenges, both individually and as a group?

The answers to these questions will help us achieve the project objectives:

- Build on the knowledge of international research by using local research and expertise to produce a uniquely Victorian response to climate change, sustainability and older people;
- Examine knowledge and attitudes of older people to climate change;
- Engage older people in problem-solving ways to increase resilience and community capacity to cope with climate change and increase environmental sustainability;
- Identify those groups of older Victorians most vulnerable to the effects of climate change;
- Consider a range of policy initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change on vulnerable older people.

In our State Budget Submission COTA identified the following priorities:

- Ensure fairness and affordability in the costs of utilities, insurance and the availability of concessions;
- Increase the stock of appropriate social housing for older people;
- Increase opportunities for older people to participate in appropriate physical activity and recreation;
- Address the impact of climate change on older people;



Seniors Conference in action

- Respond to the information needs of older Victorians through the development of a co-ordinated strategy delivered through Seniors Information Victoria.

Other important areas of the work were the Victorian State Election in November 2010, and the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Opportunities for Participation of Senior Victorians, which commenced in May 2011. COTA encouraged older Victorians to be actively engaged in this Inquiry. To this end COTA held a workshop for seniors to assist them in making submissions and writing letters. The participants identified a number of issues that they believed were important to relay to the inquiry.

COTA has continued to call for an Age-Friendly Victoria which will bring benefits not only to older Victorians, but to all members of our community, through better design and planning in our homes and environment, our work, our training and education, and our health systems. As importantly, it will also lead to changes in attitudes towards older people, and enable our communities to benefit from their participation and contributions.

## Seniors' in Leadership

Increasing opportunities for seniors to participate and contribute to our policy directions is a key COTA aim. To this end COTA undertook consultation sessions in numerous metropolitan, regional and rural areas, on aged care reform, housing, climate change and "what makes for a decent life". We held a number of forums as part of the "Have your Say" program and the Agent for Change campaign. Our key project on Seniors' Leadership, supported by The Wicking Trust, continued into this year, with the Seniors' Conference being the culmination point of the year's work. The project will continue over the next 12 months to build understanding and action for the future.



Basil's Learn your Mobilephone session

# Submissions and Representation on Committees

COTA developed and provided input into submissions on a number of State and Commonwealth policy initiatives and inquiries, including:

- Energy Customer Contracts Transition (jointly with Victorian Utilities Network)
- Guardianship and Administration Act Review
- Inquiry into Environmental Design and Public Health
- Inquiry into Opportunities for Participation of Older People
- Review of Advanced Metering Infrastructure Program 2011
- Review of Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- State Budget Submission
- Taxi Industry Inquiry 2011

Input into COTA National submissions:

- Economic Participation of Older Australians
- National Urban Policy
- Productivity Commission Review of Aged Care

COTA has represented older people and directly contributed to many different government and stakeholder reviews, reports and committees:

## GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT COMMITTEES

- Environmental Sustainability Commissioner Reference Group
- Station User Panel Advisory Group
- Hume Integrated Aged Care Collaborative
- Count Us In Evaluation Reference Group
- HACC Departmental Advisory Committee
- Consumer Affairs Victoria Working Together Forum
- Statewide Elder Abuse Reference Group
- Statewide Family Violence Reference Group
- Environmental Sustainability Reference Group
- Well For Life Reference Group
- Long Stay Older Persons Reference Group
- Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency – State Liaison Group Quarterly meetings
- Consumer Affairs Retirement Villages Roundtable

## SECTOR COMMITTEES/ALLIANCES/PROJECTS

- Age Friendly Cities 1st Global Conference, Dublin.
- IFA 11th Global Conference Prague 2012
- IFA Board
- Fair Go For Pensioners Victorian Steering Committee
- Disability Emergency Management Advocacy
- Victorian Utilities Network
- Transport and Disadvantage Strategic Working Group
- Aids & Equipment Action Alliance
- Victorian Universal Housing Alliance
- Yarra Valley Water Customer Advisory Group
- Boroondara Older Women's Homelessness Project

## NATIONAL COMMITTEES

- Consumer Health Forum Australia – Spinal Prostheses Consumer Advisory Group
- Aged Care Consultative Committee – Multicultural Issues Working Group



## Seniors Information Victoria (SIV)

COTA has been operating SIV for nearly 50 years – opening its shop front, in partnership with the Victorian government, in 2001. Since then it has responded to approximately 170,000 enquiries.

