



COTA Victoria

2017 - 2018 REVIEW

*Promoting Opportunities.
Protecting Rights. For people 50+*





Above: Launch of the Agenda for Ageing at the Victorian Parliament Building.

Cover: Seniors Rights Victoria Peer Educator Jennifer Evans.

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COTA VICTORIA AT A GLANCE

COTA Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in Victoria. For nearly 70 years we have led government, corporate and community thinking in Victoria about the positive aspects of ageing.

Today our focus is on promoting opportunities for and protecting the rights of people 50+.

We see an ageing population as a time of opportunities for personal growth, contribution and self-expression. We believe there are obvious National, State, community, family and individual benefits from this approach.

COTA Victoria is a not-for-profit member based organisation run by, for and with Victorians aged over 50. We fund our activities and services through the support of government, members, philanthropic trusts, businesses and the public.

We have an experienced Board; highly qualified, permanent staff in a central Melbourne office location; and a broad State membership. We also have over 130 community volunteers throughout Victoria with skills in training, group facilitation, policy development and advocacy.

We work with local government, senior citizen centres, community houses and a broad range of community and service organisations.

This Review summarises our activities during 2017 and 2018.

We have additional information about COTA Victoria on our website including our [Strategy](#), our [Financial Statement](#) and our [Board](#).

COTA VICTORIA IMPACT 2017-18



TOTAL REACH*
191,589

131 
VOLUNTEERS

4,498

Seniors Information
Phone Line (calls)

3,270

Seniors Information
Outreach (participants)

1,466

Peer Education
(participants)



15,000

Living Longer Living
Stronger participants

50

COTA Cycling
Members



80,325
COTA Victoria
Website users

31,212 Seniors Rights Victoria website users

10,156 Assets for Care website users

22,217 Tool Kit website users

6,799 WEAAD website users

3,939

COTA Connects
subscribers

607

COTA Victoria
Facebook followers

1,650

COTA Victoria
Twitter followers



1,543

Seniors Rights
Victoria e-news
subscribers

694

Seniors Rights
Victoria Facebook
followers

624

Seniors Rights
Victoria Twitter
followers



3,642

Seniors Rights Victoria
Helpline** (calls)

3,121

Seniors Rights Victoria
Community Education
(participants)

835

Seniors Rights Victoria
Professional Education
(participants)

*Note that this is not a number of unique individuals as people may have contact in more than one medium.
**SRV advices and cases are a sub-set of this number.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past year has seen significant progress for COTA Victoria. There has also been increased recognition of what an ageing population means for our State and Nation.

Our focus is on ensuring COTA Victoria has the strategy, structure, resources and reputation to ensure we remain a leader in promoting the opportunities and protecting the rights of people aged 50+.

Our Board and staff have developed and started a new strategy to provide clear direction for our growth over the next three years and beyond. As part of that work we have restructured our Board with an emphasis on a balance between professional expertise and experience in issues associated with an ageing population.

I thank the outstanding contribution of Board members who retired during the past year: Jenny Alvin, Marilyn King and Sue Harris. We welcome new members Gregg Nicholls and Ron Burke.

I also note the commitment, patience and expertise of our CEO, Ronda Held and our staff.

Our new strategy has required substantial restructuring as we adapt to changes in community, government and client needs and expectations. We have also needed to diversify our sources of funding to ensure we continue to provide essential community services.

Our ability to deliver these services is reliant on our highly skilled and committed volunteers and I thank them on behalf of all at COTA Victoria. Another key factor in our success during the past year has been continued constructive working relationships with Federal, State and Local Governments and their key Departments.

In thinking about our strategic direction, we have been influenced by what we consider to be two key factors relating to the ageing of Australia's population.

One is the value we believe our State and Nation ought to gain as the opportunities of ageing are taken. The other is the need to ensure the rights of an ageing population are recognised and



protected. That has been the thinking behind the changes we are making to the way we promote COTA in Victoria.

For brand and marketing purposes we have summarised our work and the value we provide as: *Promoting Opportunities. Protecting Rights. For people aged 50+*

COTA Victoria is justifiably recognised as a pioneer in bringing the issue of elder abuse to the attention of government and community. We will continue to be active in highlighting rights issues that need to be addressed by State and Federal Governments. That is why we are paying close attention to the Victorian Election and the proposed Aged Care Royal Commission.

