



COTA AUSTRALIA POLICY NEWSLETTER

No. 8 JANUARY 2013

NATIONAL POLICY COUNCIL MEETING 13-14 NOVEMBER 2012

The National Policy Council (NPC) met on 13 and 14 November in Canberra. The reports and debate covered a wide range of policy issues addressing all aspects of older people lives including aged care, employment, superannuation, health, housing and human rights.

The meeting had detailed discussions on three key areas of our work: aged care reform, ageing in culturally and linguistically diverse background and barriers to mature age workforce.

Pat Sparrow and Ian Yates updated the NPC on the Living longer Living Better package of aged care reforms, outlining the key role of the National Aged Care Alliance (NACA) in the development process and how the COTAs can be involved in this work. The NPC acknowledged the work done by Ian Yates and Pat Sparrow with NACA to advance the reform agenda. The NPC set up a working group to provide input to the NACA process.

Senator Fierravanti Wells, the Opposition spokesperson on Aged Care attended on the second day of the meeting. The Senator outlined some of the issues the Coalition is looking at in relation to further aged care reform and took questions from the NPC.

The NPC had a presentation from Dr Loucas Nicolaou, the CEO of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), which outlined the work FECCA is doing around ageing in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. FECCA has established a Healthy Ageing Reference group to assist with its work on ageing and this group will be looking at ways to improve these communities' access to services and to ensure a range of services are culturally sensitive. COTA is on that group and will be looking for ways to work collaboratively with FECCA in the future.

The NPC was fortunate to be able to have a further discussion with Professor Rosalind Croucher, the President of the Australian Law Reform Commission about the Commission's Inquiry into Age Barriers to Workers. The Inquiry issued its discussion paper in October and so the NPC was able to discuss some of its proposals with Prof Croucher prior to the COTA Submission being finalised.

The NPC also endorsed the revised National Policy Compendium which has now been published on the COTA Australia website.

The NPC agreed that priority areas for action in 2013 will include aged care, human rights and retirement incomes. The next meeting of the NPC is 19-20 June 2013.

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AGE FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The WHO initiative around age friendly cities and communities is getting increased attention internationally but the take up in Australia has been slow and very patchy. There are only a very few cities that have joined the WHO network although a number of local government areas have positive ageing strategies and have implemented a range of initiatives to promote healthy ageing.

The State and Territory COTAs held a workshop in November to look at what role COTA could usefully play in promoting the WHO approach and assist local government to implement it.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BILL 2012

The Commonwealth Government has released the draft of the Consolidated Discrimination Legislation for comment. This has been referred to a Senate committee and COTA has put in a submission.

COTA welcomes the consolidated legislation as it strengthens the provisions against age discrimination to bring them into line with other anti-discrimination provisions. This is important as ageism and age discrimination are widespread in Australian society and the current legislation has done little to address this.

AGE POSITIVE: PROMOTING POSITIVE & DIVERSE PORTRAYALS OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS

COTA and others have long advocated for the need for an education campaign to help combat ageism and was pleased when the Federal Government provided some funding in the 2012 Budget for work in this area.

The Age Discrimination Commissioner has commenced a project to look at the prevailing stereotypes, and invisibility, of older Australians in the media as well as understanding the scope and depth of age stereotyping and age discrimination in the Australian community. The project will also help shed light on the impact of stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes in both the media and community on older Australians themselves and help develop strategies to address age stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in both the media and community.

The research will be key input to the media roundtable discussions the Commission will hold in June 2013 and the communication strategy and an awareness campaign planned for 2013-2015.

AGE CARE

Implementation of the Living Longer. Living Better aged care reform package is underway with action across many of the key policy and financial areas.

Consumer Directed Care (CDC) Packages

All new home care packages have to be consumer directed from 1 July 2013 and from 1 July 2015 all existing packages will have to be converted to CDC. COTA is a member of the NACA Advisory Group providing advice to Government on how these packages should work.

Key design elements include consumers having an individualised budget and receiving monthly reports on expenditure. Service providers will be required to work with the consumer to identify their goals, needs and preferences and build the care and support plan around that. This will include services being provided by other organisations than the one managing the package, if that is what the consumer chooses.

NACA has also recommended that the packages should be defined on an exclusion, rather than an inclusion, basis. That is telling people what they can't have as part of the package but leaving everything else as a possibility. At this stage Government has not accepted that recommendation but COTA will continue to advocate for it as it will provide the consumer with the most flexibility.

Further work is now underway to develop guidelines for the packages.

Specified Care & Services Review

This review is determining what services and supports should be provided as standard to all residents in aged care facilities. This is necessary because the reform removes the existing distinction between low and high care residents and the differentiation of services as a result. Once the standard package is defined there will be flexibility for providers to offer optional services to meet consumer demand and charge an additional fee for those.

COTA is working to ensure that the standard package is comprehensive to meet residents needs while providing flexibility for individuals to tailor the services they receive based on their own needs and preferences.

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Aged Care Gateway

COTA was the architect and primary advocate for the Aged Care Gateway based on years of feedback from older people that they wanted one place to go for information and support to find the services they need. The reform package has not gone as far as that but is developing a national contact centre and the My Aged Care website to help people navigate the system.

