

COTA (ACT)

Connecting Over 50s Throughout Australia

Third
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NEWSLETTER

President's Welcome

At first sight it appears anomalous that COTA is a non-political organisation but conducts an 'Election Forum' prior to each ACT and Federal election.

From our perspective, the election forum is a logical and worthwhile activity for both COTA members and the broader community. The perspective on this issue depends very much on what we are trying to achieve. We want both older Canberrans and our politicians to be better informed as a result of the Election Forum. Firstly, the Liberal, Labor and Greens are given the opportunity to outline what they intend to achieve for older people. Secondly, you have the opportunity to ask about local issues which affect you.



'COTA (ACT) Election Issues 2008' is a paper produced and sent to all candidates to facilitate information flows in this process (see summary on page 3). In particular, we want to know what initiatives are planned in the areas of (a) Housing and Accommodation and (b) Health Care and Support Services.

Our General Meeting on 11 September will be interesting as initiatives will be outlined by the Deputy Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, the Leader of the Opposition, Zed Seselja, and the Green's spokesperson on ageing issues, Meredith Hunter. In addition, we can expect authoritative responses to your concerns.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of Catherine Versegi at COTA. Organising the National Congress was Catherine's first position with COTA. Subsequently, Catherine developed Seniors Card and then the Peer Education programs. We value both the effectiveness and professional contribution of Catherine. Thanks from COTA - we admire your efforts to broaden your horizons.

Elizabeth Grant AM

COTA GENERAL MEETING

Election Forum

11 September at 2.00pm

COTA (ACT) is holding a forum at the Hughes Community Centre.

This will provide an opportunity for the major political parties to present their views on subjects identified by COTA as having special relevance going into the ACT election.

Finance and Lifestyle Survey

COTA (ACT), with major contributions from volunteers, has produced a survey to solicit information for presentation to Government in the "fair go for seniors" campaign. The questions centre on spending and economising in the current economic climate.

The survey focuses on health and housing with lifestyle matters such as volunteering, eating out and travel being highlighted as further important indicators. The survey also gives the opportunity for Seniors to have their say on what should be done to improve their situation. The data collected will be submitted to both Territory and Federal Governments, and in particular, the forthcoming Federal enquiry into welfare and taxation which will report in February 2009.

Please assist by completing and returning the attached survey in the postage paid envelope.



ActewAGL

COTA (ACT) is proudly supported by

Did you know?

The COTA (ACT) office is a great resource for practical information relating to older people. Below is an outline of who does what in the office:

Vehicle Immobiliser Scheme

The scheme started on 19 February this year and has provided great benefits in the fight against car theft with full payment for those on a Centrelink benefit. 583 vouchers issued up to 30 June with 47 per cent of these immobilisers having been already fitted to cars. The scheme has now been widened to supply part payment for anyone in the community who has a car without an immobiliser fitted. For information about the scheme please contact **Cliff Carey** in the COTA office or direct to Canberra Connect on 132281.



Mr Thompson with new immobiliser. Launch

Housing Options

If you need help or information about housing issues, **Gwen Davies** is the Housing Options Advisor. In the last financial year Gwen attended 55 visits, 50 interviews and 287 telephone queries related to advice or advocacy on various housing issues. Enquiries include support for staying in your own home, rental options and advice on retirement or residential homes.

Peer Education

Community groups are encouraged to contact **Christine Spicer** as the new Peer Education Manager to arrange a Peer Education session. 121 sessions were coordinated to 30 June on falls prevention, quality use of medicines, choosing brand name or generic medicines and depression in older people.

COTA Membership

Membership of COTA provides many benefits as well as promoting the interests and rights of older people. Insurance specifically aimed at older people, Ambassador Cards and Wish cards are just some of these. If you have a query relating to membership, please contact **Raina Johnston** in the COTA (ACT) office or COTA Insurance on 1300 1300 50.

Hughes Community Centre

Katy Gallagher MLA has written to COTA (ACT) thanking us for providing the Hughes Community Centre as an evacuation centre on 27 June. The immediate availability of the facility was greatly appreciated by the Community Recovery Team when an emergency arose in the area.

Executive Notes



The impression gained in the COTA Office, is that more people seem to be 'doing it tuff' than at the same time last year and that the issues are often more complex. This impression has been reinforced by feedback from a number of COTA Peer Educators and other volunteers.

The recent Federal Budget lacked focus on older people's issues, including income aspects. However, after the subsequent outcry, a Pension review is to be part of the broad taxation review to be undertaken by Dr Jeff Harmer.

