

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Make housing options viable and flexible for older Australians**

Productivity Commission research into housing and older Australians should be considered as a part of a comprehensive retirement incomes package which considers the impacts on the quality of life of older people, not just as a Federal Budget quick fix, leading seniors advocate COTA Australia said today.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said COTA had called repeatedly for a full and independent retirement incomes review that would consider all policy options and their interrelationships, using evidence-based modelling.

“We have been saying for a very long time that everything needs to be on the table as part of a thorough look at the whole retirement incomes system, but COTA does not support including the full value of family homes in the pension asset test in the foreseeable future,” Mr Yates said.

“It’s too easy to point the finger and shift the burden to older Australians themselves.

“Rather than blame older people the Federal Government needs to put measures in place that encourage a more robust equity release market that encourages retirees who choose to downsize or top up their pension by accessing equity in their homes.

“There can be real value for many older Australians in using equity from their family home to provide them with a better standard of living as they age but it needs to be a real, financially viable option, that is easy to navigate, with robust consumer protections in place.”

Mr Yates said urgent action was also needed to increase the supply of innovative and affordable housing options for older people who do choose to “rightsize”, and there needs to be the right safety nets in place for a growing number of older renters being forced out of the private rental market.

“There needs to be real effort put into designing a fair and equitable retirement incomes system that provides a safety net for older Australians who need it and is sustainable in the long term as our population ages.

“This should include removing the significant market restraints and policies that are in the way of developing more flexible retirement products that give older Australians real choice and the consumer protections they need to live a healthy safe life.”

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