



COTA **NEW SOUTH WALES**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ACCESS EQUALS EQUITY: COTA NSW SURVEY SHOWS WHERE NSW IS FAILING OLDER PEOPLE**

Access, both to information and to the physical environment, is the focus of this year's COTA NSW *50+ Report*. Launched today with a series of online infographics, the *50+ Report* analyses findings drawn from a survey of almost 4000 older people living across NSW.

"Our Report makes it clear some older people are facing real barriers when it comes to participating fully in the life of their community," says Ian Day, CEO of COTA NSW. "While many are faring well, there are signs that the digital divide is alive and well in NSW, with some older people experiencing difficulty accessing vital information online, particularly from government agencies and service providers who've shifted almost exclusively to online communication channels."

"We know that the move to online communication is a done deal," said Mr Day. "But there are circumstances where much more focused information is needed by consumers than is typically available on a website."

"Respondents' desire to have access to information from a range of sources had little to do with their confidence online. Our survey respondents were skilled internet users – 90% state that the internet is their first preference when researching an issue – but many still found government websites lacking. This was regardless of educational attainment."

Access to the physical environment was also poor for some survey respondents. About 60% said their ability to move around freely in their own communities was undermined by factors like poor lighting, broken footpaths, or inaccessible street-scapes. Those aged 80 and over were particularly likely to report increased difficulty moving about their communities due to these deficiencies in the built environment.

"An inability to get out of the house and into the community places people at real risk of social isolation and all the mental and physical health risks associated with it. Making communities accessible for all has to be a priority at every level of government," said Mr Day.

Alarming, the demographic components of this year's *50+ Report* again show that older women are experiencing lower levels of financial security than men. "More than 25% of our female respondents reported a household income that approached the poverty line, in line with our previous Reports."

"Obviously, the lower a person's income the fewer options a person has, for example, to pay for an internet service, or for a car. With Seniors Festival looming, it's timely to think about the steps we need to take to make NSW genuinely age friendly."

**END**

**CEO, Ian Day, is available for interview: 0417 210 234**

Council on the Ageing NSW Inc. ABN 31 090 328 955 W: [www.cotansw.com.au](http://www.cotansw.com.au) T: (02) 9286 3860