

COTA (NSW)

Council on the Ageing (NSW) Inc
Estab. 1956



2007/2008 Annual Report

About Council on the Ageing (NSW)

Mission

Established in 1956, COTA NSW is a peak body providing leadership in social policy and community information and education for all older persons in New South Wales and Australia - COTA NSW is the voice of seniors over 50.

COTA NSW aim's to foster a society where seniors are respected, consulted, included, represented and heard. We work with government, business, the media and the wider community to represent the issues and concerns of consumers.

The Council's Vision embraces the shaping of a more just, equitable and humane community in which older people are enabled to contribute and grow to their full capacity, and have access, with dignity, to appropriate care and support.

Strategic Aims

COTA NSW desires to be widely recognised and accepted by members and other stakeholders as:

- a significant advocate for older people on all issues which concern them
- a prime source of credible information and expertise for all older people and on older people
- a significant influence on development of policies and activities which involve older people

Working Principles

COTA NSW Board, Staff and Volunteers will espouse the working principles of: honesty; objectivity; reliability; confidentiality; pragmatism; persistence; empathy; humanity; responsiveness; cooperation; respect; tolerance.

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Reports Purpose

This Annual Report was produced to give members and other interested readers an overview of the Council on the Ageing (NSW) and its performance for the year ending 30 June 2008.

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2007/2008 – A Year in Review

President's Review

Kath Brewster, President

On behalf of the Board, I present this account of the activities of COTA NSW for the year 2008.

State Matters

As reported to you at the end of last year, we were then in a round of interviews to make an appointment to the vacant position of Executive Director: always a difficult one to fill, given the broad base of skills required to accomplish the job. Jon Bisset was appointed from a short list of well-credentialed applicants, and entered on duty on 7 January this year.



Although coming to us without experience in the ageing sector, Jon was appointed primarily on perceived compensating qualities and experience acquired during his record in growth and development of Not-for-Profit organisations.

In the interim before Jon's entry on duty, at the request of the Board, the day to day management duties of the organisation were carried out by myself with the Treasurer, Don Woodburn. I sincerely thank Don for his commitment to the task he undertook during this period.

Our policy development and advocacy, and our membership benefits continued undiminished and unabated throughout this period. As you are aware, development and advocacy of policy on ageing issues is at the heart of our organisation. This work is entrusted not only to the elected and employed officers of the organisation, but to our many well credentialed volunteers, all of whom make a very valuable and much valued contribution to its work.

The volunteers who comprise our issue based policy working groups reach out into their community networks, drawing upon their experience and expertise. This allows for a finely focused and detailed examination of a set of issues, contributing to a carefully considered and researched policy position, based upon wide consultation with the people whom it directly affects. We are then in a position to draw together the different policy strands into a holistic pattern addressing the needs of the Over 50s community of NSW.

Our participation and advocacy in Taskforce and Committee work is documented elsewhere in this Annual Report. This representation forms an essential part of our

policy development and advocacy, enabling us to be informed by, and to influence, the processes of governments and other decision making bodies.

You will find in this document a report on the work of the policy unit. However, I should note the unique and timely Grandparenting Forum held over two days in April. Over many years COTA NSW has been at the leading edge of identifying and addressing the many facets and issues of Grandparenting in the 21st Century. The huge success of this Forum owes much to the experience and expertise of our staff and their commitment to addressing the issues.

Another Forum is planned for April next year, which will provide information, education and direction on the decisions which need to be taken and acted upon to ensure that our wishes regarding our health and care as we age will be recognized and respected.

Our project work also is reported on fully elsewhere in the Report; the most difficult, and to me personally distressing decision that had to be made during the year was that to discontinue the COTA On-Line Learning Centre and the Computer Club. The decision to do this and also relinquish the lease of Level 5 was not taken lightly by the Board. The plain fact of the matter is that we just could no longer afford the rental to keep it going.

For several years, we had been assisted in this project by the sponsorship of the Commonwealth Bank to the extent of \$25,000 per annum. The balance of the cost of the lease, plus the salary of the Coordinator was subsidised by COTA; a small percentage was contributed from the fees paid by members of the Club.

The discontinuation of the CBA sponsorship from June 2007 was a considerable setback; COTA runs on only a shoestring budget, and even with the Coordinator electing to work on an unpaid volunteer basis, it just was not possible to continue.

