

# seniorsvoice

NORTHERN TERRITORY

KEEPING NT SENIORS INFORMED

Published by



The peak body  
for NT Seniors  
since 1969



## ALICE SPARKLES

Thousands of face-to-face conversations all in one day PAGE 14-15

Sunday 29 October 2023

 [ntgrandparentsday.org.au](http://ntgrandparentsday.org.au)



Free  
community  
event and media  
resources kit

Event ideas  
and event  
(invitation)  
calendar

Story telling  
competition



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# Make yours a Rich Life

**NT Seniors Card welcomes one of its latest Seniors Card Business Partners to the discount program, Rich Life Health & Fitness.**

**You may be thinking the Rich Life means big \$\$\$ to join the gym, but this is not the case, and this is not your ordinary gym with pumped-up music and clanging and banging from noisy weight machines.**

Nestled in the heart of Cullen Bay in Darwin, Rich Life Studios is the 24/7 gym that redefines health and fitness while staying affordable. Their gym offers surroundings that radiate warmth and welcome, making it the perfect fitness destination for people of all ages. What truly sets them apart is their commitment to seniors.

As we age, exercise becomes increasingly vital. Rich Life Studios offers specialised programs and senior classes, ensuring that all of its members can stay active, healthy, and engaged.

From gentle yoga to specialised Silver Circuit training, they can ensure that your unique needs are met.

Exercise is crucial for enhancing cardiovascular health, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, sharpening mental acuity, and promoting independence. At Rich Life Studios, they empower seniors to reap these benefits in a supportive and peaceful setting. They have a wooden floor studio for meditation, Pilates, yoga and functional fitness classes and they can even turn the fairy lights on for the wind-down part of each session.

“My mother started going to a gym at 60 and is now 86. She inspired me to stay fit as I age. I started with personal training 2 days a week with Rich and when I felt confident, I joined the Silver Circuit,” says Rich Life client, Deborah Bear, “I’m so glad I did! I love the camaraderie and it makes me feel like I’m a part of something special.”

**Find out more about Rich Life Studios in the NT Seniors Card Discount Directory online at [ntseniorscard.org.au/discount/rich-life-studios-health-and-fitness/](https://ntseniorscard.org.au/discount/rich-life-studios-health-and-fitness/)**



“I started coming to the gym 4 months before my total hip replacement, I then continued doing PT with Rich as part of my rehab. My recovery has been amazing and I can’t wait to get back to the Silver Circuit. Rich Life gym has been life-changing and I’m so grateful to Rich and the team for keeping me active and improving my life!”  
Naomi Irvine



SENIORS CARD



## NT Seniors Card holders

**Find 100s of discounts throughout the Northern Territory on services and products from businesses in more than 40 different industries.**

Find out where to use your card in our online Discount Directory [here](#) or pick up a print copy from your nearest electoral office, library, community centre or COTA office.



If you are aged over 60, a permanent resident of the Northern Territory, then you are eligible for a FREE NT Seniors Card. Your Seniors Card can give you discounts on services and products from participating business in the Northern Territory and Australia-wide. You also travel for free on public buses in Darwin and Alice Springs, get a \$55 annual discount on private vehicle registration and receive regular e-news updates from the Seniors Card office.

**To find out more and to apply, visit [ntseniorscard.org.au](https://ntseniorscard.org.au) or call 1800 441 489 (freecall) Lines open Monday to Friday except public holidays, between 9am and 3pm.**

You will NEVER be asked to pay for a NT Seniors Card and you will NEVER be asked to disclose your bank account, credit card or payment gateway details. No other website or vendor is authorised to issue NT Seniors Cards.



# We can bring global ideas on inclusivity and compassion to the NT



Sue Shearer, CEO, COTA NT

**Well, this is our last Seniors Voice for 2023 and what a year this has been. Even since our last edition, COTA NT has held another major Expo in Alice Springs, marked the first Dying to Know Day with a fully-booked presentation, organised Seniors Month events, run its regular activities, hosted two community townhalls helping shape the future of Australian aged care and held its regional AGMs.**

The third AGM, for COTA Northern Territory, will be held on Friday 27th October at our Spillett House head office (65 Smith Street, Darwin). The AGM is open to all members of the community, and we especially encourage our financial Members and anyone interested in supporting our work through becoming a Member to attend.

At this meeting, we will review our body of work for the financial year 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, table audited financials and vote on Board nominations.

I recently returned from a Global Ageing Conference. It was heartening to hear *inclusivity* championed by expert speakers who came from social care and aged care backgrounds. They did not just *talk the talk*, they were walking it. Their professional experiences and learnings

were generously shared with us delegates. They highlighted the commonality of issues experienced by care providers across the world, most notably in the shortage of care workers. Numerous solutions were explored to enable enough carers to care.