We believe it is also important for organisations such as COTA Victoria to actively promote the 'positives' of ageing and the opportunities for a healthy, engaged and contributing lifestyle.

Without a balance in community, government and media perceptions of the opportunities and the rights of an ageing population - ageing will be seen as a problem to be solved.

We at COTA Victoria plan to continue to work tirelessly to try and achieve that necessary balance.



Above left: COTA Victoria President Mike Lescai.

Above centre: COTA Victoria Board members from left: Graeme Bird, Sylvia Geddes, Mike Lescai, Lynette Moore, Ron Burke, Gregg Nicholls.

Above right: COTA Victoria CEO Ronda Held.

CEO'S REPORT

COTA Victoria was literally on the move last December when we left our home for the past 15 years in Melbourne's Block Arcade. Our staff and volunteers are enjoying more modern premises in Little Lonsdale Street as we work towards our mission of advancing the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age.

Thanks to our President Mike Lescai and all Board members for their service and support. A major achievement during the year was our new strategy. We started implementation of that in July 2018 and are aligning all our activities with its emphasis on opportunities and rights.

One of our major programs, Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV), celebrated its 10th Anniversary in April 2018. This was a good opportunity to mark a decade of support for older people experiencing abuse. The program has also been working to provide education and change attitudes, behaviour, structures and legislation regarding elder abuse.

In the lead-up to the 2018 Victorian Election our policy focus has been on highlighting the need for long term planning for our ageing population. This is necessary to capitalise on the contribution

of older Victorians, as well as addressing areas of disadvantage and vulnerability that can occur with ageing.

We continue to advocate on a broad range of issues including: retirement housing, dental care, assistive technology, homelessness and rental accommodation, energy affordability, mature age employment, elder abuse and aged care services.

We promote the health and wellbeing of older Victorians by offering information and education, as well as physical and social connection programs such as *Living Longer Living Stronger™* and our *OM:NI men's discussion groups*.

We thank all who have contributed to COTA Victoria's work over the year including our members, staff, donors, partner organisations, and many active volunteers. We greatly appreciate the Government and Philanthropic funding that supports our work.

PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES

NEW STRATEGY TO PROVIDE CLEAR DIRECTION

During the past year we developed and introduced a new strategy to provide a clear direction for COTA Victoria for the next three years and beyond.

Our strategy is based on our positive and pragmatic view of ageing in Australia. We genuinely believe ageing is an opportunity for both Australia as a Nation and older Australians as individuals, albeit with significant challenges, just like any other life-stage.

That is why we are working hard to change the public discussion about ageing to emphasise opportunities and value.

We are also a leader in bringing to public attention issues such as elder abuse that reduce the rights and, therefore, the opportunities of older Australians to enjoy the quality of life they want.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP

To ensure opportunities are promoted and rights protected, we need to understand the issues that concern people and develop policies to address those concerns. We are justifiably proud of our leadership in policy development and advocacy on behalf of people aged 50+ in Victoria and Australia in general. Our work and engagement is varied and involves our own team of experts, qualified volunteers and alignment with other community groups.

Promoting our views

COTA Victoria prepared a comprehensive *submission on the 2018 State Budget*. Priorities we suggested for State investment included responding to elder abuse, creating opportunities for mature workers, energy affordability, better planning for ageing in rural and regional Victoria, and homelessness amongst older women.

We led an alliance of 20 organisations that called on the Victorian Government to develop a Victorian bi-partisan *Agenda for Ageing*.

We also reiterated our policy views ahead of the 2018 State election, by calling on all Parties to commit to a comprehensive plan for the ageing of our population. Our *2018 Election Platform* highlighted the opportunities arising from older Victorians contribution to our economy and community. It also noted the concerns including housing stress and poverty; discrimination and

elder abuse; and increased barriers to accessing services and information.

Listening and responding to concerns

The development of our various policies and our advocacy efforts have been informed by community meetings we ran in 22 locations across Victoria. We also have a State survey. The top themes across all locations were transport; healthcare; and the internet.

We are active in the Assistive Technology for Older People Alliance. This was formed in 2017 in response to concerns about inequitable access to assistive technology for older people.

We are members of the Victorian Oral Health Alliance seeking more support from the Government to reverse concerning dental health statistics for vulnerable Victorians.