Sourcing of sponsorship is a very competitive business, and while we made every effort to find another sponsor of at least part of what was needed, this was not successful. These are the circumstances which dictated the decision, and it was not made suddenly, nor lightly; we kept the Online Learning Centre going as long as we possibly could in the hope that 'something would turn up'. Unfortunately, it didn't.

Government and Corporate Relations

During the year we have met with many of our NSW State politicians and their staffs, both of the Government and the Opposition, and have developed an on-going relationship with each of them. We enjoyed a good relationship with our corporate and private sponsors: and again a list is included elsewhere.

National Matters

Following the invitation to the four COTAs i.e. South Australia, Queensland, ACT and Northern Territory who have been embroiled in a de-merging exercise from another association to become full members of the COTA Over 50s Ltd (the Company) we have been engaged in joint activities.

By agreement, efforts during this past year have concentrated solely on the policy and advocacy functions; however, the way is open to further cooperation and collaboration in joint ventures in the future, and indeed, discussions currently are reviewing structures and processes to achieve this.

In this renewal of old partnerships there remain some on-going matters of clarification and resolution, but we are confident that any issues of contention can be overcome.

What is important is that all the state COTA's are once more in a working relationship. In this journey, we can revisit old acquaintances, explore new friendships.

The National Policy Council has functioned throughout the year in meeting its obligations under the Community Services Sector Scheme grant, and this grant has been renewed.

The National Policy Council has functioned throughout the year in meeting its obligations under the Community Services Sector Scheme grant, and this grant has been renewed. Additionally, each of the Member organisations has a levy imposed of 1.5% of its previous year's income to facilitate the work of the NPC and the Board.

The National Policy Council meets bi-annually in Canberra; the Company Board meets in conjunction; thus meeting on 13 November 2007, and 27 May 2008. The major thrust Board deliberations at these meetings has related to the re-structuring required to accommodate its new membership and the re-processing required to move forward.

I note here with regret that the Company received recently the resignation of ARPA Over 50s, having decided that their members' benefits were more compatible with those of another organisation. This withdrawal from the Company became effective immediately following a Special Meeting of the membership of ARPA Over 50s on 7 October 2008, at which was adopted a Special Resolution to this end. During the period over which the COTAs worked with ARPA Over 50s we have appreciated the degree of collegial relationship developed; the contribution of the President and Staff has been invaluable, unselfish and unbiased.

The NSW Board

The Board Members continue to be associated with committees and projects of both the Board, and the many external committees on which we are represented essentially to ensure that the voice of the Over 50s in our society is heard to advantage. A listing of such committees is to be found elsewhere in the Annual Report.

There are some new faces on the Board this year, as some retirements or resignations have occurred for various reasons. You will find a full list of Board Members who have served through the year elsewhere in the Report.

During the year, Stephen Lowndes, CEO of Aged Care Services Australia, was co-opted to the Board to the end of 2008. While not 'representing' Service Providers on the board, it is useful to have that perspective brought into our deliberations. Similarly, it is important for the consumer perspective to be brought to the attention of providers of services. However, Stephen left this position, resulting in his being unable to attend meetings, and he resigned in March.

Professor Colleen Cartwright, Foundation Professor of Aged Services, and Director of the Aged Services Learning & Research Collaboration, Southern Cross University, was co-opted in June this year; she brings to the Board a wealth of experience and expertise in matters of ageing.

Following Paul Gregory's departure on his leaving his law firm to commence his own practice, we have been seeking to co-opt to the Board a member who can bring a legal perspective; although there have been some expressions of interest and some interviews, this has not been successful to date.

At the last AGM I flagged the need for change in our Constitution, which had been altered during the period when the COTAs and the National Seniors' Association were under Agreement to work together towards a merger, to conform to the requirement under the Agreement to terminate the State and Territory Boards. As part of this process, the term of office of Members was altered so as to terminate all memberships concurrently at the end of a two-year period in preparation.

The present Board was re-elected under that Constitution, and its term flows through until the end of 2008. Elections have been held over the past weeks, and the results will be announced by the Returning Officer later in this meeting.

As your elected Board, we have been conscious of our responsibilities, and our accountability to you, our members, and to our sources of funding and sponsorship. We have endeavoured always to act upon this sense of responsibility and accountability when making our decisions as to the objectives of our organisation, and the means by which they will be affected.

The Executive Director will be seeking acceptance of a new Constitution which seeks to redress anomalies resulting from the changes referred to above, and to bring it in line with current legislative requirements.