Of particular interest to me were workshops on housing for people growing older (and for those who care for them as either family or professional, paid carers). I heard from CEOs of aged care providers who managed care environments built as safe, inclusive and inviting homes for *real* people which could adapt to life changes. It gave me more food for thought as we progress development plans for COTA's Spillett House site. We continue to investigate the feasibility of providing accessible (i.e. low-cost), safe and long-term housing for older people in central Darwin

by rezoning the organisation's current site for built-for-purpose housing development. More news on this in 2024.

Further inspiration and ideas borne out of the conference can be found on page 21.

December through to February are usually slightly quieter months for COTA NT. However, this year, I will be involved in the Northern Territory Government's community consultations as part of the Advisory Panel tasked with creating a framework for voluntary assisting dying (VAD) legislation. I urge you to take part in these discussions and to have your say, which you can do through attending meetings, taking a survey or writing to the VAD Inquiry Team (details on pages 5-6).

Until our next issue – anticipated in January 2024 – stay safe.

## Territory Seniors | Info

Northern Territory Government  
Switchboard 08 8999 5511

NT Concession & Recognition Unit  
1800 777 704 (free call)

Seniors Card 1800 441 489

Help Accessing Aged Care 08 8941 1004

Multicultural Support 08 8941 1004

Services Australia: Centrelink, Age Pension, Health Cards, Financial Information, Concessions, Loans, Retirement 132 300

Medicare 132 011

Disability, Sickness, Carers 132 717

Elder Abuse Helpline 1800 353 374

My Aged Care 1800 200 422

Aged Care Complaints Commissioner  
1800 951 822

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## seniorsvoice

NORTHERN TERRITORY

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COTA NT Website [www.cotant.org.au](http://www.cotant.org.au)

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*Seniors Voice acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.*

# The hidden faces of abuse

Paul Morris, Relationships Australia NT

**Sadly, Alice's husband of forty years, Mike, died the week Alice retired from work. Fortunately, her financial situation was in relatively good shape. Alice was the beneficiary of a life insurance payout, and she had access to her own and her husband's superannuation and other savings.**

Several months after the death of her husband, Alice downsized and sold the family home to buy and move into something more manageable. She bought a new car with the money left over from the sale of her home and invested the remaining money and both superannuation payouts in term deposit accounts with her bank.

Alice recalls that the financial abuse started innocently, and she wasn't aware that it was happening at first. It was her daughter-in-law that first approached Alice and asked for 5k to make repairs to her grandchild's room – how could Alice say no?

Next, Alice was being asked to help with fees for her grandchild's interstate school trip. Alice was told that they will pay her back, but she never received the money.

Alice's son then asked for more money to buy a new car. Alice initially said no until her son implied she would have reduced access to her grandchildren due to not having a car to drive her – a threat Alice took seriously.

Alice eventually gave her son money for the car. Alice recalls never seeing her son with a new car.

Alice felt forced and coerced by these demands and was not sure what to do. By reaching out to Relationships Australia NT Specialist Elder Abuse Service, she was able to receive support. In her free counselling sessions, Alice learnt about coercion and control and learnt tools to deal with the financial and emotional abuse.

Relationships Australia NT provides free counselling and support through our *Specialist Elder Abuse* program amongst other counselling and mediation services in Darwin and Alice Springs.

**Call 1300 458 600 or email [communitywellbeing@ra-nt.org.au](mailto:communitywellbeing@ra-nt.org.au)**



Relationships Australia  
NORTHERN TERRITORY

50 YEARS

**Specialist Elder Abuse Services**

Supporting older people to feel respected and safe  
[nt.relationships.org.au](http://nt.relationships.org.au)  
1300 458 600



Nearly 100 people attended 2 sessions at COTA NT's head office in Darwin.

## Territorians help shape future aged care

**Over 100 Territorians had their say in two 'reverse' townhall-style community consultations sessions on the proposed new Aged Care Act and the key funding principles for the aged care system of the future.**

Across the country, COTA Australia, its federation bodies, (of which COTA NT is one) and OPAN delivered 12 in-person consultations, four residential aged care consultations and two online events in a two-week period. 582 people registered for these consultations and nearly 100 were from the Territory.

"We brought the voices of older people directly to the Department who were there at every consultation and heard for themselves what older people and the

community thought. That was unlikely to be elicited if COTA Australia and OPAN did not facilitate a safe space for those discussions. It shows the value that we bring," said Pat Sparrow, Chief Executive Officer of COTA Australia.