Following the release of the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector in March 2017, we continue to be part of a campaign seeking important changes for residents.

We work with key organisations seeking improved consumer protection in the energy retail market sector. The Essential Services Commission has improved assistance for consumers experiencing hardship.

Successful advocacy resulted in an increase in Utility Relief Grants to \$650 in the Victorian State Budget. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has commenced a review of how the Utility Relief Grants Scheme is administered.

We have worked with distributors Jemena and Ausnet to provide information and feedback. Through funding from Energy Consumers Australia, we are training volunteers to become consumer representatives on consultative committees with distributors and energy retailers.

Access to transport is a recurrent concern. This led to a forum at Docklands in June to discuss the issue. Transport users, organisers of community transport (such as local councils) and advocates discussed transport options and scope for improvements.

We will continue our active engagement in the Ageing, Disability and Mental Health Collaborative Panel and its related projects in Victoria. We see this as a valuable opportunity to collaborate with

others in adapting to new approaches to funding and service delivery in these sectors.

We are an active contributor to the implementation in Victoria of the Federal Government's Commonwealth Home Support Program through our sector support funding. This enables us to build our volunteer capacity, engage consumers in policy work and raise policy issues that impact on program participants. We see this program as a key enabler for older Victorians to be supported to remain in their homes and preferred communities.

Getting the best policy advice

During the year we created two new structures to ensure our members are able to guide and support our policy work.

Our Policy Development Committee is part of our new response to emerging issues for older people and will actively work alongside our policy officers to respond to submissions, Inquiries and advocacy requests. Our Community Reference Panel will ensure the lived experience and subject expertise of our individual and organisational membership informs our policy advocacy.

COTA Victoria members will also continue to be active in our policy working groups including Green Sages, transport, energy, research and 'end-of-life'.

Below: Campaigners for Retirement Housing Matters at the Victorian Parliament Building.





HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Above: Launch of the resource “Safeguarding the end of the Rainbow” by Victorian Government Minister, Martin Foley MP.

Right: The first meeting of the Bunyip OM:NI group was held in June 2018.

From a strategic perspective, we believe the most promising opportunities to emerge from the ageing of Australia are in the area we generically call Health and Wellbeing. In our Strategy, our activities address the physical, mental and financial health of older people.

Information to assist health and wellbeing

There are many resources available to people 50+ to assist their physical, mental and financial health. COTA Victoria continues to play a key role in explaining and enabling access to this information.

Apart from our reputation as a trusted source of information, we also have skilled peer educators and trained volunteers.

Seniors Information Victoria continues to be a successful program providing important information to older Victorians through a phone line and outreach sessions. During the past year over 7000 people were assisted with information.

To ensure the program’s continued efficiency and value, we have been working with the DHHS. We are implementing changes, including more targeted outreach to communities with current barriers to accessing information, and greater use of volunteers to deliver services.

Due to public demand, our Peer Education program has recently focussed on end-of-life issues.

With funding from the North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network we delivered sessions on Advance Care Planning. We focussed on groups with diverse cultural backgrounds.

In partnership with the Health Issues Centre and funding from the DHHS we took the installation, *Unspoken: What will become of me?* across Victoria. *Unspoken* uses art and performance to create awareness and understanding of the value of end-of-life conversations. COTA Victoria's Peer Educator team supported the events with presentations, information and discussions.

In another initiative, Victoria's older LGBTI community now has resources to help with 'end-of-life' planning following the recent launch of the *Safeguarding the End of the Rainbow* booklet.

We also launched the *Death of a Partner: a practical guide for partners and families* booklet in May. This followed research on difficulties faced by people dealing with post-death 'red tape'.

This booklet was developed by volunteers Anita Smith and Anne MacBean, with funding from the Victoria Law Foundation. It helps navigate legal, financial and administrative requirements after a partner's death.

Promoting physical health

Living Longer Living Stronger™ is our progressive strength training program conducted in over 100 health, gym and community centres across Victoria. It has an estimated 15,000 participants.

Highlighting the importance of physical health and training for older people, it has the potential to significantly increase the numbers of organisations and people participating. There is also scope to broaden the range of health information for older people provided through this channel.

Promoting wellbeing

Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) is one of our unique programs comprising a network of Men's Discussion Groups.

