



**COTA NEW SOUTH WALES**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**MAJOR PARTIES MUST ACT ON NSW HOUSING CRISIS**

Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW) is calling on both major parties to tell voters how they plan to address the housing crisis before the State Government election on 28 March 2015.

“The supply of housing in NSW has been constrained for many years,” says COTA NSW CEO Ian Day. “The lack of supply and recent speculation has resulted in house prices soaring. Housing in NSW, and particularly in Sydney, has become unaffordable. But the time has come for both major parties to reveal how they will address this issue if they assume Government.”

“We’re concerned by the number of older people who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Sydney is now the third most expensive housing market in the world. This inflates the cost of housing throughout much of the State, and now people across NSW are struggling to find accommodation they can afford.”

“There’s been an assumption that older people are immune from the escalating price of private property. But they’re not. In the last two years COTA NSW has surveyed older people about their ability to obtain and retain safe, appropriate and affordable housing. Increasingly, they can’t.”

“Our last survey found that 20% of people whose main source of income is the age pension are now renting. The cost of rent in the private housing market means that people on the age pension have to choose between paying their rent, or paying for food.”

“Growing numbers of older people are now on the bottom rung of the housing ladder. These people are having to move into residential parks, ‘granny flats’, boarding houses, or outside of metropolitan centres. Without action, many of these people will lose their grip on housing, and face homelessness.”

COTA NSW is urging both political parties to announce far-ranging measures to address this problem.

“The incoming Government must increase the supply of housing in NSW. We welcome the measures to increase the amount of land to be released in Sydney that the Premier announced over the weekend,” says Mr Day. “But changes to planning regulations are also required to increase housing density and accessibility around metropolitan and regional transport, retail and service hubs.”

COTA NSW is also calling on both major parties to introduce measures to increase the stock of affordable housing. “The prevailing planning regime has actually worked to inhibit innovation. This has to change.”

“The issue is not just one of quantity, but quality,” said Mr Day. “We are deeply concerned about the people who are living in squalid conditions – there are people who are so desperate to hang on to the housing they have, be it in a boarding house or ‘granny flat,’ that they will put up with appalling conditions.”

“For the next Government to address this issue, we need to see committed, whole-of-government action across a range of portfolios, including Treasury, Planning, Fair Trade and Family and Community Housing. This is not just a social justice issues, it’s an economic one. If vulnerable people become homeless they will rely entirely on the State for support. If just from this perspective, it’s vital that we see action.”

“Almost 43% of all electors in NSW are aged 50 and over. We’re talking about nearly 2.5 million people. It’s time for both major political parties to show they recognise their needs.”

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

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