

COTA Victoria

Review | 2018 – 2019

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About COTA Victoria

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 about the positive aspects of ageing.

We are a not-for-profit community organisation and fund our activities with the support of government, members,

philanthropic trusts, businesses and the public. As a member-based organisation, we are run by, for and with older Victorians.

One of our principal programs is Seniors Rights Victoria, which provides information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older people.

Our vision

Ageing in Victoria is a time of possibility, opportunity and influence

Our purpose

COTA advances the rights, interests and futures of Australians as we age

Our values

Respect, Diversity, Collaboration and Integrity

Acknowledgement of country

COTA Victoria acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Victoria and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past, present and future.

*Our cover features COTA Victoria volunteers Isobel Buchan, Mary Hall, Wilma Marmur and Mabel Png.
PHOTOGRAPH: Djoyobisono.*

Our highlights



Royal Commission

We provided more than 200 Victorians with the knowhow to make submissions to the Aged Care Royal Commission.

See Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety on page 9



Unspoken

Unspoken brought conversations about the end of life out of the hospital and into the community.

See Unspoken roadshow on page 15



Dementia Australia

Good legal planning can help prevent elder abuse. We worked with Dementia Australia to assist people newly diagnosed with dementia.

See Sessions demonstrate the power of planning on page 19



COTA Wise

We advised people who participated in our information and outreach program how to cut their power bills, move into a retirement village and declutter their homes.

See COTA Wise on page 14

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I begin by welcoming our new Chief Executive Officer, Tina Hogarth-Clarke. Before coming to COTA Victoria, Tina ran her own aged care consultancy, assisting companies with strategy and offering advice to the public looking for care. I have great confidence in Tina's leadership in the next stage of the development of COTA Victoria. Tina will be our 9th CEO (or equivalent) in our 68 years.

Tina builds on the work of her predecessor, Ronda Held, who left us in August 2019 after three years. Ronda brought significant passion and enthusiasm to the organisation. Her efforts have helped to cement our organisation as the voice of Victorians aged 50+. I join the Board in wishing Ronda well in her retirement.

Thank you to my fellow Board members for their contributions. I would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of Board members Ron Burke and Ian Dunn, who retired during the year.

This is the second of our three-year strategy, which is based on our positive and pragmatic view of ageing. We believe that ageing is a series of transitions: it is not a bracketing based on how old each of us are. In each transition we

believe in promoting the Rights, Health & Wellbeing, and Policy advocacy for Victorians 50+.

During 2018-19, we marked the tenth anniversary of SRV. Since 2008, when this vital service was established, we have received more than 22,000 calls to our helpline and assisted more than 4000 people through advice and casework. I pay tribute to the dedication of the SRV staff throughout its 10 years of seminal work.

I would like to thank all our staff and volunteers. I would particularly like to thank the funders and supporters who provide the vital resources for us to continue our work. To each and every member thank you for your continued support and contribution in providing valuable feedback on issues that are important. We look forward to continuing our important work in 2020 and planning for our 70th anniversary in April 2021.

Mike Lescai

COTA Victoria Board Members



MIKE LESCAI
PRESIDENT



LYNETTE MOORE
DEPUTY
PRESIDENT



GRAEME BIRD
TREASURER



CATHY MEAD
DIRECTOR



GREGG NICHOLLS
DIRECTOR

CEO's report

I would like to extend a welcome to everyone in the COTA and Seniors Rights Victoria communities. During my first few months as CEO, I have been privileged to meet many of you. I look forward to continuing the conversation – whether face-to-face or through our many other channels - with you in the years ahead.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my predecessor, Ronda Held. I join our staff and volunteers in wishing Ronda well in her retirement and any new adventures that she embarks upon.

The more than 130 people who volunteered for COTA and Seniors Rights Victoria during 2018–19 deserve special recognition. They helped us manage events, provided information, contributed to advocacy and community education and led cycling and discussion groups. Older Australians are known for lending a helping hand. More than a third of people between 65 and 74 volunteer.

My job would be a great deal harder without the support and talents of the staff of COTA Victoria. I thank them for their enthusiasm, skill and dedication. I would also like to recognise the contribution during the year of

the COTA Victoria Board, who, as volunteers, provide the organisation with considerable skill and expertise.