The functionality of the Gateway is currently being determined and Government will shortly let a tender for a contact centre provider. Research with users is also underway to inform the content and design of the website. Both are due to be operational from 1 July 2013. COTA is concerned that this is too tight to develop a quality Gateway service and that compromise will occur in order to meet the timeline.

COTA CE Ian Yates chairs the NACA Advisory Group on this key initiative.

Other Groups

NACA has just established two additional groups to advise on the:

- establishment of the Home Support Advisory Program which will bring together a number of existing programs including HACC, respite and others. This work will include reviews of meals services, respite care, community transport and home maintenance and modifications; and
- development of quality indicators for residential aged care that will be available on the My Aged Care website to help people compare services and make informed decisions.

Financial Matters

The Aged Care Financing Authority (ACFA), of which COTA CE Ian Yates is a member, provided advice to Government on the requirements for accommodation payments for residential aged care. Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler considered this advice in setting the new accommodation payment arrangements:

<http://goo.gl/VSE8o>

COTA welcomed the greater transparency and protection these arrangements afford consumers

<http://goo.gl/500ri>

Aged Care Strategies for All

On 20 December 2012 the Government launched its ageing and aged care strategies for:

- older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (found at <http://goo.gl/VXZJo>); and
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex elders (found at <http://goo.gl/RbqBF>)

COTA welcomed the two strategies stating that aged care must cater for all older Australians <http://goo.gl/6ACxu>

AGEING AND DISABILITY

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme has highlighted the interface issues between the ageing and disability sector. There are a range of issue confronting people who have a disability as they age as well as people who acquire a disability in later life. The Productivity Commission's inquiries into the two sectors recommended that there be an upper age limit for entering the disability sector but that people who already have a disability should be given the choice, to stay with the disability service system or move into aged care.

The Government accepted this recommendation and so the NDIS will have an upper age limit of 65 for people to enter the scheme and people with a disability who are ageing will need to choose between the two sectors.

COTA's position is that people with a disability who are ageing should be able to continue to get disability support but should also be able to access aged care services for supports that are related to the ageing process, in the same way as people who do not have a disability.

The legislation to establish the NDIS is the subject of a Senate Committee Inquiry and COTA will be putting in a submission which focuses on the upper eligibility age of 65 for NDIS and the need for people to be able to access both disability and ageing supports.

Downsizing

AHURI is undertaking a project "Downsizing amongst older Australians". Downsizing is an important issue for COTA as it is often promoted as a desirable outcome for older people and yet we have not had good evidence on why people decide to downsize, how they do it and the barriers they face. This work from AHURU sets out to

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answer those questions.

In November AHURI held three research and policy forums in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to outline the preliminary findings of the survey and to get stakeholder input on the policy questions which have arisen from the work to date. COTA had representatives at the Sydney and Adelaide forums. The input from the Forums will inform the direction of the final paper which should be released mid 2013.

HUMAN RIGHTS-UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

COTA continues to work towards a United Nations convention on the Rights of Older Persons. Our focus at the moment is on getting the Australian government to support the proposal and to agree to be an active participant in its development.

COTA WA hosted a one day symposium on human rights for older people in October. Jane Barratt, the Secretary-General of the International Federation on Ageing presented a strong case for why we need a convention and the other presenters outlined why it is important that we use a human rights framework when looking at ageing issues and how we can protect the human rights of older people.

We met with the Parliamentary Friends of Seniors and Ageing in October to brief them on the need for such a convention and to look at ways we can work with them on this issue. The Age Discrimination Commissioner also attended that meeting and has indicated her support for the convention and COTA is exploring how we can work cooperatively with the Commissioner on this issue.

INCOME SUPPORT

COTA has joined the campaign led by ACOSS for an increase in the Newstart Allowance. We put a submission into the Senate Inquiry looking at the adequacy of the allowance system in which we argued for a \$50 per week increase in the single rate of Newstart, increases in the income free threshold and a major independent review of the current employment participation policies to identify ways this could be improved. COTA Australia appeared before the Senate Committee at the Sydney public hearings.

The Senate Committee released its report at the end of

November and whilst it acknowledged the inadequacy of the allowance did not recommend an increase in the single rate. COTA will continue to work towards getting that increase.

SUBMISSIONS

September	Submission to Senate Select Committee into Electricity Prices
October	Appearance at Public Hearing of Senate Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System
December	ALRC Inquiry: Grey Areas-Age Barriers to work in Commonwealth Laws
December	Senate Inquiry into Human Rights and anti Discrimination Bill 2012

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference The Power of Me, You and Us Jo Root

ARATA 2012 Conference NDIS/Aged Care reform: implications for AT panel Jo Root

2013 - WHAT'S COMING UP

11 February	COTA WA Ageing in the 'Right' Place Policy Forum, Perth
11-12 February	National Aged Care Alliance Meeting, Canberra
24-26 February	LASA Victoria Tri-State Conference, Albury
15 March	Consumer Congress, Sydney
21-22 March	2013 AAG & ACS Rural Conference, Orange
25-26 March	ACOSS National Conference, Adelaide
7-10 April	National Rural Health Conference, Adelaide

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