We have 24 groups across Victoria and 10 of these celebrated their 10 year or more anniversary in May.

We started another three groups during the year. We believe there is scope to expand this program working closely with the leaders of current *OM:NI* men's discussion groups.

"You don't stop exercising because you grow old, you grow old because you stop exercising."

- Fay Barnes, 83 years 'young',
LLLS supporter and fitness inspiration.





Left: Panellists Uncle Jack Charles, Lois Peeler, Jane Caro and moderator Lee Lin Chin at the HeART of Ageing event.

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

We believe that one of the most important ways of changing public perceptions about ageing is to promote the outstanding achievements of older Australians and the value they provide. We are actively involved in community awards programs and also ensure our volunteers are recognised.

Seniors Awards 2017

Fourteen people and one organisation were honoured at Victoria's Government House.

Roy Francis received the Senior of the Year Award for his outstanding contribution to his community and Victoria. Roy raises awareness about cancer and other health issues in talks across the State, as well being involved in other volunteer roles. Ten people were acknowledged with the COTA Victoria Senior Achiever Awards.

International Day of Older Person's 2017: HeART of Ageing event

Our event *The HeART of Ageing* at The Wheeler Centre took the opportunity to ask "what will it take to change the conversation about ageing?" with over 200 attendees participating.

Our panel exemplified the enormous contribution made by older people to society and have all challenged stereotypes throughout their lives. Moderator Lee Lin Chin, well known journalist and author; Dr. Lois Peeler, Senior Victorian of the Year; Jane Caro, author and social commentator; and Uncle Jack Charles, actor and mentor led a

lively conversation on how we can change the conversation about ageing to a more positive one through the fields of journalism, education and the arts.

Celebrating our volunteers in National Volunteer Week May 2018

We had over 130 volunteers working with us during the year, including 25 new to our network. In May we celebrated their achievements and contribution.

Jack Bell, centenarian and recipient of a 2017 COTA Senior Achievers Award, shared his inspirational thoughts on living a great life, the importance of volunteering and staying connected within the community.

The outstanding work of our volunteers includes contributing to policy and advocacy; providing peer education; assisting with marketing, media, and design; administration; information technology; and leading cycling and OM:NI men's discussion groups. One of our volunteers, Ken Ramplin, was a recent recipient of the Jagajaga Community's Australia Day Awards.

PROTECTING RIGHTS

SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA



Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is the COTA Victoria program that is the key state-wide service dedicated to preventing and responding to elder abuse. Elder abuse is any act that causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect.

SRV provides information, support, advice, casework and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians.

Our services include a Helpline, specialist legal services and short-term support and advocacy for individuals. We have a leadership role in policy development, law reform and education, and work with organisations to raise awareness of elder abuse.

10th Anniversary

We celebrated our 10th anniversary this year. Since 2008, we have had:

- 22,063 calls to our Helpline
- 4,382 older people receiving personalised assistance through advice and casework
- 29,182 participants in community education sessions
- 12,247 participants in professional development sessions
- Production of nine different information sheets and the booklet, *Care for Your Assets: Money, Ageing and Family*.

Below: Seniors Rights Victoria staff and stakeholders.



OUR PRACTICE

The SRV confidential telephone Helpline provides information, support and referrals.

In 2017–18, the Helpline service received 3,462 calls (3,379 the previous year), of which 3,315 were related to elder abuse or associated issues.

Women made up more than 77 per cent of all callers. We recognise that elder abuse can affect all older persons and cater our services accordingly.

The most prevalent issues were financial abuse at 47 per cent (up from 25 per cent in 2016-7) and emotional/psychological abuse at 34 per cent (up from 24 per cent). Other calls related to guardian and administration issues, aged care facilities,

adult children returning home, wills, neglect and social abuse. Clients often experience more than one type of abuse.

A significant number of SRV callers were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with 240 advices made to clients whose birth country was not Australia, representing 46 countries where English is not the first language.