Appreciation

At this year draws to its close, there are, as always, people to be thanked, both inside and outside the organisation.

I must select out from these the staff, whose efforts in maintaining the smooth running of the organization are again to be lauded. Without reservation, I acknowledge that they willingly give above and beyond the demands of their job descriptions. I wish also to thank Jon Bisset for bringing a new perspective to the position of Executive Director, and I trust that there will be many years of his happy and productive incumbency of this role.

We also are more than well-served by the loyal band of volunteers who contribute to our work and achievements - often in the less observable aspects of the organisation: stuffing envelopes, entering data into computer systems, serving as peer educators, participating in Policy Working Groups, filing papers, cataloguing books and papers into the library – and other, sometimes mundane but always essential, tasks.

It is here that I would wish to acknowledge the work of Les Petocz, who passed on in May of this year. Les was one of our most dedicated and faithful volunteers, travelling each Thursday morning from Thirroul where he lived. He was a quiet, gentle and erudite man, with whom I often enjoyed a chat when each of us came early into the office, and before the clamour of the day began. Les' work and effort over 14 years in sorting, editing and cataloguing the records of over 50 years represents an enormous contribution to this organization.

I wish to thank the members of the Board who give generously and unselfishly of their time and expertise to support the work of COTA at state and national levels. The demands made upon Board and Staff in fulfilling our strategic aims is, to say the least, quite onerous. Much of the work that is done is not readily apparent to the casual observer. That it is done so effectively and assiduously is a tribute to the commitment that is brought to the organisation by all those who work in and for it.

We have been grateful for the support of:

- Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
- St George Bank
- Perpetual Trustees
- NSW Health
- Pfizer Australia
- Alphapharm
- Webstercare
- Public Trustee
- Colgate
- Lilly
- Beyond Blue
- Siemens
- The Senior Newspaper
- Sydney Community Foundation

Without the support of our corporate friends, much of what we do could not be achieved.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the donations received from individual members. The sums may vary, but the intent does not: each and every donation received represents a sacrifice on the part of the donor because of a belief in what the organisation stands for and achieves.

The Future

Despite the challenging times locally, nationally and globally, hopefully we look forward to a year of growth in 2008: growth in our membership and in the benefits we can offer it, both idealistically and intrinsically.

Our challenges remain: how COTA remains a vibrant, viable vehicle for change and amelioration in a demographically and socially evolving society; how we respond to the imperative of a more complex set of issues and interactions; how we as an organisation necessarily must and can work more closely in partnership with governments and corporates; how we must and can tailor our policies and practices to address the unique and unprecedented needs and aspirations of the emerging cohorts of changing and changed generations. These challenges are significant at both state and national levels.

We must forge whole new structures and initiate protocols to meet these challenges. It is a demanding scenario, nevertheless one which I am sure we as an organisation and individually as members of that organisation are capable of addressing with resounding success.

The challenges basically revolve around our pushing out the boundaries to build upon the first of our many objectives:

“... to promote policies, practices and services that advance well-being and justice for older people, and redress injustice, discrimination and disadvantage”
(COTA NSW Strategic Plan)

For your part, we seek your continued support, asking that you seize every opportunity to raise COTA's profile and reputation in the community. Please help us to maintain and enhance that enviable reputation we have earned over more than half a century of being widely recognised and accepted by all stakeholders:

- as a significant advocate for older people on all issues which concern them
- as a prime source of credible information and expertise for all older people and on older people,

- as a significant influence on development of policies and activities which involve older people” (COTA NSW Strategic Plan)

Assist us to work towards the Council's Vision, which:

“... embraces the shaping of a more just, equitable and humane community in which older people are enabled to contribute and grow to their full capacity, and have access, with dignity, to appropriate care and support.” (COTA NSW Strategic Plan)

By the year 2030, in Australia it is projected that:

- the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 13.8% to 22%; and
- the proportion of people older than 85 will grow by 142%

By the year 2018, in Australia - that is, in only 10 years from now - it is projected that the number of people aged 65 and over will outnumber children under 15

Today, 2008, in NSW our population of some 7 million persons equates to one third of the total Australian population of 21.5 million, and with a larger than national average in the demographics:

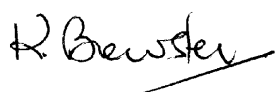
- the largest number of older people (over 65), of the total older population in Australia i.e. 35%; which represents 13.7 % of the total state population.
- the increase in people over 85 years is 6.2%, compared with the national average of 5.7%.
- 28.4 % of the national Aboriginal population (ABS website, 2008).

