

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's economic and social development being held back by failure to tap the talents, contributions and participation of Older Australians

On the 2017 United Nations International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) today, Australia's leading seniors' advocacy body, COTA Australia is calling on the Federal Government to act decisively over the coming year to achieve the greater economic and social participation of older Australians to lift economic growth, reduce health care costs and improve social wellbeing.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates, said "This year's IDOP theme - Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society - will explore effective means of promoting and strengthening the participation of older persons in economic, social, cultural, and civic and political life.

"Ageism and age discrimination regularly prevent business, organisations and society benefiting from the skills and experience of older people. The International Day of Older Persons is an opportunity to speak out and challenge stereotypes that hold us back from being a more productive community.

"Outdated stereotypes about ageing being a burden still underpin widespread discrimination in the workplace and in the broader community - reducing economic productivity; diluting development of social capital; and shortening lives and adding to our health and aged care costs," Mr Yates said.

Mr Yates said government, business, the health system and the community must work together to take a stand against ageism as a major curse in our society, which will have an even worse impact as Australia's population ages significantly over the next decade.

"However as well the community and government tackling ageism and age discrimination, the Federal Government needs to develop a coordinated set of policies, programs and services that create incentives for healthy and productive engagement of older Australians in the workforce; incentives for greater retirement savings for average retirees; and incentives and reward for services that restore and improve the health and wellbeing of older people", Mr Yates said.

"Only government can provide the leadership Australia needs to enable and expand the contributions of older people, creating and strengthening pathways that support full and effective participation of older people, not just because it's their basic right but because it builds a stronger, more productive and fairer society.

"It's time for decisive government action to take public policy and practice to a whole new level in areas like mature employment, health care, aged care, housing, superannuation, elder abuse - creating a comprehensive ageing strategy that makes Australia truly a society for ALL ages.

Find out more at the UN Day of Older Persons at <http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/>

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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.