"The collective feedback we received has provided us with a strong position on these vital reforms which will make monumental changes for older people, families, and carers now and into the future."

COTA Australia has submitted the results of the consultation and survey to government. The decision of when and whether to release them will be made by the Government (federal). An interim report by the Aged Care Task Force is expected in October/November 2023 with the Exposure Draft of the Aged Care Act in December 2023/January 2024.

### Quick codes tip

Quick codes on [Services Australia web pages](#) can be found at the very bottom right of the page. Also useful is the web page listing codes for commonly used customer forms, see [here](#) **QC 84**.

#### Find news fast with our quick codes

To read these news items go to our website and type 'QC ####' into the search, where #### is the Quick Code number from the article. Or you can search for the article by title. This way you can be sure you're accessing our official website.

**If you care for someone with Dementia you can also act on their behalf when dealing with Centrelink**



Supporting Dementia Action Week,  
18 - 24 September 2023.

Find it fast with this quick code:

**QC 65320**

# Community consultations on voluntary assisted dying legislation for the Northern Territory begin

Sue Shearer, COTA NT

**I was honoured to be invited to join the expert advisory panel set up to assist the Northern Territory Government in its consideration to legalise voluntary assisted dying in the Northern Territory.**

Our panel is led by co-chairs the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO and Duncan McConnel SC and includes me, Ursula Raymond, Dr Devaki Monani, Wendy Morton, Dr Geetanjali Lamba, Dr Christine Sanderson and Dr Kane Vellar. We have been selected to serve based on our experience and expertise in end of life health care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural matters, justice and social welfare policy.

COTA NT has lobbied for choice, compassion, dignity and individual rights and as an organisation our position is in support of the Northern Territory having laws around voluntary assisted dying.

Our research\* showed that 91% of our Membership and over 78% of senior stakeholders in the Northern Territory were supportive of legislation for assisted dying. Our national body's *State of the Older Nation* survey of



2018 showed that 84% of Australians across the nation were in support of legislation for assisted dying.

It is time to find out what laws around assisted dying for **all** Territorians will be regardless of age, gender, cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs.

## More information

Community consultation dates, Discussion Guides and Survey are on NTG web pages,

- [Information Page](#)
- [Have Your Say Survey - How You Think VAD Should Work in the NT](#)

COTA NT will use its channels wherever possible to share consultation dates.

If you are interested in having a group meeting with the Advisory Panel outside of a community consultation, or have any other questions, contact the VAD Inquiry Project Team directly.

- **Email**  
[VADInquiry@nt.gov.au](mailto:VADInquiry@nt.gov.au)
- **Call the hotline on 1800 973 393 from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.**

\* Results of COTA surveys are published here, [www.cotant.org.au/petition](http://www.cotant.org.au/petition).

## Terms of Reference – Expert Advisory Panel Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation in the Northern Territory Available online [here](#)

**The provision of compassionate, high quality and accessible palliative care for persons at their end of life is a fundamental right for everyone living in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory community is entitled to make choices to manage their end of life care, as are all other Australians.**

The Northern Territory was the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce voluntary assisted dying (VAD) with the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995* (NT) (the ROTI Act). The ROTI Act involved a lengthy application process to determine mental competence and a terminal illness. It required assessment by three independent medical practitioners including a specialist to confirm the terminal nature of the illness and a psychiatrist to confirm the patient was not clinically depressed. It was followed by a nine day 'cooling off' period.

Four people with terminal conditions accessed the legislation and were supported through VAD. These people were also able to access palliative care services from

the Department of Health. The effect of the law was overridden in 1997 by the passage of the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (Cth). The Commonwealth legislation amended the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* (Cth) by removing the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly's power to make any law permitting euthanasia. The Commonwealth legislation also removed this power from the Legislative Assemblies of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Norfolk Island.

## Current situation

The ROTI Act remains in force but with no legal effect. On 1 December 2022, the Senate passed the *Restoring Territory Rights Act 2022* (Cth) which repealed the 1997 amendments meaning the Northern Territory can now enact modern legislation to allow VAD.

All other Australian state jurisdictions have enacted or are developing modern VAD legislation customised to their community, with Victoria's law operating since 2019. The ACT is currently progressing with their legislation, having completed a public consultation process ahead of reporting

back to the ACT Legislative Assembly for the introduction of a Bill in late 2023. VAD is now a standard treatment option throughout Australia and in many other countries.

The laws around Australia are similar, with criteria for eligibility including being over the age of 18 years, being an Australian citizen or permanent resident, having competent decision-making capacity, and having a life-limiting illness. Criteria vary between jurisdictions on the definitions of eligible diseases or medical conditions, and the process for assessment and administration.