I began by talking about a conversation. An important part of any conversation is how it is framed. The two Royal Commissions we mention in these pages remind us of the challenges that older Victorians face.

But in framing this conversation, we must also continue to remind people of the importance of Victorians aged 50+. Never before in our community have we had access to such an untapped pool of wisdom, talent, experience and enthusiasm. As CEO of COTA Victoria I will work hard to ensure that older Victorians occupy their rightful place as esteemed members of the community.

Tina Hogarth-Clarke

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RON BURKE
DIRECTOR



IAN DUNN
DIRECTOR



ROBERT
CAULFIELD
DIRECTOR



JEAN RAAR
DIRECTOR



TINA
HOGARTH-CLARKE
CEO

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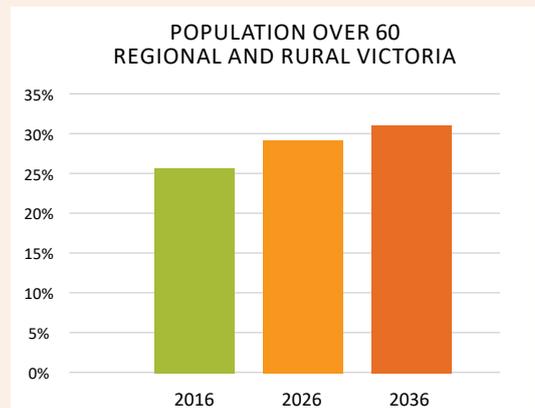
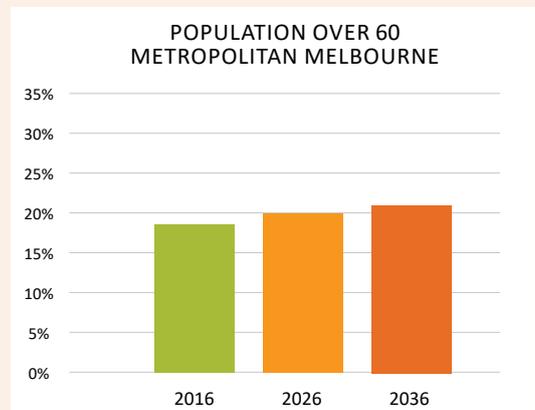
THANK YOU

Victoria's population is ageing.

By 2036, almost a quarter of Victorian will be older than 60. Outside Melbourne that will be almost a third.

The greying of the population will bring new challenges, forcing us to change the way we think about employment, housing, and healthcare.

The information pictured here provides a statistical picture of older Victorians.



41% and **46%**
of Victorians 65+ of Victorians 85+
were born overseas



35%
of people
aged 65–74
**do voluntary and
community work**

About us

In 2018–19, we:



Provided a voice

We made the views and concerns of older Victorians known to governments, regulators and Royal Commissions. We did this through four submissions, two policy platforms and three joint submissions. These included:

- our Agenda for Ageing in Victoria report
- our state election platform
- our pre-Budget submission.



Provided vital skills

Our training and education programs, delivered by peer educators and volunteers, helped older Victorians to:



- resolve financial problems

- navigate the aged care system.



- prepare for retirement



Helped to prevent elder abuse

Seniors Rights Victoria received more than 3500 calls to our helpline. Financial abuse was the leading issue.



Financial abuse



41.1%



Emotional / psychological abuse



28.9%



Guardianship and administration



17.1%

Other issues raised were physical abuse at 7.6%, social abuse at 4.9% and sexual abuse at 0.5%.

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GETTING TOGETHER: COTA Victoria volunteers Carolyn Gommers, Helen Wu and Alicia Maclan

This is the second year of our strategy, which will run from 2018 to 2021. We base our work on its four pillars.

Policy

We will maintain our leadership in policy development and advocacy on behalf of people 50+.

Health and wellbeing

We will manage and increase a portfolio of physical, mental and financial health projects and services designed to benefit and improve the quality of life of older Victorians.

Organisation

We will build COTA Victoria's organisational efficiency and sustainability in Victoria through improvements to public awareness of COTA Victoria's impact, knowledge management, income generation and increased volunteer involvement.

Rights

We will maintain the position of Seniors Rights Victoria (a COTA Victoria program) as Victoria's leading provider of information, advocacy and social work, legal services and support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and protect the rights of older people.

