



COTA QUEENSLAND

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The Hon Tim Mander
Minister for Housing and Public Works
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Dear Minister

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Housing and Public Works. I am sure that your personal and professional background will be great assets in meeting the challenges of your portfolio. COTA Queensland supports Queenslanders as they age in a variety of housing situations: for example, by promoting universal housing design, age-friendly neighbourhoods, and community development with seniors in social housing.

COTA Queensland would like to congratulate you on your decision not to sell the caravan parks at Cannon Hill, Woombye and Torquay. COTA is aware that many of the residents of these parks are low income older people with few housing options. As a State-based organisation that advances the rights, needs and interests of people as they age, COTA is committed to working with you and your department to improve the security, accessibility, and affordability of housing. We share the Government's focus on those Queenslanders experiencing marginalisation and exclusion

COTA believes good housing is one of the keys to successful ageing policy. Research with seniors indicates clear links between housing and health, well-being, and social inclusion. COTA looks forward to working with you on a range of housing issues, including the following:

Renters

More older people today are heading towards retirement with a home loan still to pay off than was the case a decade ago. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of people in their early 60s who had paid out their home loan dropped from 75% to just over 50%. As a result, there are older people dropping out of home ownership and becoming dependent on the private rental market. Current research also indicates that home ownership for low income earners in the 45 to 60 years age group is declining. COTA is concerned by the increasing numbers of older people who are being forced into the private rental sector and the fact that these numbers will rise significantly over the next 10 to 20 years.

As you would be aware, this has huge implications for a person's standard of living because the Australian age pension has always assumed most older people own their homes and do not have rental costs. Yet seven percent of Australians over 65 years of age live in the private rental housing, much of which is unaffordable, insecure, unsustainable and, at times, unsafe.

Homelessness

We congratulate the Queensland Government on its intention to develop a Homelessness Strategy and we look forward to being involved to ensure that older people's needs are addressed. Older people are at increasing risk of homelessness and there is a nexus between older people's homelessness and those living in the private rental sector. Specialist housing programs need to address the housing needs of older single people in the private rental sector, in general, and older single women in particular.

Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service

The de-funded Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (TAAS) has particular value for the most vulnerable private renters and frequently means the difference between people becoming homeless and being able to maintain adequate housing. The program is self-funded and by keeping people in their private rental, it reduces pressure on the social housing system. It is the only program in Queensland that provides tenants with advice and advocacy and its loss will exacerbate hardship for older tenants and other vulnerable groups. COTA urges you to re-establish funding for this much needed program.

Manufactured Homes

Residential Parks provide a housing tenure for many Queenslanders as they age. While they have been seen to provide an affordable housing tenure for some older people, there are also many tensions between residents and managers, and disputes are frequently not resolved to satisfaction. COTA believes the *Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003* needs to be reviewed, especially to resolve issues of fairness and ambiguity.

Public Housing Tenants

COTA is concerned that the recent de-funding of the Tenant Participation program will have adverse consequences for the social inclusion of tenants and for access to informal dispute resolution processes. Additionally, we believe that stock transfers from public housing to community housing needs to be undertaken in consultation with public housing tenants.

Once again I look forward to working with you and your department. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 3316 2999.

Yours sincerely



Mark Tucker-Evans
Chief Executive