The service provides a depth and breadth of information for the needs of senior Victorians and those who work with, or care for, them. This information must be relevant, accurate and reliable, to enable older persons to decide from a range of options what is in their best interests. Poor decisions are hard to recover from.

A by-product of the service is invaluable insights for COTA's policy unit and the Department of Health, providing ongoing information about current issues affecting older people. This knowledge informs policy development and advocacy.

This year SIV staff have provided a service to over 24,000 people, with the support of 15 volunteers. Some users prefer receiving information via personal contact – whether face-to-face or telephone. Yet, there has been a steady increase in queries related to dealing with a more technology-focused society. These requests covered assistance, support and advice about technology – computer support and training, internet access options, digital TV and mobile telephones.

SIV also delivers information in face-to-face sessions: monthly sessions on *Solving the mysteries of your mobile phone*, supported by a volunteer, continue to be booked out; Need to Know sessions monthly; attendance at expo's; presentations at conferences and community group sessions and through Ask an Expert program.

SIV continues to be at the forefront of information delivery, and is the *information destination* for seniors in Victoria.



## Active Ageing

**Living Longer Living Stronger™** continued to attract and maintain strong membership during the year – in 120 locations across Victoria with over 17,000 participants. However, we continue to develop and respond to the changes in the health, community and fitness environments that have occurred since it was established ten years ago, with enhanced promotion and referral pathways. Consultations have reinforced the high value participants place on the physical and social benefits of the program and the role of the program format in enabling participants to achieve their goals. They also reiterated the importance of instructor attitudes and skills, and the culture of the facility offering the program.

In response to feedback and in line with COTA's commitment to ongoing fitness-instructor training, COTA piloted the **Working effectively for older people** series in 2011. These workshops have been extremely well received.

The annual conference theme was 'motivation', with a strong practical component that enabled participants to practice the skill of motivational interviewing. Sessions on new approaches to exercise programming and falls prevention were also very well received.

**Back in the Game**, COTA's sports pathway program for older people, is now well established at Shepparton and Tatura. The DVD showing the program in action has stimulated considerable interest not only in Victoria but also interstate and overseas. Participants are enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in activities that in some cases they have never tried previously. The games are adapted to suit all levels of ability and fitness and the key reason for continued participation is enjoyment. Further work is underway with the support of VicHealth to develop a business model for the program to capitalise on the momentum the pilot program has generated.



COTA Cycling group with Minister Delahunty and COTA President Janet Wood

## ACTIVE AT ALL AGES AWARDS

The 2010 Active at All Ages Awards reinforced the benefits – physical and social – of an active lifestyle. The enormous contribution that older people make to their communities was also very clearly demonstrated with most nominees having several volunteer roles as well as participating in a diverse range of physical activities – everything from aerobics to Zumba.

The awards were presented by Minister for Sport and Recreation, The Hon. Hugh Delahunty who was met on the steps of Parliament House, where the awards were presented.

## COTA CYCLING

It has been another active year for COTA Cycling. Leader Janet Bennett was recognised for her contribution to the health and well-being of older Victorians with an individual Minister for Health Volunteer Award for Outstanding Achievement. Janet, who has led the group for over 10 years, is also a peer educator. During the year, Janet and her team have continued to offer a varied program of weekly rides for seniors. The rides provide options for new and more advanced riders.

## OMNI

Starting in 2004, **OMNI**, Older men's social groups, now has 22 active groups. Of these, 3 were established in 2011. One of this year's highlights is the *Thumbnail Project*. Led by Ken Young, all groups in Victoria and a few from New South Wales contributed to the completion of the history of **OMNI**, to capture the journey **OMNI** has taken over the years.

On the national stage, John Dutch, a volunteer, represented **OMNI** Victoria at the National Men's Health Gathering held in Perth in September. He delivered a workshop on how a typical **OMNI** group operates and the benefits to its participants.



OMNI Advisory group

## Older people in bushfire affected areas

The ***Bushfire Health and Wellbeing program***, funded by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal, has supported a variety of projects. These projects are helping older people reconnect with each other and their communities through a range of physical activity, gardening and other skills-based and social activities, such as meditation, computer use and table tennis. The creativity and initiative evident in the bushfire affected areas is inspiring – especially given some people experienced floods, just as they were beginning to recover from the fires. COTA will continue to support funded groups in collaboration with Senior Victorians until April 2012.

## Peer Education

Demand for peer education sessions is undiminished with about 200 ***beyond maturityblues*** and ***Medicines and You*** sessions delivered during the year. ***Challenging Ageing*** was conducted again this year. This course provides an introduction to ageing and ageism as a personal journey, as well as a pathway to further involvement as a volunteer with COTA.