Policy



TECH-WISE: Volunteer Bernard Brickhill and COTA Victoria IT Consultant Rob Hagan compare notes

During 2018–19, we have concentrated on:

- consulting with people to assist them to understand and respond to the Australian Government Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety
- responding to the Victorian Government Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System
- advocating for a whole of government response to ageing
- advocating for better access to assistive technology
- working to achieve a stronger energy regulatory framework for older, vulnerable consumers
- advocating on systemic issues that emerge from Seniors Rights Victoria's case work experience.

Assistive technology

Assistive technology helps with everyday tasks. It includes wheelchairs, communication aids, prostheses and memory aids.

The NDIS provides funding and specialist support for people younger than 65 who require assistive technology. People older than 65 must access assistive technology through the aged care system. This does not provide the same support as the NDIS. Often people face long waiting lists or must pay for technology themselves.

During 2018-19, COTA Victoria and our fellow members of the Assistive Technology for Older People Alliance stepped up the campaign to redress this inequality.

The alliance wants the Victorian Government to champion the needs of older people with disability by starting a national discussion through the Council of Australian Governments' Disability Reform Council. The aim is to establish and fund a national aids and equipment program for older people with disability.

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TALKING IT THROUGH: Participants at the City of Darebin/COTA Victoria information session about the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Royal Commissions

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

In October 2018, the Australian Government announced the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The commission is to provide its final report no later than 12 November 2020.

In 2018–19, COTA hosted a round of information sessions to support older people to make submissions to the Australian Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

We hosted seven public sessions, listening to more than 200 participants, including family members and people working with older people in the aged-care system. This included older people living with disability, older people representing 19 language groups, and regional Victorians.

We aimed to provide older people with the know-how and confidence to write

their own submissions or help someone else write one.

Several themes emerged, including:

- how older people are disempowered in places run as institutions
- ageism from family, staff and society
- system failures such as the quality and cost of care, wait lists, inadequate staffing and poorly constructed aged care packages
- transport issues and costs that leave people isolated
- challenges for people when their cultural needs are not met
- differences in education and experience of life that are not understood or supported
- difficulties for older people with disability, particularly the disconnect between the NDIS and the aged-care system. ***See A whole of government response to ageing on page 12***



PROVIDING FEEDBACK: Older people told us they are concerned about the future of aged care in Australia. Above right are Edie Mayhew, left, and Anne Tudor who shared their positive story to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health will deliver its final report by October 2020. COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria provided considerable input to the commission on behalf of older Victorians. For information about the SRV submission - ***See Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System on page 19***

In June 2019, COTA Victoria consulted with older Victorians about what we should include in our submission. We asked people to provide us with information about:

- social isolation and loneliness and its relationship to poor mental health
- issues impacting upon the mental health and wellbeing of older men
- barriers to accessing age-appropriate mental health services.

'We're seeking to change the culture of ageing but older people are seen as a burden. This contributes to an aged-care system that doesn't consider quality of life. Yes, we're encouraged to live a long time, as long as we don't get old.'

*Valerie, Melbourne workshop,
28 March 2019.*

The COTA submission noted that mental health might decline as we age. The risk factors include declining physical health, loss of status and independence, financial insecurity, and social isolation and loneliness, including the loss of partners and friends. We noted that older people still have the lowest rate of contact with mental health services of any age group in Australia. The complete submission is available at <http://bit.ly/mhrcom>.

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CASE STUDY: Linda and Faye

Linda has been advocating and supporting the care of her mum, Faye, for more than four years, so the Aged Care Royal Commission became a necessary, albeit painful, opportunity to share her experiences.

Faye is in her 80s and is living with dementia. According to Linda, she may have been able to stay at home longer had the aged-care package to support her care not been so delayed it became inadequate. Faye was finally offered an upgraded package the week after she transitioned to aged care.

‘Every now and then I’m blown away by the compassion of a worker and I think why can’t there be more like that.’

‘I have tried to do the best for my mum, but the system is so broken,’ Linda said.

‘Aged care is poorly resourced by mostly under-skilled staff with poor communication skills. It is a system built around the finances, not the older person.’

Linda went to a number of COTA Victoria information sessions to gain the confidence and courage to write a submission, to share her experiences and listen to others.