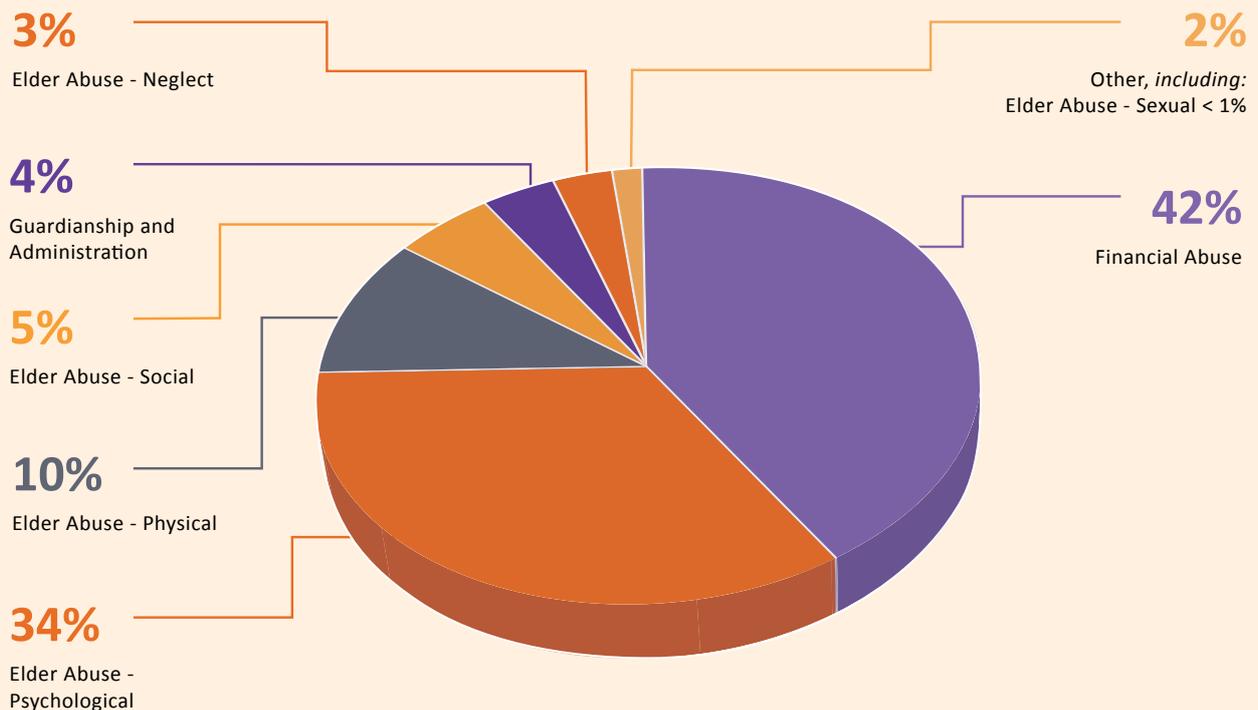
Overall we provided 2950 instances of information, 512 advices (legal and advocacy) and 752 secondary consultations to other organisations. Sometimes a caller receives information and advice on more than one issue.

Casework

If a client requires further assistance after receiving advice, where the issue fits within our guidelines and there is capacity to do so, a case is opened.

SRV casework is delivered by both our advocacy and legal services. We opened 187 new cases (including Health Justice Partnership cases) and closed 159 cases.

New Cases by Problem Type
2017-2018 Financial year





LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

Above: Elder Abuse as Family Violence discussion papers.

SRV is an influential thought leader, working for positive change for and with older people. The past year resulted in significant results from our engagement in constructive opportunities to stop elder abuse.

The Federal Attorney-General Christian Porter MP launched Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) in June 2018. SRV is an inaugural board member of the EAAA, a growing network of organisations and individuals engaged in elder abuse prevention and support around Australia.

As a result of our success in raising awareness of elder abuse as a form of family violence we are active in Victorian Government committees.

We participate in the Family Violence Steering Committee, the Ministerial Taskforce on the Prevention of Family Violence and the Diverse Communities and Intersectionality Working Group.

We contribute to consultations on matters including support and safety hubs, information sharing and police implementation of relevant Royal Commission of Family Violence recommendations.

We also continue to develop closer relationships with Family Violence services.

The publication of five discussion papers was a significant contribution to understanding the relationship between family violence and elder abuse. These were: *Elder Abuse as Family Violence*; *Elder Abuse, Gender and Sexuality*; *Preventing Elder Abuse*; *Criminal Law and Elder Abuse*; and *Mandatory Reporting*.

Community Education

SRV's *community education program* underpins our empowerment and prevention frameworks. It raises awareness of elder abuse. It also builds community capacity to respond and enable older people to take action.