COTA wants to demonstrate that inflation, including food and housing aspects, is having deleterious and undesirable impacts in Canberra. Two COTA volunteers, Rusty Woodward and Jan Petrie have led this work. We would very much appreciate you taking the time and effort to give us feedback on your circumstances by completing and mailing the questionnaire. In addition, if you are part of a group, could you encourage these friends to also complete a questionnaire? We can provide additional copies.

Looking further ahead, the next General Meeting will be our 'election issues' meeting for the ACT Election. The following meeting will be the AGM. The AGM will provide the opportunity for the election of new members to the Board. If you are interested in participating in the strategic management of COTA, or you know someone with particular skill, please see me for a nomination form. Alternatively, the current Board members are willing to discuss the nature of the role.

Paul Flint
Executive Director

Retirement Village Progress



High service
Hughes



New village
Belconnen

Ambulance Cover

Pensioners receive free ACT ambulance service. This service is also recognised when you travel to NSW, Tasmania, Victoria and the Northern Territory. However, if ambulance services are required, then charges apply in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. For information phone ACT ambulance on 6207 9980.

Hot Water Bottles

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission issued a safety awareness brochure on the safe use of hot water bottles. Dangers include overfilling and lying on them which can cause the bottles to burst and lead to severe burns. The brochure is available from www.accc.gov.au or by phoning 1300 302 502.

In the Frame

Rusty Woodward



Volunteer Peer Educator

Rusty Woodward was born in Hertfordshire, England at the beginning of World War Two. Her home was bombed so the family went to live with her grandparents. Her father was away for the whole of the war, thus she didn't get to know him until she was about six years old. Her mother was a pharmacist and her father worked in a factory after the war.

Rusty married and had two children before migrating in 1964. They moved "to escape the cold" and to seek greater opportunities in Australia.

Rusty and her husband, an engineer, lived and worked in Melbourne, Cobarr, Nowra and Sydney. She worked in various pulp mill and papermaking industries as well as direct marketing businesses.

Rusty retired in 2002 and moved back to Nowra. She began her volunteering career as she felt that reading books and catching up with friends was not enough to fill the void that work had left. This began with providing the community radio with technical expertise. She also assisted the Rural Fire Service and became a community visitor with the Red Cross.

After developing health problems Rusty moved about 18 months ago to be with her daughter in Canberra. She only knew one couple so decided she "had to do something". She met Jan Petrie (volunteer Peer Educator) who introduced her to COTA.

Rusty is working as a Peer Educator presenting Quality Use of Medicines and Moving Right Along – Falls Prevention sessions. She is also working on the Fair Go for Seniors lifestyle survey with Jan. Her interest in this was prompted by the seniors rally at Flinders Street Station in Melbourne. The survey is included with this newsletter.

Election Issues

The major subject areas for Seniors are **Housing & Accommodation** and **Healthcare & Support Services** but each of these is subdivided into additional categories.

Housing & Accommodation issues include long term planning for **Retirement Villages and aged care facilities** so residents can retire in their local community rather than face the destabilising and de-socialising effects of relocating in retirement or when needing support.

Other priorities include provision of more affordable housing for seniors, assistance for low income households not in public housing and measures to address homelessness.

Health Care & Support Services incorporates the adequacy of health care funding and the appropriate allocation and disbursement of HACC funding to meet the needs of an increasing aged population with a longer life expectancy.

COTA also believes that increased workforce and mandatory minimum qualifications for aged care workers and support staff would enhance the level of care available to the ageing. As well as adding to the image and perception of the industry.

At a specific level, COTA has identified improved public dental health care as a priority, particularly the establishment of a Mobile Dental Clinic to service our frail and immobile aged population.

If you want to hear what the candidates have to say on these vital election issues, please come to the COTA (ACT) **General meeting at 2.00pm on 11 September.**

U3A/COTA ACT Workshop

"Should I move - sorting through the options" workshop run by Pam Bongers, M Soc Wk.

Tuesday 2 September from 10.00-12.00 at Hughes .

If you are interested in this session, please contact COTA (ACT). Handouts provided; cost - \$2 for photocopying.

Lunchtime Forums 2008 Hughes Community Centre

Tuesdays 12:15-1:45pm. Cost \$1. Free tea and coffee provided. Bring your own cup.

