

Media release

For immediate release
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Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria responds to sharp rise in power bills

COTA Victoria is very concerned by a massive rise in the Victorian Default Offer (VDO) and its potential impact on older Victorians. While the VDO is not meant to be the best available price to consumers, more needs to be done to ensure older people can access and receive the support that they need to get a cheaper deal.

“Older Victorians, particularly pensioners or those who receive welfare payments, are most vulnerable to energy price rises as they often have fixed incomes,” said COTA Victoria CEO, Chris Potaris. “Their income and resources will not increase by the amount proposed in the draft decision. The proposed increased costs of over 30 per cent for electricity, coupled with broader inflation and interest rises, could leave some older Victorians having to make difficult decisions if this offer comes into effect.”

The impact of such a price increase is compounded by the associated rise in gas costs, which have also increased by over 20 per cent in 2023. Victoria is the state most reliant on gas for household use, making this a potent mix. These combined rises may mean some older Victorians see their energy costs increase by over \$800 this year.

We are particularly concerned as the number of households on the VDO has more than doubled to 400,000 in less than 18 months. The VDO also applies to the estimated 150,000 customers in embedded networks, including retirement villages, where it is the maximum that can be charged. With an increasing reliance on digital technology to shop around for the best energy price, we are worried older Victorians will miss out and pay increased costs.

“If the VDO is truly a safeguard, then vulnerable Victorians — especially certain segments of the older population — need to be protected from this proposed price rise,” Mr Potaris said. “It is vital that we make sure that older Victorians get the best energy price, before the hike kicks in.”

“While we welcome initiatives for Victorians to reduce their energy costs, we are hearing that they are often struggling to reach older Victorians,” Mr Potaris continued. “For instance, while the soon-to-restart \$250 Power Saving Bonus has a community outreach component for those not online, there’s a rise in older people that are not aware of the Bonus or how to access it.”

Greater investment, effort and outreach is needed to make sure that all possible energy supports reach those most at risk. There are too many vulnerable older people slipping through the gaps, while energy use is a key contributor to the health and wellbeing of older Victorians.

COTA Victoria will continue to monitor the situation and work to protect the interests of older Victorians facing greatly increased power bills.

About Chris Potaris

With over 25+ years of CEO-level experience in over eight industry sectors, Chris has chaired and sat on numerous boards, regional and community-based entities that included small, medium, and larger not-for-profits. Chris has been founder and Chair of a Social Justice Coalition in Melbourne's west, an Integrated Justice Precinct Advisory Group informing the State Government on the urgent need for integrated justice services, and a criminal prosecutor for over 13 years.

- [Read full bio](#)
- Headshots: [Landscape](#) | [Portrait](#)

About us

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

Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for and protecting the legal rights of people 50+. We value ageing and embrace its opportunities for personal growth, contribution, and self-expression. This belief drives benefits to the nation and its states alongside communities, families, and individuals.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is a program of COTA Victoria and the key state-wide service dedicated to advancing the rights of older people and the early intervention into, or prevention of, elder abuse in our community.

SRV has a team of experienced advocates, lawyers, and social workers who provide free information, advice, referral, legal advice, legal casework, and support to older people who are either at risk of or are experiencing elder abuse. SRV supports and empowers older people through the provision of legal advice directly to the older person.

Further information

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