This was made possible by the dedicated efforts of COTA's peer educators, who in May were recognized for Outstanding Team Achievement in the Minister for Health Volunteer Awards. For over 10 years the team has delivered healthy ageing messages to seniors' groups on a diverse range of topics including ***Challenging Ageing, beyond maturityblues, Medicines and You, Moving More, Myths and Stereotypes of Ageing, Memory and Older Men's Health***.

The training of seven new Chinese (Cantonese) speaking peer educators for the ***beyond maturityblues*** program has enabled COTA to take the important messages about depression and anxiety to a new audience. Our work with the Italian community continues and we are also currently exploring ways of reaching the Greek and Vietnamese communities.

## Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV)

SRV is an advocacy and legal service to prevent and respond to older people experiencing elder abuse, and has been in place for three years. The different forms of abuse are physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and neglect. Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, such as family and friends.

SRV is a joint venture comprising COTA, the Public Law Clearinghouse (PILCH), Eastern Community Legal Centre and Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre. COTA is the lead agency for the service.

SRV provides telephone information and referral, short term advocacy and support, community education, professional information and specialist legal services. SRV also engages in law reform, systemic advocacy and policy reform activities. Four Seniors Rights Legal Clinics are provided through PILCH in different health sector host agencies, these clinics are staffed on a pro bono basis. SRV works from a perspective of empowerment and human rights.

This year, SRV received 1592 calls to the helpline regarding elder abuse. The helpline is located in SIV. The advocacy and legal service provided 696 advices. Across SRV, 332 new cases were opened and 232 cases were closed.

The most frequent form of abuse experienced was financial abuse, followed by psychological abuse. The two forms often occur together.

The community education team, including eight volunteers, delivered 138 sessions across Victoria to 3,436 participants. Of these, 15 sessions (661 participants) were delivered to CALD groups with the assistance of interpreters. Of the total sessions, 60 were delivered in rural and regional areas.

Fifty-three professional information sessions were delivered to 1,531 individuals. Of these, 26 were in regional Victoria.

In Law Week, SRV delivered two workshops - ***Granny Flat Arrangements***, in Bendigo, and ***Boomerang Kids – Adult Children Returning Home***, in Melbourne.

***World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*** is recognised internationally on 15 June each year. SRV organised



three main events. A legal seminar on Family Agreements was held for solicitors. A full-day workshop was held for workers in health, aged care, family violence and community sectors. The focus was on a rights perspective and practical tools to respond to elder abuse. The keynote speaker was Professor Simon Biggs who spoke on international prevalence of elder abuse and social ageism. A community event in Bendigo included a church service, a mayoral proclamation and banners on a vintage tourist tram.

The Legal Services Board funded a project which addresses the exchange of assets, frequently from the sale of the older person's home, in return for lifelong family care. It will produce a lawyer's practice guide and a plain language guide for older people and their families.

SRV contributed to the Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee's Inquiry into the Powers of Attorney and made a submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review of Guardianship.

## HACC Training Unit

COTA is funded by the Department of Health to co-ordinate the Home and Community Care (HACC) Regional Training Program for the Western Sector of the North and West Metropolitan Region.

COTA has welcomed the adoption by the HACC Program of an Active Service Model (ASM) approach which emphasises capacity building to allow clients to live in the community with as much

autonomy and independence as possible. Much HACC training activity this year has been focused on providing HACC staff and volunteers with the additional understanding and skills necessary to successfully implement the Active Service Model. We received – in association with Merri Community Health – an ASM Seeding Grant which has allowed us to provide intensive ASM training to the staff of 50 small HACC agencies across the region. These agencies provide social support programs – such as Planned Activity Groups and volunteer visiting – to their clients.

Through the regular HACC Training Calendar, we have delivered 59 training courses – some in association with the Royal District Nursing Service Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health. Nearly 900 HACC staff and volunteers have participated in this training. The Training Calendar regularly includes one of COTA's peer-educator led courses, *Towards Positive Ageing: challenging negative myths and stereotypes*.

HACC Training Unit ran a one-day forum for more than 60 HACC staff and volunteers in August on the topic of Well-being with the theme "Empower Yourself, Empower Your Clients". The forum explored the meaning of well-being to people from different backgrounds, including Indigenous elders, refugees and members of the Muslim communities. Presenters included COTA President, Janet Wood, as well as HACC clients and carers.



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