I will not venture into the cultural diversity of our population in NSW: not because it is not important, but simply because it is too complex for this occasion.

Challenges indeed in addressing the needs of this large, imbalanced and culturally diverse population. The challenges basically revolve around our pushing out the boundaries to meet and to build upon our objectives. We must forge whole new structures and initiate protocols to meet these challenges. It is a demanding scenario; nevertheless one which I am sure we as an organisation are well equipped and capable of addressing with resounding success.

Yet again, I acknowledge and thank our members who remain with us. There are tangible benefits accruing to them, but more importantly there are the intangibles i.e. those policy and advocacy initiatives which seek to benefit not only them but all older Australians, in particular those suffering from some disadvantage, be it financial, health or social disadvantage.

Finally, I would say that, given a positive attitude and appropriate priorities and strategies, I believe that ageing of itself is not a problem to our society. Ageism is.



Kath Brewster
President COTA NSW

Executive Directors Review

Jon Bisset, Executive Director

It is with pleasure that I present a report of the Council on the Ageing (NSW) activities for the year ended 30 June 2008 and invite you to reflect on the achievements of the past twelve months.

We continued as an organisation to make good progress against our strategic plans.

In early 2008, with the cooperation of the Board, I undertook a review of our Management Structure. As a result a renewed staffing focus was placed on our policy and communication activities and the new position of Policy and Communication Manager overseeing a two to three person policy team established. The recruitment of this team commenced in late June 2008.

Significant change was also made in late 2007 when we outsourced our accounting function to Matrix-on-Board, a firm specialising in not-for-profit organisation accounts management. This change acknowledges the importance that COTA NSW places on the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation and the need for us to work towards increasing the financial independence of our operations. As a result of the change Lucy Zhang left our employ in November 2007. Whilst I commenced after Lucy left, I sincerely thank Lucy for her work during her time with us. Also leaving COTA's employ in late 2007 was our Policy Officers Lisa Langley and David Skidmore and our IT Trainer Diane Brentnall – I gratefully acknowledge their support and contribution to COTA NSW.

The time commitment at all levels of administration is often overly challenged with little recognition. Without the strong support of the Board of Directors, and staff of COTA NSW, in particular my management team of Tim Martin, Ruth Anstice, Prue Fairlie, Annette Barnes, Liz Aitkin and Suzanne Williams we could not achieve our mission. I thank them for their exceptional work over the past year. It is the people in our organisation who will carry us forward successfully on our strategic journey. It is our members who will judge that success.

Thank you to the many volunteers who dedicate many hours voluntarily to ensure that COTA NSW is managed effectively. My appreciation to the COTA NSW Board, who have taken on increased workloads and provided valuable support to myself throughout the year. To Kath Brewster, Don Woodburn, Nan Bosler, Patricia Campbell, Roger Morris, Steven Lowndes, Averil Fink and Heather Johnson - your loyalty and commitment to COTA NSW is appreciated by all.

External partnerships continue to be developed. This partnership approach will be the cornerstone for our ongoing success and must be further enhanced over the coming years. COTA NSW must specifically acknowledge the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health who collectively contribute over half a million dollars to our activities. Thanks also to the Sydney Community Foundation, St George Bank, Perpetual Trustees, Pfizer Australia, Alphapharm, Webstercare, Colgate, Lilly, Beyond Blue, Siemens, the Public Trustee and the Senior Newspaper for their continued financial support.

It has been agreed in principle with COTA (SA) that their NSW Senior Peer Education Centre (SPEC) will integrate with COTA NSW and a goal of this occurring by the 1st January 2009 has been set.

The SPEC currently runs (effectively in competition with COTA NSW) Quality Use of Medicine Programs for the National Prescribing Service, Falls Management programs and the Beyond Maturity Blue Program. Integration will be contingent on COTA NSW achieving appropriate capacity to manage these programs.

Whilst I believe there is substantial room for further improvement in our current business, management is making real progress with excellent levels of performance in many areas, and ambitious targets in others.

In emerging from a difficult period, COTA NSW is now well positioned for the future. We have the people, as well as the knowledge, commitment and energy to grow and succeed.

