

MEDIA RELEASE

19 February 2020

Labor's vision for older Australians a promising step towards a comprehensive national, bipartisan ageing strategy

Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese's commitment to delivering a national strategy to support older Australians has been welcomed by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, the peak body for older Australians, as a crucial bipartisan step towards building a better, fairer nation putting the needs of older people above politics.

Mr Albanese's [address](#) in Brisbane today outlined the Labor Party's vision for an older Australia which includes addressing ageism to support mature workers in finding employment, improving access and affordability for health services and aged care, and protecting the pillars of our retirement income system to ensure older Australians have a good retirement.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates welcomed Mr Albanese's recognition of the valuable contribution of older Australians to the community, and the missed opportunities to reap the benefits of increasing their participation in the workforce and economy, and society more widely, by not addressing ageism, and other cultural and structural barriers.

"Mr Albanese is absolutely correct that older Australians are a diverse group of people who cannot be treated all the same," said Mr Yates. "They require a diverse policy response that addresses issues across employment, health, finance, care, welfare and industrial relations, which I expect Labor's proposed Positive Ageing Strategy would address.

COTA applauded Mr Albanese's recognition that a 3% increase in workforce participation by Australians over 55 would grow the Australian economy by \$33 billion per year.

"A plan to ensure access to meaningful and flexible employment in later years is essential for our economy's increased productivity. Older Australians at the peak of their experience are eager to continue working but find themselves locked out of the workforce due to ageist and illegal hiring practices and outdated attitudes. Some below the pension age simply cannot afford to stop work. A strategy needs to provide a bipartisan blueprint for all older people being able to work as long as they need and want.

In its pre-budget submission, COTA called on the Government to deliver a similar strategy, cementing and building upon the measures it laid out in the 2018 More Choices for a Longer Life package.

Mr Yates noted that while Mr Albanese made no policy commitments beyond a Positive Ageing Strategy and maintaining the legislated superannuation rise, he signalled continued support for a range of measures including improving dental health, healthcare affordability, urban planning, along with the need to improve aged care waiting times and pension application processing timeframes.

"However, one point on which we disagree with the Opposition Leader is characterising the Federal Government's planned single aged care assessment system as 'privatisation' and we will discuss this with Labor. A single consumer-focused professional national assessment service with many local access points has been recommended for years, by successive Reviews and by COTA and the National Aged Care Alliance. This is an essential front door for a reformed aged care system.

"Today's speech is significant milestone in moving toward a bipartisan approach that ensures all Australians are supported and respected as they age. I look forward to discussing these and other matters further with the Labor Party and the Government."

Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439; Hannah Craft 0423 377 965

A copy of Mr Albanese's full speech may be found at: <https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/anthony-albanese-speech-respecting-and-valuing-older-australians-wednesday-19-february-2020>