Delivered by the Community Education Coordinator with peer educators, we provide accessible resources, workshops and presentations to older people, family members, carers, community groups and service providers.

We also provide professional education for management, staff and workers in aged and community care, health services, local government and legal services.

In 2017-18, SRV delivered:

- 93 community education sessions to 3121 participants
- 27 professional education presentations to 752 participants
- A new recruitment process for peer educators

Supporting the Integrated Model of Care

SRV developed new partnerships with the DHHS Integrated Model of Care sites responding to elder abuse and the delivery of training with the Bouverie Centre.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) - 15 June

In 2018, priority was given to delivering community education to older people during the month of June. There were 19 presentations to 681 participants attending a range of forums.

WEAAD partnerships occurred with Frankston City Council, Mitchell Shire, Yarra Council, MPower (Warrnambool), Banyule City Council and Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council.

We also presented to direct home care workers and elders at the Aboriginal Advancement League.

We used our WEAAD resources to support Victorian events by updating all marketing collateral, supporting media coverage and updating WEAAD website information.

We provided WEAAD promotional material for a digital campaign at Airport West Shopping Centre and distributed 5000 bookmarks to every library in Victoria.

Elder Abuse Prevention Networks (EAPN)

SRV is supporting the development of local Elder Abuse Prevention Networks across the state by working with them in primary prevention activities.

Funded by the Victorian Government, the EAPN will operate at 10 sites in regional, outer urban and metropolitan areas at an individual and community level, to raise awareness and educate communities about the rights of older people.



Jeanette Lane and her husband Graham from PACE, at the launch of the Ballarat Elder Abuse Network.

FUNDERS, SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS AND ALLIANCE PARTNERS

COTA Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation reliant on funding and assistance from a variety of Government, philanthropic, corporate and individual contributors. We also work closely with a broad range of community organisations and alliances. We are very thankful for the assistance we receive.

FUNDERS

Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services
Victorian Legal Aid
Federal Government Attorney-General's Department
Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation
Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet
Federal Government Department of Health
Consumer Affairs Victoria
Casey-Cardinia Foundation
City of Brimbank
City of Casey
Collier Charitable Fund
COTA Australia
Energy Consumers Australia
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network
Palliative Care Victoria
Sidney Myer Fund & Gay and Lesbian Foundation Australia
State Trustees Australia Foundation
The J.O. & J.R. Wicking Trust (The Wicking Trust) Equity Trustees
Victoria Law Foundation

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Alfred Health Advance Care Planning
Ballarat Community Health
Bouverie Centre
Carers Victoria
Clayton Utz Foundation
Consumer Action Law Centre
Country Women's Association (Victorian Branch)
Dementia Australia
Domestic Violence Victoria
East Gippsland Shire Council

Eastern Community Legal Centre
Elder Rights Advocacy
Energy and Water Ombudsman
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition Inc
Family Mediation & Counselling Victoria
Federation of Community Legal Centres
Financial and Consumer Rights Council
Frankston City Council Positive Ageing Program
Golden Days Radio 95.7FM
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative
Health Issues Centre
Health West
Housing for the Aged Action Group
Human Rights Law Centre
Justice Connect
Latrobe City Council
Law Institute of Victoria
LIFE Activities Clubs Victoria Inc.
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Maddocks Lawyers
Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
Mental Health Victoria
Merri Health
Mornington Peninsula Shire Advisory Committee of Elders (PACE)
Municipal Association of Victoria
National Ageing Research Institute Ltd
Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
Office of the Public Advocate
Open Place
Palliative Care Victoria
Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria
Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria
Russell Kennedy Lawyers
South West Carer and Respite Services Network

Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership
Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust
St Vincent's Hospital
Star Health
Swinburne University
Transgender Victoria
U3A Victoria
Val's LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care (GLHV)
Victoria Police
Victoria Walks
Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation
Victorian Committee for Aboriginal Aged Care and Disability
Victorian Community Transport Association
Victorian Council of Social Services

ALLIANCES

Oral Health Alliance
Assistive Technology for Older People Alliance
Agenda for Ageing Alliance

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COTA VICTORIA

1800 136 381

enquire@cotavic.org.au

Level 4, 533 Little Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne, VIC 3000

www.cotavic.org.au