We will work with our people to create cohesiveness and teamwork across our organisation and our networks, continually looking for ways to improve. Our vision won't become a reality without the support of our people.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our team for their ongoing dedication and commitment, as well as our members for their loyalty.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Bisset', written in a cursive style.

Jon Bisset
Executive Director

Report of Activities 2007-2008

Membership

Members continued to strongly support COTA NSW with 89% of members rejoining in 2007/08.

Individual membership numbers decreased by about 2% to 2490 during the year and organisational membership numbers disappointingly dropped by 18% to 153, mainly as a result of many Senior Citizens Clubs ceasing to operate.

New membership strategies are being implemented in 2008/09 to address the decline. Insurance and Membership Services Ltd ("IMS"), who operate the COTA Insurance Scheme will commence the management of membership services from the 1st September 2008.

Through our partnership with IMS COTA NSW Membership will offer many benefits:

- 12 month membership of COTA NSW from just \$24.
- Personalised membership card.
- Membership of Australia's premier Savings Program. Simply show your COTA membership card and SAVE!
- 144 page COTA Savings Directory
- COTA Publications
- COTA Insurance offers tailored insurance solutions.
- Information and opportunities for involvement in COTA's policy development and advocacy, and representation to government on behalf of over 50s in Australia.
- Access to state based COTA services and programs for over 50s.
- Invitations and discounted entry to selected COTA events.
- Special offers from COTA corporate partners that support the work of COTA.

Programs

Healthy Ageing Talk Series

COTA NSW continued to conduct regular community information seminars to enable people over 50 and organisations providing services to be better informed on matters concerning their health.

On average 90-120 people attended each talk during 2007/08. Topics included:

- Macular Degeneration – Are you at risk. This talk was run in conjunction with the Macular Degeneration Foundation.
- Healthy Ageing - Exercise for Youthfulness.
- Hear, Listen, Enjoy a discussion on hearing and listening devices and Osteoporosis held in Campbelltown.
- A Practical Approach to Driving Assessment and Rehabilitation for Older Drivers. This was run in conjunction with the Australian Association of Gerontology.
- Podiatry – Focus on Feet held in Campbelltown.
- Advance Care Planning.
- Continence - What's normal and What's not,

A special free talk attracting 170 people was held in conjunction with the Benevolent Society, featuring Hans Becker, from the Humanitas Foundation in The Netherlands. Hans spoke on an exciting alternative approach to housing and care for older people developed in The Netherlands and now being trialled in Australia by the Benevolent Society.

Peer Education

COTA NSW continued to provide informative and interactive peer education sessions to groups throughout New South Wales on a variety of health and wellbeing issues affecting people over 50.

Peer Education is the process of people who share common ground teaching and learning from one another. COTA NSW trains older people to talk to other older people about healthy ageing issues.

Medications Management Project

The Medications Management Program involves the training of volunteer peer educators to talk to seniors around NSW about healthy ageing and the appropriate use of medication to improve the health and quality of life of older people.

Over 35,000 people have been reached through this program since its inception. The Program will cease as at 31 December and be replaced with a similar Program.

Beyond Maturityblue Project

COTA NSW, in conjunction with COTA Seniors Connect in South Australia and Beyond Blue the national depression initiative, delivered the Beyond Maturityblues Peer Education program to raise awareness and promote understanding of depression.

The focus of the sessions is on learning about depression - its symptoms and treatments, methods of prevention, how to support those living with depression, and what you can do to enjoy better health.

During the year COTA NSW easily has met it's beyond Maturityblue program target of 100 sessions.

COTA NSW anticipates continuing to deliver the Beyond Maturityblue Program in 2008/09.

Online Learning Centre

The COTA Computing Club began operating in 2002 and provided computer facilities to approximately 250 members on a regular basis.

The COTA Computing Club also offered training courses. In 2007/08 courses attracted approximately 680 participants.

Until December 2007 the COTA Computer Club was staffed full time, however as a result of the loss of a major sponsor the club was staffed by volunteers for the second half of 2007/08.

After extensive consideration the Board determined in May 2008, with considerable regret, that the Computer Club would cease operations as at 30 June 2008.

The computer club provided a valuable opportunity for seniors to learn how to use technology at a convenient location in the heart of the CBD and close to transport for many years, however the cost to sustain the club in central Sydney was unfortunately beyond the ongoing resources of COTA NSW.

COTA NSW expresses its sincere thanks to the volunteers who supported the Computer Club over the years. These wonderful volunteers played a critical role as trainers, in providing administration and program support and in helping computer club members.

