

MEDIA RELEASE

6 May 2016

Appointment of full time Age Discrimination Commissioner welcomed by older Australians

Peak seniors advocate, COTA Australia, today welcomed the Hon. Dr Kay Patterson to her role as Australia's new Age Discrimination Commissioner and the reinstatement of full time commissioners to the age and disability portfolios.

COTA CEO Ian Yates said age discrimination is unfortunately still rife in Australia – most recently highlighted in the release of the report of the Human Rights Commission's *Willing to Work* Inquiry earlier this week.

"Both age and disability are extremely important human rights portfolios and are only going to become more important as our population ages," he said.

"We welcome the roles being restored to the priority they require with full time Commissioners in their own right.

"Dr Patterson's breadth of experience as a senior minister in the federal government in health and ageing and community services portfolios, coupled with her current advocacy as a Commissioner of the National Mental Health Commission, make her well placed to take on the job of ensuring older people's rights are enhanced.

"Older Australians often face serious challenges, particularly in retaining their jobs and re-entering the workforce. The Human Rights Commission has found that more than one quarter of older Australians experience age discrimination at work.

"The *Willing to Work* report also found that discrimination and structural issues are locking out a large proportion of older people from participating in the labour force – despite many being willing and able to work.

"This is not only having a negative impact on the wellbeing of older people but it also has serious implications for our society and our economy.

"The new Age Discrimination Commissioner will need to continue to lead the cultural and attitudinal change that we desperately need.

"I look forward to working with Dr Kay Patterson on furthering the rights and reducing discrimination against the older people of Australia.

"We are confident that Dr Patterson will be an excellent advocate for the rights, well being and contributions of older Australians."

Dr Kay Patterson will succeed current Commissioner Susan Ryan AO in August.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.