

MEDIA RELEASE

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International Day of Older Persons – Longer lives should mean more opportunities, not simply more years - 1 October 2026

Today on the International Day of Older Persons, COTA NT calls for long-term planning to ensure that Australia and the Territory is ready for its growing and increasingly diverse older population.

Sue Shearer, CEO of COTA NT reflected that whilst living longer was one of the great achievements of our time, governments needed to plan now to make sure longer lives were healthy, meaningful and supported. The United Nations theme for the International Day of Older Persons, *Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives* provides a reminder for governments across the world to ask whether their systems are ready for longer lives.

“Today is an opportunity to recognise older Territorians and the enormous contribution they make to our families, communities and the Territory,” Ms Shearer said. “People are living longer and that is good news. Older Territorians are not a problem to be managed. They are valued members of our community who continue to work, volunteer, care for others, participate and contribute in countless ways.”

COTA NT says long-term planning for ageing must reflect the unique challenges of living in the Northern Territory, including the needs of people living outside Darwin, in regional and remote communities, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

“We need to make sure older Territorians can access the services and support they need, regardless of where they live,” Ms Shearer said. “That means planning for appropriate housing, accessible transport, health and aged care services, digital inclusion and opportunities for people to remain connected and active in their communities.”

COTA NT also says ageing needs to be considered across all areas of government policy, rather than being treated as the responsibility of health or aged care alone.

“Planning for an ageing population is about much more than aged care,” Ms Shearer said. “It is about housing, transport, health, employment, cost of living, community connection, digital access and ensuring our communities are designed for people of all ages.”

COTA NT says tackling ageism must also be part of this work.

“People should not be overlooked for employment, services, opportunities or participation simply because of their age,” Ms Shearer said. “Older Territorians have skills, experience, knowledge and

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connections that benefit the whole community. We need systems that recognise and support that contribution, not create unnecessary barriers.”

“Longer lives should mean more opportunities, not simply more years,” Ms Shearer said. “On International Day of Older Persons, we are calling for long-term, coordinated planning for ageing in the Northern Territory with older people involved in shaping the policies and services that affect their lives to build a Territory where people can age with dignity, connection, security and choice.”

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More information

International Day of Older Persons (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day>)

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