

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA welcomes older Newstart recipients and carers being identified as key priority groups for Try, Test & Learn fund

Leading seniors advocacy group, COTA Australia, commends the government for now focusing on vulnerable older Australians at risk of long term welfare dependence in the next round of the Try, Test and Learn fund, announced by Minister Christian Porter at the National Press Club yesterday.

The objective of the Try, Test and Learn Fund is to generate new or innovative approaches to reducing long-term welfare dependence, through increased workforce participation or capacity to work.

Chief Executive of COTA Australia, Ian Yates, welcomed the inclusion of Newstart allowance recipients aged 50 and over, and working age carers on the carer payment, as key priority groups in the second tranche of the program, which COTA has been seeking since Try, Test and Learn was first announced.

As of 30 June 2017, there were around 251,400 people aged 50 or over receiving Newstart Allowance and around 221,700 working age carers. The latest Priority Investment Approach valuation shows that the expected average future lifetime cost for working age carers is \$461,000 per carer and \$320,000 per Newstart recipient.

“Around a third of the long-term unemployed receiving Newstart Allowance are over the age of 50 and are often forced to subsist on the paltry allowance until they qualify for the age pension.

“The sad reality is that many people, aged 50 and over, who find themselves unemployed, struggle to secure another job.

“Age discrimination remains widespread in too many workforces, which means many older Australians, by no fault of their own, are locked out of the job market.

“Older Australians possess vital skills and experiences and we should be tapping into the wealth of wisdom and knowledge they have to offer.

“Working age carers are also at risk of long-term welfare dependency and face a myriad of barriers in re-accessing employment.

“Due to their caring responsibilities, they require more flexibility in support services and in their workplace.

The second tranche of the Try, Test and Learn Fund is open for [grant applications](#) up until 28 September 2018.

COTA Australia is excited to see what new and innovative policy responses to welfare dependence are proposed over the course of the next year.

COTA Australia also acknowledges the \$98 million allocated to mature age reskilling programs to help job seekers over the age of 50 to re-skill and change careers, originally announced in this year’s budget.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.