

COTA History project

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“Engrossing” and “a privilege” is how I would describe my experience of doing field work for the COTA History project.

Mental and physical stamina are needed in large quantities. The people being interviewed have warmed to their topic and have been very helpful. Mostly, they have revealed a story of deep commitment and passion for the quality of life of older people, the COTA movement and “making it work”.

The COTA History project explores the development of the COTA Movement with emphasis on the development of the national council, COTA (Australia). Special attention is paid to the part played by the State and Territory COTA's in the evolution of national council, and the whole Australian COTA movement, from 1951.



Federal Budget, Courtesy Herald Sun, May 1956

The project is a partnership between the University of Melbourne and COTA (Australia), and is supported by a SPIRT Grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC). The contract was signed for commencement in March 2000. Denys Correll, National Executive Director,

COTA (A), Dr Elizabeth Ozanne, School of Social Work, The University of Melbourne and Brenda Keogh, researcher/PhD student, are the people running the project which is expected to be finished about March 2003.

What progress has been made? The schedule of the work for the project was presented to the COTA (A) Board in May 2000 and again in May 2001 and has been broadly followed. It is expected that the interviewing period will be completed before the end of March 2002. We are in the interviewing phase at present. All State and Territory offices of COTA have been visited and 34 interviews completed. There will be visits to ACT, WA and SA in the next few months to conduct interviews. More interviews are to be scheduled for people based in Victoria.

The process of working under the combined guidelines for a SPIRT grant and for post-graduate studies, has been a steep learning curve for all involved, but the experience will smooth the way for future funded research projects. The major milestones in the project have been the completion of the research design, ethics approval, a major review of relevant academic literature and acceptance of the project and researcher as being suitable and eligible for submitting a PhD thesis. The thesis and data gathered, will form the basis of a book on the history of the COTA movement.

Interviews in each state will be completed in early part of 2002 and an analysis of the development of COTA from 1970-1989 will be presented at an academic seminar at Melbourne University in late March. Analysis of archives and interviews will be the major focus of 2002.

Brenda Keogh,
Researcher
COTA History Project



COUNCIL ON
THE AGEING



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

The project is still keen to receive copies of speeches, unpublished reports, and photos of COTA people and events, or any other COTA memorabilia. Collections of COTA papers of past board members are most welcome. Please contact Brenda Keogh, COTA History Project, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne, Vic 3010. Tel 03- 8344 9425 or email b.keogh@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au or Kathy Hogarty at Council on the Ageing (Australia) Level 2, 3 Bowen Crescent Melbourne 3004. Tel 03 9820 2655 or email Khogarty@cota.org.au.