Grandfriends

Grandfriends provides an opportunity for young people in the community to get to know members of an older generation. Through the Grandfriends program, members of the younger and older generations can learn from one another and begin to understand and respect one another.

For schools, the program represents an opportunity to respond to the needs of parents and children, and to be involved more closely with people of the older generations who make up an important part of the community. Grandfriends helps to bridge the generation gap.

Grandfriends is the creation of Iris Wallis, who arranged a group of seniors in her local area to visit local primary schools, to help teachers in their classrooms.

During 2007/08 the Grandfriends program had 54 registered volunteers and 19 affiliated primary schools. There were 38 Grandfriends in the Central Coast area, 12 Grandfriends in the Sydney Region (including Liverpool Grandfriends) and 4 Grandfriends in the Port Stephens Region and other areas.

During 2007/08 the Sydney Community Foundation (SCF) provided a grant to COTA NSW to extend the Grandfriends program into the Campbelltown Area.

Stories of Experience

This project by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) has drawn on the environmental experiences of older Australians to help promote sustainable living to the community. The project brings together personal stories with environmental themes such as energy use, waste minimisation, transport, biodiversity, water use and reuse, and chemical use. Each story is complemented by relevant information on the issue obtained from current experts and sources including available State and Local Government resources. The stories are illustrated with drawings or photos from the authors, their families and a professional illustrator.

Stories of Experience aimed to broaden the general community's knowledge and understanding of the older generation's experience in protecting the environment and promoting positive environmental behaviour, while at the same time helping older people to value their life experiences and give them an opportunity to play a more active role in promoting sustainable living in their local communities.

The 24 short stories celebrate the practices, innovations and wisdom of older people... stories about surviving hardship and self sufficiency. Mend and make do, thrift and sharing were a major part of life well before recycling, environmentalism and plasma television sets. Up-to-date environmental information with each story suggests a change or action all of us can make.

The launch of the Stories of Experience was held on 28th March.

Older Men: New Ideas

An Agreement between COTA NSW and the OM:NI groups of March 2007 stated that if the OM:NI groups had not formed a democratically elected governing committee, proved that they could be financially viable, and applied for independent Association status on or by 30th June 2008, COTA would disband the OM:NI groups.

Pleasingly an initiative of the combined Riverina OM:NI groups met the agreed deadline to continue the work that was so successfully initiated by COTA NSW.

OM:NI groups are unique in allowing older men to meet together in a safe, confidential male only environment to share joy, sorrows, hopes and achievements as well as significant issues or other that may have prevented them from enjoying full and enriching lives. COTA NSW is pleased that they will continue, in at least the Riverina, and hope that over time many of the other former OM:NI groups join with them.

COTA NSW will of course maintain our interest in the operation of OM:NI groups and the new incorporated body and will be pleased to assist where possible should it be requested.

Policy

COTA NSW continues to undertake a variety of policy work, including the production of submissions and papers and contribution to policy through representation on various committees and through participation in conferences and forums.

The policy function of COTA NSW also has a direct influence on driving our own health based projects and community activities which positively impact on the health and wellbeing of the many older people who attend our talks and peer education sessions.

COTA NSW's success is dependent upon its ability to continue to build networks and collaborate with other government and non-government organizations. We continue to be involved with and represented on various committees and forums and continue to collaborate closely with both Government and other community organizations in order to develop its policy and deliver effective programs and services. A list of those organisations and committees is contained in Appendix 2.

COTA NSW is guided and informed by its members. In this way, COTA NSW can ensure that its policy is informed by a wide range of community and expert opinion across a range of issues which affect older people of NSW.

Our policy working groups are made up of representatives from the community who come together to advise COTA NSW on key policy priorities including aged care, housing, transport and intergenerational issues such as the role of grandparents as carers. COTA's community care workforce and grandparenting forum working parties both include indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse representatives. COTA NSW strives to include the participation of both indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse groups in its policy working groups and working parties.

During 2007/08 our submissions included:

- Licensing of older drivers
- The NSW State Plan
- Review of the Skills Base in NSW
- NSW Planning for the Future Community Housing
- 2008-2009 - Pre Budget Submission
- Community Health Review Consultation
- Contributed to COTA Over 50s Pension Review
- Responsible Lending Practices in relation to consumer credit

Re-focus in HACC

COTA NSW has been involved with the convening of NSW representatives and NSW delegates who had attended the National HACC Forum in Melbourne in February to devise strategies to package, name and promote a long term process of re-development in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program in NSW.

