



Submission to the Northern Territory Government

COTA NT Rebound Submission

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1. About COTA

Council on the Ageing NT (known as COTA NT) is the peak, not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged 50 plus in the Northern Territory.

COTA NT has been working towards a just, inclusive, age-friendly and equitable society for all senior Northern Territorians since 1969. Its mission¹ is to empower older people, those who work with them, government and the community into achieving well-being and social justice for older people.

For over 50 years, COTA NT has led government, corporate and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing. Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for, and protecting the rights of, senior Territorians.

COTA NT – is the voice of senior Territorians

- Over 8,000 seniors attended COTA NT’s activities from October 2018 to October 2019). This equates to over a quarter of all seniors who reside in the Territory.
- The COTA NT website www.cotant.org.au receives an average of 18,000 visits p.a.
- COTA NT handled 2200 phone calls in a 12-month period 2018/19.
- COTA NT social media pages on Facebook are followed by over 800 seniors.
- COTA NT’s newsletters are received by over NT 2000 stakeholders.
- Over 900 seniors aged between 50 and 100 years, from across the Territory: Darwin, Palmerston, Darwin Rural, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Alice Springs and the Barkly and Central regions responded to COTA NT’s Seniors Survey 2018².

We are extremely confident that COTA NT is genuinely the “voice” of senior Territorians.

¹ <https://www.cotant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/COTA-NT-Strategic-Plan.-Aug-18.pdf>

² <https://www.cotant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/COTANT2018SeniorsSurveySnapshot.pdf>

2. Aim of this Submission

To help shape the Territory's economic recovery, create jobs and attract more private investment to the Territory by creating a long-term, focused and innovative strategy to retain and attract older residents and more tourists to the Territory. We are not calling for 'quick-fix' measures but considered planning for the ageing populations of the future.

3. Considerations

Between 2000 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population aged over 60 years will double from about 11% to 22%, to about two billion in total. The Northern Territory also has the fastest growing over 65 population, according to the ABS, so therefore careful planning needs to be done to ensure the Territory attracts and retains its population and also taps into the rising demand for tourism products that will attract the older population, and even convince them to return permanently to the Territory.

As population ageing is one of the biggest social transformations in the 21st century, supportive and enabling environments that enable older people and visitors to enjoy all that is on offer is paramount.

4. Employment Opportunities

COTA NT believes that one of the biggest ways to rebound the Territory economy is through providing and actively promoting employment opportunities in existing and emerging sectors (construction, tourism, health), but especially for older Territorians.

5. Construction

Investment into the local construction industry which includes:

- Investment into much-needed *affordable* retirement living villages.
- Investment into Territory government run residential aged care homes and nursing homes, which will reduce the need for older Territorians to 'reside' in the public hospital.

6. Age Friendly³

Invest in projects to improve the 'age-friendliness' of the Territory urban environment in particular and to **make the Territory not only a leader in Australia, but the world** in its *living* age friendly policy (i.e. it's not just on paper, but people are actually living in age-

³ <https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age-friendly-cities-communities/en/>
https://placedesigngroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AgeFriendly_White-Paper.pdf

friendly communities or cities). The Territory should look at structures and services which *genuinely* meet the needs of older people:

- the built environment
- transport
- housing
- social participation
- respect and social inclusion
- civic participation and employment,
- communication,
- and community support and health services.

Learn lessons from age friendly cities⁴ in other regions of Australia and implement a 'Territory' appropriate strategy. As of October 2013, the WHO Age Friendly City and Communities Network had 145 members across 22 countries. Australian participation includes the cities of Boroondara and Warnambul in the State of Victoria, Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Melville in Western Australia, and Unley in South Australia.

7. Tourism

We call for government encouragement, support and investment for new tourism products that would attract varying age groups to the Territory's regional centres – which are engaging, attractive and affordable for a wide demographic.

- Investment into marketing the Northern Territory as the place to visit for the domestic Territory market – with safe, interesting destinations for older travellers - as well for interstate.
- For example,
 - Infrastructure such as the museum in Central Australia, which creates both employment opportunities during construction and ongoing opportunities for employment.
 - A World War 2 Walking Trail from the War Memorial right through to Noonamah and Litchfield – a proper walking trail that highlights the role that Darwin played in the war. This would create short-term employment opportunities in planning and construction; long-term benefits to local, interstate and international tourism.
 - Why not form a trail from the north to the south of the Territory and create a walk like the EL Camino Trail in Spain? This is a world class trail which

⁴ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0898264314532687>

attracts walkers from all ages. These could be extended further into a network of trails like the Great Walks of New Zealand.⁵

- Invest in promoting the Territory for niche (older appeal) tourism sectors such as golf tourism, art tourism, foodie tourism and sightseeing.

8. Health and Wellbeing

- Investment into programs for Territorians of all ages to remain fit and active.
- Financial support for local gyms and organisations offering programs.
- Invest in Senior Fit stations and Seniors Fitness Trails⁶ across Territory parks and green spaces creating short-term employment opportunities in planning and construction; creating long-term benefits to Territorians and visitors to the Territory.



⁵ <https://www.newzealand.com/au/feature/great-walks-of-new-zealand/>

⁶ <https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/about-council/news-and-publications/media-releases/2019/april/seniors-embrace-magnetic-island-fitness-trail>