



Age-old issues that the parties can't ignore

with IAN YATES COTA chief executive

COMMENT

commitment: COTA'S federal election platform focuses on three key policy areas within an overall theme of challenging ageism and age discrimination.

First, we seek a commitment to major aged-care reform.

This means much more than reshuffling current funding and announcing small initiatives, as we have seen in the lead-up to and during the election campaign.

Major aged-care reform means being committed to a big increase in community care, both its funding levels and the range and number of care packages.

The tight rationing of community care has forced far too many people inappropriately into residential care or left them stranded in hospital. It also means a radical change in how funding is allocated.

Aged-care entitlements must be allocated direct to older people, just like we see age pensions going to individual people.

It is time we stopped supporting a funding system in which government gives control over older people's lives to aged-care providers.

The aged-care system should be enabling people to get the services they need, not serving up a "take it or leave it" menu at the convenience of providers,

supervised by a bureaucrat exercising iron control over every aspect of aged care.

Secondly, COTA wants to see a new deal in health for older people.

We need a national dental and oral-health program, better mental-health services and more research into dementia.

It is appalling that our political parties have had national dental-scheme legislation locked up in the Senate all year without an outcome.

Why are there almost no health promotion programs targeted to older people?

You would think they want us to die off fast. Such programs would actually reduce hospital and GP costs.

Thirdly, we want effective age discrimination legislation and a commissioner to tackle ageism and age discrimination in workplaces, where it is alive and well.

In summary, we want an aged-care system that older people can control, a health system that recognises older people are its main customers and have equal rights and we want age-friendly workplaces.

Finally we want national leadership through a Minister for Older Australians who takes responsibility for good policies for an ageing society. »