‘It’s pretty daunting to consider a submission without a community around you. The workshops were

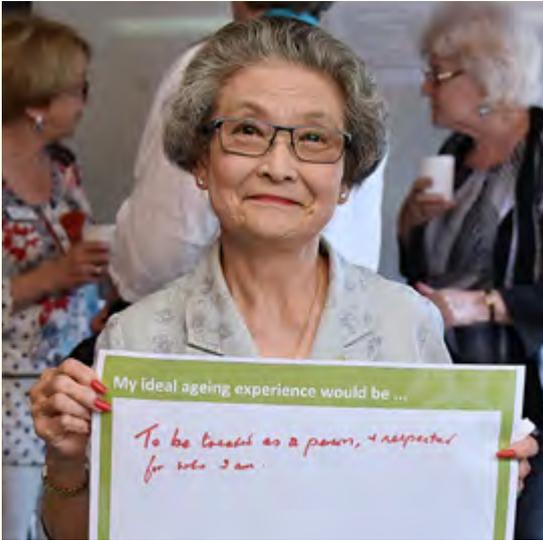


invaluable. They clarified different ways to approach the process and helped me feel I wasn’t alone,’ she said.

Linda is hopeful for change but thinks there is a broader issue around ageism.

‘Ultimately it seems we dehumanise older people. Once they become dependent, they are seen as a nuisance, but every now and then I am blown away by the compassion of a worker and I think why can’t there be more like that. I really hope this is the beginning of a cultural change,’ she said.

‘In the meantime, I know there is value in having a voice, particularly for me as a carer for someone who can no longer speak – it’s probably the most significant thing I can do.’



SPEAKING UP: Volunteer Marion Lau provides her perspectives on ageing

A whole of government response to ageing

COTA Victoria continues to push for a statewide action plan – *An Agenda for Ageing* – through the Alliance for an Agenda for Ageing. An agenda would eliminate the current fragmented approach to policy and programs. In our state election platform – delivered before the election in November 2018 – we said that a Premier’s Advisory Committee on Ageing in Victoria should be established to deliver such a plan. During 2018–19, we also delivered a pre-Budget submission. In these documents, we asked for:

- a vision for modern ageing in Victoria
- an investment in elder abuse training and education from specialist services
- investment in affordable and fair housing for older people, including addressing homelessness of older women

- greater understanding of and access to advance care planning, palliative care and end of life care
- improved access to dental and mental health services
- increased funding for Seniors Rights Victoria to provide more resources to meet an increase in demand
- funding for the continuation and extension of Elder Abuse Prevention Networks - ***See Elder Abuse Prevention Networks action research, on page 21.***

The Agenda for Ageing is available at: <http://bit.ly/ageagenda>

Our state election platform is at: <http://bit.ly/electionvic2018>

The Victorian Budget submission is available at: <http://bit.ly/vicbud>

An Agenda for Ageing would eliminate the current fragmented approach to policy.

A better energy deal

From July 1, 2019, all Victorians have been able to access a mid-range, simple, no traps, good value electricity deal or Victorian Default Offer (VDO). During 2018–19, we worked with a group of consumer and social service organisations to provide feedback on the needs of older people especially those in financial difficulty to the Essential Services Commission – which regulates electricity, gas and water – about the VDO.

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DYNAMIC DUO: COTA Victoria volunteers Anne McBean and Anita Smith aim to cut out death-related bureaucracy

Death of a partner

Tackling the red tape involved after the death of a partner led two former financial counsellors and COTA volunteers to develop the successful *Death of a Partner* booklet.

Anita Smith raised the issue with COTA in 2015. 'Utilities and even local libraries make things difficult for the surviving partner unless they can produce appropriate documentation such as a full death certificate,' Anita says.

Anita partnered with Anne MacBean to produce *Death of a Partner*. The booklet was launched in May 2018 and more than 1500 copies were distributed. The project prompted discussions with service providers about how to reduce bureaucracy.

Anne's personal experience informed her work. Her account with a tollway company is still in her late husband's name. She offered to provide them with a certified copy of the registration of the car she shared with her husband and a statutory declaration. The company

insisted on a full death certificate.

'I am not prepared to share the sensitive details on the death certificate.'

The women say that Australia should follow the lead of the United Kingdom, which has set up the 'Tell Us Once' service. All government departments are notified of a death through one email or phone call.

