

MEDIA RELEASE

17 March 2016

COTA Australia welcomes Labor's commitment to planning for a positive and inclusive ageing Australia

Leading seniors advocate COTA Australia today backed Labor's proposal for a new Minister for Ageing and Longevity to oversee a whole of government approach to increasing longevity and to look after the welfare of the many older Australians who are excluded from the full benefits of citizenship due to inequality and ageism.

The proposal was put forward in the report 'Growing Together – Labor's agenda for tackling inequality' launched last night.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said appointing a Cabinet Minister for Ageing and Longevity would help stimulate, co-ordinate and align policies and programs across government to help Australia capitalise on the opportunities presented by our ageing population, and he called on all parties to make the new appointment an election commitment.

"By 2031 almost 1 in 5 Australians will be older than 65, as we live longer and our healthier than ever before - it's an incredible achievement," Mr Yates said.

"A dedicated Minister for Ageing and Longevity will help us remove barriers to increased productivity and economic growth from an older population - including policies that will tackle age discrimination and keep older people in work through their 50s and 60s, and well into their 70s if they choose to; make the most of the wealth of experience and knowledge of our older Australians; and meet the challenges that ageing will present to our health and aged care systems.

"A Minister for Ageing and Longevity will perhaps finally help government seriously address vital issues such as a comprehensive and equitable retirement incomes policy; affordable and appropriate housing policy; and planning for livable age friendly communities."

Mr Yates said ideas around longevity and employment for older Australians in the Growing Together policy were welcome recognition that an ageing population was not a burden but a positive opportunity for our community and our economy.

He said the report included positive statements supporting the need to protect the rights of older Australians and provide opportunities for older Australians to keep working if they choose, or live active lives in retirement.

"We welcome the report's support for a full time Age Discrimination Commissioner, a position that the current government cut to a half time role across both Ageing and Disability. We call on Labor to make this an election commitment.

"COTA Australia also welcomes Labor's support for the Turnbull Government's policies that provide more choice and control for consumers in aged care, which have had bi-partisan support."

Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Olivia Greentree 0439 411 77