

Community Connectivity Project Proposal in the Context of COTA Over 50s' Policy Priorities

Policy Context: The COTA Over 50s' Community Connectivity project proposal involves the use of technology to maximise the potential of older people, with a specific focus on residents of aged care centres. From the perspective of COTA Over 50s' policy priorities, this project is one of the innovative strategies undertaken by COTA Over 50s to support the aged care context and, as a result, to understand it better.

(a) Community care in terms of its forms and funding support (HACC)

Old does not mean alone: In respect to education, COTA Over 50s is interested in forms of care that attend to older people's need for feeling integrated into the life of the community and supported in terms of needs that have the potential to enhance this participation. Therefore, education and lifelong learning need not be limited to formal education. Instead, COTA Over 50s is looking at all forms of educational support that can provide older people with the **opportunity to learn in order to feel involved, valued and part of a greater whole according to one's capacities and needs.**

It is important for COTA Over 50s to identify the forms of support that are currently made available to the over 50s and that make use of education as a tool for overcoming social and emotional distance. COTA Over 50s pays specific attention to those who are disadvantaged in terms of access opportunities due to language, cultural expectations, family situation, distance, mobility, health or money.

COTA Over 50s is of the view that the availability and provision of this kind of educational support is not only of value to older people, but also to the larger community. A positive step in one context is likely to have a positive feedback effect in other contexts.

(b) Workforce issues

Caring for the old is as complex as caring for the young COTA Over 50s is committed to the continual enhancement of the quality of care provided to older people in Australia. Apart from the issues outlined in point (a), this also includes the provision of high quality training for aged care staff who need to be able to attend to the complex needs of the elderly.

High quality training should also help change the general perception of the demands of the aged care profession and the self-esteem of those in aged care profession. In regard to education, COTA Over 50s is of the belief that caring for the quality of life of older people means access to staff qualified to attend not only to their physical, but also to their intellectual and emotional needs.

Currently, COTA Over 50s is assisting the Southern Region Training & Employment Strategy Group based in Moruya with advice on forms of training and education that would make aged care employment worthwhile and more appealing. Furthermore, COTA Over 50s is supporting the Group's initiatives, including representation to the Minister of FaHCSIA, The Hon. Jenny Macklin. In addition, the Connectivity project is another contexts through which COTA Over 50s will seek to enhance those training programs and, at the same time, to learn about the training needs. Experience from these engagements gives COTA Over 50s insights into its own policy directions.