Death of a Partner, a Practical Guide for Partners and Family is available at <http://bit.ly/bklet>. It provides information on:

- a timeline of things you must do after your partner dies
- hiring a funeral director and planning a funeral
- settling your partner's estate
- accessing and closing online accounts
- tips to ensure you look after yourself.

We thank the Victoria Law Foundation who funded this project and provided support throughout its development.

Health and wellbeing



SHARING STORIES: COTA Victoria volunteers Lee Choon and Jonathan Pietsch discuss Inspiring Life Stories

COTA Wise

COTA WISE is our telephone and face-to-face information service, which aims to make older people feel WISE – Welcome, Included, Supported and Empowered. It includes dedicated programs such as Seniors Information Victoria (SIV), our financial counselling service and peer education. We delivered the programs through several channels as we recognise that not everyone can access online services. This may be because people do not speak English as a first language, or are living with a disability that prevents them from accessing services online or they lack digital literacy.

Information and outreach

In 2018-19, COTA Victoria reached out to older Victorians through our information and outreach programs, social media channels and our website. Our information was delivered in a range of formats including the phone line (we received 4065 phone calls), 120 Need to Know information sessions and events, which more than 4800 people attended.

We also reached out to diverse and hard-to-reach communities, offering sessions in a number of community languages and covering much of the state.

Need to Know sessions

We deliver our Need to Know sessions at COTA Victoria headquarters. These sessions are free and open to anyone who wishes to attend. This year, we featured events including:

- the Power is Yours (how to use the Victorian Government energy price comparison site to cut your power bills)
- The Department of Human Services' Financial Information Service with four topics related to retirement
- the Zen of Decluttering hosted by Australia's Marie Kondo, Mary Harnan
- Retirement Villages, What to Look for Before You Buy, delivered in conjunction with Consumer Affairs Victoria.

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Financial counselling

We launched our financial counselling service during the year. It provides information, support and advocacy for people in financial difficulty. It is free, independent and confidential. We provide the service by phone or at the COTA office.

More than a third of the cases have covered several issues and required extensive case management. The more difficult cases involved reverse mortgages, investigations into aged care fees, and multiple debts.

Training and peer education

Our 15 peer-educators delivered more than 100 sessions to more than 1700 people in 2018–19. Topics included wills, safe use of medicines, ageism, end-of-life conversations and consumer-directed care. Our program taps into existing education opportunities through local community groups.

Aged Care Navigators

In February 2019, COTA Victoria established three trial Aged Care Navigator hubs. The trial, which is funded until June 2020, helps older people struggling to understand and use the aged care system. 62 hubs have been set up around Australia.

Volunteers who know the aged care system act as 'systems navigators' to

Aged Care Navigators helps
older people struggling to
understand and use the aged
care system.



LAUNCH DAY: COTA Victoria CEO Ronda Held, in front of banner, and the Aged Care Navigator working group partners in Dandenong.

assist older people and their families to access information. COTA Victoria has set up a phone information service – 1300 13 50 90 – and hubs in Dandenong and Pakenham.

Unspoken roadshow

Unspoken, what will become of me? – our partnership with the Health Issues Centre and the Municipal Association of Victoria – concluded in December. The Department of Health and Human Services financed the project, which brought conversations about three critical government end-of-life initiatives out of the aged-care facility and into the community.

Unspoken consisted of COTA Victoria information sessions bookending a performance by theatre troupe Born in a Taxi. COTA Victoria's community educators provided information about the Medical Treatment and Decisions Act, the new Victorian Palliative Care Framework and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017.



VITAL CONVERSATIONS: Born in a Taxi theatre troupe members at a performance for Unspoken. People using our Inspiring Life Stories materials to tell their stories

The roadshow across Victoria used art and performance to generate awareness, understanding and action around end-of-life conversations.

During the year, North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network provided funding to COTA Victoria to deliver community education about advance care planning across seven municipalities in north western Melbourne.

Inspiring Life Stories

Stories of a lifetime are the stuff that history is made from. Yet many older Victorians are unsure of how to share their stories. Research from Swinburne University about the benefits of reminiscing inspired COTA Victoria to develop Inspiring Life Stories in 2018–19. It helps older people create, refine and record their stories. Their personal history becomes a permanent source of inspiration for relatives and friends. COTA Victoria launched Inspiring Life Stories at Victorian Seniors Festival. You can obtain more information at cotavic.org.au.