The meeting, which COTA NSW co-hosted, commenced a review of concepts that HACC jurisdictions have been urged to consider, including:

- Restorative approaches;
- Wellness models;
- Active models;
- Person-centred approaches; and
- Re-enablement models.

A working group, including COTA has been formed to develop a draft set of principles, using the new COTA Over 50's policy principles as a base in relation to the Active Service Model Approach. COTA NSW will continue to play a leadership role in this area.

Pension Campaign

COTA NSW continues to work with the other State COTA's and nationally with COTA Over 50s (our national organisation) to:

- Lobby Members of Parliament
- Influence the Federal Tax Review
- Run a media campaign and raise awareness in the wider community
- Prepare submissions to the Federal Pensions Review and for the Federal Budget

We are also working with other non-profit organisations to support the campaign and create a stronger voice for pensioners. We are part of the Fair Go For Pensioners Coalition and have convened the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition in NSW to encourage pensioners to show politicians that we need better pensions now.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In April 2008, COTA (NSW) in consultation and collaboration with DADHC and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing (MACA) convened a Forum on the rights, roles and responsibilities of grandparents. The Grandparenting Forum brought together grandparents, researchers, service providers and interested parties to present and debate the issues and make recommendations to put before all levels of government and funding bodies.

Grandparents are a crucial part of society, they provide childcare and support for their grandchildren, they raise their grandchildren, and through their relationships, help to build solid intergenerational communities.

Grandparents often do not receive the support they need from government in their tasks.

At the Grandparenting Forum, it was decided to produce a policy document which would outline and explain the key objectives for grandparents going forward. This policy will be the focus of a campaign, lead by COTA NSW, which will aim at improving the situations of grandparents in our society. We will look to help those grandparents who provide childcare, those grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, and those grandparents who are denied the chance of having a relationship with their grandchildren.

COTA NSW hopes that the ideas and energy shown at the Grandparenting Forum help to drive the agenda on grandparenting policy agenda.

Grandparenting needs to be recognised as a crucial part of the way that our society looks after its children, and as a crucial part of the way that older Australians maintain their health and wellbeing. Grandparents are a very important resource, and government must take better care of them, by recognising their unique role and the specific challenges they face in their relationships with their grandchildren.

The Grandparenting program continues to progress well. Its five key achievements are:

- Setting up the Information Package and website Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Where do you go for HELP? www.raisinggrandchildren.com.au
- Assistance in setting up Grandparent Support Groups across the state. We can now identify:
 - 45 Grandparent and Kinship Carers Groups - mostly attached to community services of some kind
 - 20 Foster Carers Groups that also welcome grandparents
 - approximately 20 Aboriginal Grannies Groups through the NSW Aboriginal Secretariat (AbSec) Foster Care
- Through lobbying in many forms COTA NSW has had significant influence in the establishment of a Supported Care Allowance being achieved for grandparents through the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). NSW is the first state to recognise grandparents raising their grandchildren with an allowance that is equivalent to the Foster Careers Allowance and available even when there is no court order regarding the care of the children.
- Through attendance and talks given at many interagency forums awareness has developed more broadly in the community regarding the role grandparents play in child protection.
- Through the growing awareness of grandparenting issues services are emerging around cultural differences in grandparenting. COTA NSW has developed a broad network cross-culturally liaising with community workers and discussing the development of services for grandparents of various cultural backgrounds. This is seen as an area for research and development.

COTA (NSW) is committed to an ongoing and sustained position in lobbying for the rights and needs of Grandparents. The project continues to be viable through the support of the benefactor who has made provision for the ongoing nature of the project.

Finance Report

Treasurers Review

Don Woodburn, Treasurer

In a not-for-profit organisation, recurrent income and expenditure should normally closely match each other. Accordingly COTA NSW's profit or loss should be minor each year.

The financial year 2006/7 produced a deficit of \$8,747, a not unexpected result because we had lost the Seniors Information Service contract the previous year, and we anticipated that it would be difficult to replace the income lost and reduce the related core expenses. The budgeted deficit had been \$40,213, but as reported last year this was materially offset as a result of bringing to account (as income) unspent sponsorship residues from past projects.

