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## The need for a structured, evidenced based conversation about an ageing Australia

**‘Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*’**  
COTA Australia's National Policy Forum – July 2014



# Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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## COTA Australia

Peak older persons organisation in Australia -started as Council on the Ageing over 60 years ago.

COTAs in each State/Territory collectively have over 1,000 member organisations of seniors, reaching over 500,000 people, plus 40,000 direct members.



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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COTA covers a broad range of public policy – pensions, superannuation, taxation, health care, aged care, housing, consumer rights, discrimination, transport, financial services, energy, urban design, and many more.



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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COTA speaks for the consumer – the pensioner, the superannuant, the aged care resident or home care client, the tenant, the retirement village resident, the bank customer, the driver, the public transport user, the pedestrian, the patient, and more – and their nominated representative(s).



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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This has been a major shift in the last decade, as consumer advocates speak for consumer rights and interests in the ageing sector.

Many providers in various sectors have found this challenging.



# Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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## A brief reflection ...

In **aged care reform** over a decade's efforts to radically reform aged care were going nowhere.

A cacophony of voices, and different positions argued from different interests in the sector, had torpedoed previous efforts at a comprehensive plan for reform.

## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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In the **National Aged Care Alliance (NACA)** - which brings together all the major peak consumer, provider, union and professional groups in aged care to inform, debate and seek common positions - COTA argued for a new shared vision for aged care, embracing all those interests.



The NACA document  
“Leading the Way:  
Our Vision for  
Support and Care of  
Older Australians”  
was released in  
September 2009.

National Aged Care Alliance

Leading the Way

Our Vision for Support and Care of Older Australians

September 2009



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Used the Vision to press the case for reform, and convinced the then government to hold a Productivity Commission inquiry into reform of aged care

Vision contains a comprehensive and integrated set of proposals, many of which found their way into the PC report and later into the government response.

## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Did not get full NACA Vision out of government but did get major reform in an inhospitable political and financial environment.

We would not have got it without consumer leadership and a sector- endorsed blueprint.

The “Living Longer Living Better” package was announced in April 2012 and is being implemented with bi-partisan support.

## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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I reflect on our aged care reform experience because we face a similar situation now of:

- dissonance,
- competitive positioning
- partial answers to not well articulated questions in regard to a comprehensive approach to an ageing population..



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Issue is we have a range of solutions being offered to a an undefined, not consensually agreed problem.

All the focus is on the “problem”, little on the opportunities

Too many suggestions that have the flavour of one big solution that will be “the fix” to one big problem - fiscal challenge

## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Usually this is in the income security space :

- raise the pension age!
- **change the pension eligibility criteria!**
- raise the superannuation preservation age!
- **change the tax arrangements for super ....!**



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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When we decided on this forum we did not know that ageing would become such a central plank of the Commission of Audit and the Federal Budget - and so narrowly focused on the pension.

Indeed we had been led to believe that these matters would NOT be addressed in the 2014 Federal Budget .

Decisions were made outside normal policy processes and based on predetermined positions

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## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Federal Budget measures and responses have the danger of highjacking this discussion.

Were not introduced within an overall policy framework

Principal rationale is of fiscal constraint for lower Budget growth

However inconsistencies in this approach across Budget

## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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Again, proportionally too great a focus on income payments in isolation from other matters

Even the retirement incomes space alone needs to have interconnected consideration of :

- age pensions
- superannuation
- taxation policies

not isolated initiatives



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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COTA has argued to the Treasurer and Finance Minister for a process in regard to retirement incomes that covers all aspects and involves all key stakeholders; with links to the Treasury IGR process

The Treasurer agreed in principle to this, but in the meantime has acted unilaterally



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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A comprehensive policy framework for population ageing must involve :

- employment policy
  - incomes
  - health
  - support and care
  - housing
  - transport
  - urban planning
  - energy and utilities
- etc ....



# Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

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## Without a comprehensive framework:

- don't see the gaps
- unintended consequences
- unconsidered consequences
- policy inconsistency
- don't seek and develop opportunity
- focus on symptoms, not policy levers



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

Most of today's speakers represent organisations that have put themselves into this policy space over last 9 months

I have referred to some of the areas in which proposals have been put into the public space



## Making an Australia for all ages - *what's the plan?*

What we hope is that we can work together to be part of developing a comprehensive framework that involves all stakeholders

and

That we all put pressure on the federal government to take more leadership in what is usually cited as one of three major public policy challenges, but for which there is no framework and no responsible Minister.





# QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