Living Longer, Living Stronger™

Living Longer, Living Stronger™, our strength, resistance and balance program for older Victorians, marked its 17th year. The program offers Fitness Australia-accredited training through gyms, community centres, and aged care facilities.

Its benefits include:

- being able to run after (and keep up with) grandchildren
- enjoying and re-joining sport
- staying independent longer
- avoiding falls and feeling confident that you can get up after having one.

As well as building physical strength, the sessions provide mental health benefits, allowing you to socialise with other like-minded and similar-aged people. Participants do not have to subscribe to a plan. Sessions are also inexpensive, starting from as little as \$8.

More information on the program is available on the COTA Victoria website.

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COTA Victoria Policy team member Joseph Hwani and COTA Victoria Life Member Bob Barron

Volunteers

National Volunteer Week in May 2019 was a fitting occasion to celebrate the more than 130 people who volunteered with COTA Victoria during 2018–19. Their work includes:

- contributing to policy and advocacy
- providing peer education
- conducting elder abuse awareness and education sessions
- assisting with marketing, media and design
- sharing information on climate change
- administration
- information technology
- leading cycling and OM:NI men's discussion groups.

Older Men – New Ideas discussion groups

OM:NI marked its 15th year in Victoria by adding another five groups, taking us to a total of 27. More than a third of the groups have been going for over 10 years. About 400 men attend meetings each month.

The groups provide men who are 50 and over with a place to meet and share their knowledge and experiences. The new groups are at Bunyip, Selandra Rise Retirement Village in Clyde North, Pakenham, Panton Hill, and Queenscliff.

Our new website

We improved our website during the year. We made the navigation better, made it easier to use by people with disabilities and made it more mobile friendly. Thank you to everyone who helped us before, during and after the development process. This included the user experience team from Officeworks. They kindly donated their time to test the site with our members and volunteers.

Protecting rights



MARKING A MILESTONE: Former COTA Victoria CEO Ronda Held, CEO Tina Hogarth-Clarke and Seniors Rights Victoria Manager Jenny Blakey celebrating 10 years of Seniors Rights Victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria is the key statewide service dedicated to stopping elder abuse.

We provide 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, short-term support and social work advocacy for individuals. We also participate in policy development, law reform and education, working with organisations and groups to raise awareness of elder abuse.

Tenth anniversary celebration

We marked our tenth year with a celebration on 4 October 2018. The Victorian Government established Seniors Rights Victoria and adopted a statewide elder abuse strategy in 2008.

In 10 years, Seniors Rights Victoria has:

- received more than 22,000 calls to our helpline
- assisted more than 4000 people through advice and casework
- had more than 29,000 people participate in community education sessions
- trained more than 12,000 people in professional development.

Our practice

The Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) helpline provides information, support and referral. In 2018–19, we received 3572 calls (3462 the previous year).

About 70% of clients who received legal and advocacy advices were women. Women represented 68% of clients whose issues progressed to case level. We recognise that elder abuse can affect all older people and cater our services accordingly. While any older person can experience elder abuse, a person's gender or sexual identity and related sexism, racism, homophobia

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LOOKING FORWARD: Seniors Rights Victoria staff members Melanie Perkins and Mandy Walmsley worked with Dementia Australia to provide legal information sessions

and transphobia may exacerbate their experience of violence.

The most prevalent issues raised by callers to our helpline were financial abuse at 41 per cent (42 per cent last year), while emotional/psychological abuse accounted for 29 per cent (34 per cent last year) of issues. Other significant types of abuse reports relate to guardian and administration issues, physical abuse, aged care facilities, adult children returning home, wills, neglect and social abuse. Very often a client experiences more than one type of abuse.

The most prevalent issues raised were financial abuse and emotional/psychological abuse.

SRV provides services for people aged 60 and over (45 for Aboriginal people). However, the greatest concern is for people aged over 75. A significant number of SRV callers were from

culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Overall, we provided 783 advices (legal and advocacy).

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. Our advocacy and legal service both deliver case work. In 2018–19, we opened 169 new cases (including Health Justice Partnership cases) and closed 161 cases.

Leadership and influence

Sessions demonstrate the power of planning

In January 2019, SRV partnered with Dementia Australia to provide community legal information sessions to 140 people who have been newly diagnosed with dementia and their families and friends. The sessions, about proper preparation of Powers of Attorney (POA) and Advanced Care Planning, were delivered as part of Dementia Australia's 'Living with Dementia' (LWD) program. After SRV received further funding from the Integrated Services Fund, we are planning a further 22 sessions.