Our original budget for 2007/8 was for a deficit of \$31,566. This turned out to be an eventful year for COTA NSW, particularly because there was a period of three months when we operated without an Executive Director, following the resignation of the previous incumbent. Our present Executive Director, Jon Bisset, commenced duties in mid January 2008 and a revised budget was prepared for the 2007/8 year. This budget was for a forecast deficit of \$48,900.

However, the final result as detailed in the Financial Report tabled today was a deficit of \$21,798.

Year 2008/9 is budgeted to produce a surplus of \$12,056.

The review of internal systems and accounting procedures was finalised during the first half of the past financial year. In December 2007 we outsourced the accounting function to a firm specialising in not-for-profit organisation accounts management. This has proved to be most satisfactory as it has resulted in greatly improved accounting control and reporting, at a reasonable cost and without requiring excessive involvement from the Treasurer, as had been the situation for the past year or two.

Despite the loss for the past two years COTA NSW continues to be in a sound financial position.

Donald H. Woodburn FCA
Honorary Treasurer

[INSERT FINANCIAL REPORT HERE]

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Board of Directors and Management

Board of Directors

Current as at 30 June 2008

Kath Brewster OAM	President
Roger Morris AM	Vice President
Don Woodburn	Treasurer
Nan Bosler OAM	
Patricia Campbell	
Averil Fink AM MBE	
Heather Johnson AM	

Retired during 2007/08

Steven Lowndes	1 Dec 2007 to 8 May 2008
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Management

Executive Director	Jon Bisset (From January 2008)
Administration Manager	Tim Martin
Project Officer – Peer Education	Suzanne Williams
Administration Officer	Liz Aitken
Project Officer - Grandfriends	Ruth Anstice
Policy Officer – Grandparenting	Prue Fairlie
Information Officer	Annette Barnes
Advertising Sales	Frank Gribble
Executive Director	Bill Byrnes (until September 2007)
Policy Officer	Lisa Langley (until December 2007)
Policy Assistant	Ashton Hayes (Nov 2007-Jan 2008)
Policy Officer	David Skidmore (Feb-April 2008)
Accounts Officer	Lucy Zhang (until December 2007)
IT Trainer	Diane Brentnall (until December 2007)

Other

Public Officer	Jon Bisset
Auditor	Leah Russell, WHK Horwath Sydney

Appendix 2 – Consumer Representation

Consumer representation is a key element of the work conducted by COTA NSW. COTA NSW, as an independent organisation, is in a strong position to provide unbiased and effective representation of the views and interests of seniors to decision-makers. To this end, COTA NSW staff and volunteers act as consumer representatives on a large number of groups and advisory bodies.

COTA NSW or its Officers participate in the following:

- Board of Governors - NSW Meals on Wheels Association Roger Morris
- Chair - Aged Care Planning Advisory Committee, Dept of Health & Ageing Kath Brewster
- Chair - Future of Ageing: Coffs Coast Retirement & Aged Care Strategy (Cowper Electorate) Kath Brewster
- Chair - NSW Department of Health, Health of Older People Advisory Committee Kath Brewster
- Chronic Illness Alliance of NSW Policy Manager
- Energy Australia Customer Council Jon Bisset
- Department of Housing NGO Housing Partners Reference Group Policy Manager
- Health Policy Advisory Group (HPAG) Policy Manager
- Home Modification and Maintenance Information Advisory Committee Policy Manager
- Accreditation and Standards Agency Liaison Group Kath Brewster
- Aged Services Learning and Research Collaboration Advisory Committee Kath Brewster
- Health Care Advisory Council, NSW Department of Health Kath Brewster
- Health Care Complaints Commission, Consumer Consultative Committee Kath Brewster
- Healthelink Pilot Implementation Management Group, NSW Department of Health Kath Brewster
- State Planning Forum on Veterans' Aged Care Services, Dept of Veterans' Affairs Kath Brewster
- NCOSS Sector Development Forum Jon Bisset
- NGO Housing Partners Reference Group Policy Manager
- NSW Aged Care Alliance Policy Manager
- NSW HACC Issues Forum Policy Manager
- Older Peoples Mental Health Working Group, NSW Health Suzanne Williams
- Oral Health Special Needs and Specialist Services Advisory Group Policy Manager
- Strategic Carer Action Network Policy Manager
- The Benevolent Society Research Ethics Committee Jon Bisset
- The NSW Forum of Non Government Agencies (FONGA) Jon Bisset

Council on the Ageing (NSW)

ABN 31 090 328 955

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