26 August "Organ Donation" Speaker: Holly Northam (ACT Organ & Tissue Donation coordinator)

2 September "Did I trip, or did I fall?" Speakers: Kyleen Slatyer and Diana Shogren

9 September "US Presidential Elections – What is really going on?"

16 September "Renewed hope for renewable energy" Producer: Bryan Furnass

23 September "The Country City Divide" Speakers: Carolyn Ewart, (Grazier), Maureen Campbell

30 September "Is 'New Federalism' 'old centralism' in small print?"

7 October "Retirement Villages - Questions you should ask" Speakers: Brett Phillips, Malcolm Whyte

14 October "I wish to stay at home. Who will help me?" Speaker: Athlene Rosvorough

21 October "Vietnam Revisited" Speakers: Elizabeth "Biff" Ward and Graham Walker

28 October "Olives, the Stuff of Life" Speakers: local olive producers **\$1 extra, to cover tastings & samples**

Adult Learners Week: 1-8 September

COTA will be presenting two peer education sessions. One on 'beyondmaturityblues' and another on 'Quality Use of Medicines' including 'Brand Name or Generic; Choosing Wisely'. This is a great opportunity for members of the public to come along and take part in our interactive and informative sessions that are presented by our volunteer peer educators. The sessions will be run on Monday 1 September in the Hughes Community Centre hall, Wisdom Street, Hughes. The first session, 'beyondmaturityblues' will be held at 10.30am. We expect the sessions to run for one hour. This will be followed by a short break where refreshments will be offered before the next session, 'Quality Use of Medicines' which will begin at 12 noon. Please RSVP by Thursday 28 August by calling the COTA office on 6282 3777 or e-mail cs Spicer@cota-act.org.au.

Living with Neighbours

Living in a hostel, unit or aged care community is very different from living in a house and entails different considerations. Walls, parking areas, laundry facilities and more may be shared. Many have rules relating to noise levels, visitors, when certain facilities are open and pets.

Understand and follow the community rules. Get to know your neighbours and discuss issues if in doubt. If there is a medical emergency or leaking plumbing, a fire, or even a need to borrow sugar, your neighbour can be your first port of call.

Keep the lines of communication open. If any disagreement arises you can discuss the situation in confidence with the Conflict Resolution Service on 6162 4050. This mediation service is prompt and free.

National Santa Shortage

Is the shortage of Santas a result of global warming? Weststaff have been placing Santas to retailers, such as Myer, David Jones and shopping centres, since 1964 and want to ensure there are enough jolly ol' fellows in time for this Christmas.

Being a Santa involves making children happy; playing the role at shopping centres; full training is provided in October. All applicants must undergo Police and Working with Children checks.

If you are interested in helping with the Santa shortage please call Weststaff on 1800 753 390.

2ND ANNUAL ACT INTERGENERATIONAL FORUM

10 am to 2 pm, 30 October, Old Canberra House, ANU

The students of the Australian Association of Gerontology present their research on topics such as retirement and mental health; health and physical activity in later life; use of brain imaging technologies; memory and dementia; lifestyle choices and successful ageing.

Keynote speaker: Emeritus Professor Sol Encel from the University of NSW.

Lunch provided. Free parking or take ACTION Bus 3. REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL. RSVP to Natalie Chan at natalie.chan@anu.edu.au or 6125-1448.

Further information can be found online at <http://aagstudents.anu.edu.au/>

Things to do.

1. Complete survey and return to COTA.
2. Prepare question for Election Forum.
3. Look at www.cota-act.org.au to see changes.

Peer Education



Christine



The handover

Hello everyone! My name is Christine and I've taken over Catherine's role in Canberra. I was previously doing general administration at COTA which has provided me with a solid background in the role of COTA in the community.

We have applied for more funding from the ACT Department of Health to continue our Moving Right Along: Falls Prevention program which we'll hear about in October. Last financial year we had 481 people attend our sessions with extremely positive feedback.

We have started a new partnership with the ACT Library Service to offer our Peer Education sessions to the public.

We have also been in contact with some of the more regional areas around Canberra to offer Peer Education sessions and we have had a very positive response. We have been looking into areas that are within a day trip of Canberra.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Peer Educator Volunteers for their hard work, commitment and assistance offered to me in this new role. I'm really looking forward to working together in the future.

Our new web site is up (www.cota-act.org.au) with an easy access link to our Peer Education section. Make sure you have a look!

Free Seniors Rotary Concert

Dreams – Songs of Hope and Love

Featuring **COLIN SLATER AND FRIENDS** and **THE SING AUSTRALIA CHOIRS**

Sunday, 26 October 2008, 2pm to 4pm
(Seating by 1.45pm) Albert Hall, Commonwealth Avenue.

Afternoon tea is provided.
Free transport can be arranged if required.

Book at COTA on 6282 3777 no later than 20 October.