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

Along with COTA Victoria, SRV made a submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. The submission drew on the experiences of clients who had experienced mental health problems or who provided care for a family member with mental health problems. The submission is at <http://bit.ly/vicrc>.

CASE STUDY: Richard and Judy

Background

Richard and Judy called Seniors Rights Victoria about their son Greg, who had moved back in two years ago when his marriage failed. Richard and Judy can no longer ask visitors over as Greg, at times, becomes aggressive.

Greg maxed out his parents' credit card after convincing them to assist him with his new business, which subsequently failed. Richard and Judy cannot service the debt as Richard recently retired due to ill health.

Greg regularly threatens to harm himself and rants constantly at his parents although he is not physically violent.

An SRV lawyer and advocate met Richard and Judy on several occasions. The couple was overwhelmed by Richard's illness, their debts and concern for Greg. The couple were reluctant to take our advice about seeking a family violence intervention order, seeing this as a last resort.



Action

We provided them with support including:

- a referral to Aged Care Assessment Services about their care needs
- a referral to a financial counsellor about the credit card debt
- a safety plan to follow if things with Greg became critical
- information about support organisations in relation to Greg's apparent mental illness.

Outcome

The financial counsellor negotiated with their bank to reduce the credit card debt, cease charging interest and develop a repayment plan.

Greg declined professional assistance about his mental health and refused to engage in any mediation with his parents. In the end, his parents' only choice was to apply for an intervention order so Greg would be forced to move out. An SRV lawyer and advocate attended court with them to make this application.

The couple now have a home care package (which they could not obtain until Greg left due to safety concerns for homecare staff). They are devastated that they no longer have contact with Greg but feel this was their only option. They hope that he will get the help he needs, and they will be able to re-establish contact.

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AWARENESS RAISING: Staff at Westfield Airport West Shopping Centre wear ribbons to raise awareness during World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019.

Resources booklet targets elder abuse

A booklet for people who are concerned that someone they know might be experiencing elder abuse was produced during 2018–19. *Concerned About an Older Person* will be formally launched in the 2019–20 year. The booklet, which is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, provides help and information for people who call the SRV helpline on behalf of someone they know.

Community education and training

Seniors Rights Victoria educates older Victorians on issues relating to elder abuse, including prevention, in order to give them more confidence and control over their own lives. Our experienced trainers also work with community groups and service providers to raise awareness of elder abuse.

In 2018–19, we delivered 110 community education sessions to 2955 participants. 10 presentations were to culturally and linguistically diverse groups and 30 sessions were in regional and rural Victoria.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Regional Victoria was the focus of our World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) forum for the first time this year. Professionals and staff who work directly with older people in the health, aged, legal government and community sectors attended the forum in Shepparton. In June 2019, 459 people attended 18 community education events throughout the state. SRV supported the events with speakers and 650 show bags.

Elder Abuse Prevention Networks action research

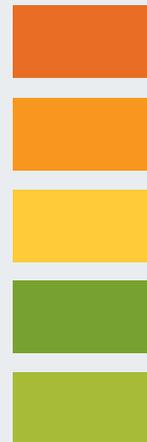
Ten Elder Abuse Prevention Networks were established as a result of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence. Traditionally, professionals and community members have been educated to look for signs of elder abuse after it happened. The EAPNs, a collection of organisations in a geographic area, are a primary prevention method.

During 2018–2019, with funding from the State Trustees Australia Foundation, SRV completed action research looking at best-practice models for EAPNs. This approach allowed network staff and members to actively participate in the research.

Thank you

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 that we received.

Some of the people who helped us during the year appear below.



From top left:

COTA Victoria Administration Assistant Olee Zhang, volunteer Kavya Wijedoru and Marketing and Communications Advisor Lizbeth Gonzalez

Volunteer Merle Mitchell speaking at the COTA Victoria 2018 annual general meeting. Merle also gave evidence at the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Volunteer and COTA Victoria research committee member Dianne Goeman and Senior Policy Officer Donna Swan

OM:NI members Tim and Ken celebrate with other volunteers at Bunjil Place in Narre Warren in June 2019



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