

MEDIA RELEASE

New report shows action needed to help vulnerable older Australians

A new landmark report has found the majority of older Australians feel a decade younger than their current age, overwhelmingly support assisted dying legislation, and nearly half feel less valued by society than when they were younger.

The State of the (Older) Nation 2018 Report, launched today by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) at Parliament House today in Canberra, is the most comprehensive national study ever undertaken to seek the views of Australians aged 50 and over.

Access to health services and the rising cost of living were also raised as key issues in the report, particularly for vulnerable older Australians.

Highlights of the report include:

- 80% of older Australians feel younger than their current age
- 46% feel less valued than when they were younger
- Health is the number one factor that impacts whether older Australians have a high or low quality of life
- 84% support legislation for assisted dying
- More than a quarter (28%) of those in paid employment want more paid work but 1 in 5 have experienced employment-related age discrimination
- 29% of working older Australians don't expect they will ever retire
- 12% are struggling with overdue bills
- More than half of older Australians undertake unpaid work in an average week, including volunteering and caring for family and friends
- Only one in five (19%) older Australians feel valued as a voter
- Dental services were identified as the most difficult to access for older Australians.

The report found nearly half (49%) of Australians aged 50 and over, including 56% of Australians aged over 65, live with at least one high vulnerability indicator such as unemployment, having a household income of less than \$30,000 per year or living with a disability. This group is also less likely to eat healthy meals or have money to spend on leisure or social activities, leading to a degree of social isolation.

COTA Australia CEO, Ian Yates said nearly a third of our population – 7.9 million people – is aged 50 or older.

“This inaugural State of the (older) Report quantifies the key issues for older Australians in relation to employment, age discrimination, cost of living, financial security, health, home and aged care, housing, later life planning, consumer rights and transport,” said Mr Yates.

“It tells us most older Australians believe they have a good quality of life. However, we're very concerned about the number of older Australians who are telling us they're not coping with the rising cost of living – many of whom are renting and facing challenges to pay bills.

“There are also too many older Australians feeling ignored, left behind or discriminated against in society and this report shows action is needed urgently, particularly to address the needs of vulnerable older Australians.

“COTA Australia is calling on all sides of politics to commit to a long-term national strategy to address the needs of older Australians – including increasing rent assistance by 40%; taking a whole-of-government approach to services for older Australians; and improving access to oral and dental health services for older Australians,” Mr Yates said.

The report was commissioned by the Federation of nine Councils on the Ageing from across Australia and was independently conducted by Newgate Research. It is expected to be an annual report to monitor progress and the attitudes of older Australians over the long term.

The full report can be found at www.stateoftheoldernation.org.au

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