The Northern Territory will now embark on an extensive consultation process to listen to the views of our community, address concerns, and develop safeguards so that Territorians can make informed choices about their end of life.

## Governance of the Consultation

An independent Expert Advisory Panel (the Advisory Panel) will be commissioned to lead the consultation process under the Inquiries Act 1945.

The Advisory Panel will be co-chaired by eminent persons with specific knowledge of the Northern Territory. Panel members will be selected based on their expertise in the fields of end of life health care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural matters, justice, and social welfare policy.

The Advisory Panel will advise on the development of a discussion paper, lead the consultation process, make recommendations for the potential development of VAD legislation and report to the Chief Minister.

## Terms of Reference

The Advisory Panel is tasked with providing advice to Government to assist in the consultation and potential development and implementation of a new statutory framework for VAD.

Specifically, the Advisory Panel will provide advice to the Government on an appropriate legal framework for VAD in the Northern Territory by answering the following questions:

- What can the Northern Territory learn from the VAD experience in other jurisdictions, including overseas?
- Who should be able to access VAD?
- What process should a person follow to access VAD?
- What models of care should be adopted so that VAD can effectively be delivered in the Northern Territory context?
- What are the legal and ethical obligations of Health Practitioners who provide services relating to VAD?
- What safeguards need to be put in place for those accessing or providing VAD?
- How should compliance be monitored? and
- Any other question the panel considers appropriate.

The Panel must report on its findings to Government by end of July 2024.

## Discussion guides

The following discussion guides provide more information about VAD and can help guide your input:

[What is voluntary assisted dying and how you can have your say?](#)

[Who should have access to voluntary assisted dying?](#)

[What process should a person follow to access VAD](#)

[The role of health professionals and health services](#)

[Monitoring and compliance - How should we monitor voluntary assisted dying to make sure the process is safe and effective?](#)

Printed copies can be obtained from MLA offices, libraries and COTA NT.

## Consultation

Broad public consultation will be undertaken, with multiple avenues for interested people and groups to put forward their views. At time of writing these include the following:

- a dedicated [website](#);
- [an online survey](#);
- public meetings in the major centres;
- meetings with key stakeholders and community groups;
- written submissions; and
- any other methods as

considered appropriate by the Panel.

Wherever possible, consultation will be undertaken with the assistance of appropriate interpreters.

## Timing of the consultation

This is a crucial piece of public policy, with the potential to reshape end of life outcomes for Territory individuals, families, and communities. The Panel has commenced its work and public consultation will occur through to April 2024, enabling the preparation of a report with recommendations to Government by the end of July 2024.

## VAD Project Contact

- Email**  
[VADInquiry@nt.gov.au](mailto:VADInquiry@nt.gov.au)
- You can call the hotline on 1800 973 393 from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.**

**Guide 1** This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

### What is voluntary assisted dying and how you can have your say?

Ensuring compassionate, high quality, and accessible palliative care for those nearing end of life, is a fundamental right for all Territorians. Just like every other Australian, the NT community should have the freedom to make choices regarding their end-of-life care.

The NT has a unique history as the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce voluntary assisted dying (VAD) in 1995. Today, many Territorians seek greater choices for their end-of-life care, including the option to sign their final moments with their held values.

Voluntary assisted dying is a carefully regulated process that provides individuals with the choice to end their life when they wish, provided they meet all the legal criteria.

The VAD framework places a strong emphasis on safety, ethics, and the protection of both individuals and healthcare professionals. In December 2022, the Australian Senate passed the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act (VAD), removing previous restrictions that had prevented the NT and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) from enacting VAD legislation.

Voluntary assisted dying is already accessible in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, and South Australia, and will be introduced in New South Wales in November 2023. The ACT will also consider VAD legislation in its Legislative Assembly in 2023.

This is so a person can only access VAD if they are close to dying. Due to difficulty in estimating how soon a person is likely to die, this can also mean that a person may suffer and die before they are considered eligible to access voluntary assisted dying. In Victoria, a person can bring additional eligibility criteria access VAD if their disease, illness or medical condition is expected to cause death within six months (or, in the case of a person with a neurodegenerative disease, illness or condition, within 12 months).

When should a person be eligible able to access voluntary assisted dying in the Territory?

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

Engage | Listen | Respect | Report

**Guide 2** This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

### Who should have access to VAD?

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) is a process that allows eligible individuals the choice to end their life on their terms. Eligibility refers to the criteria that determines who can access VAD. We value your input on determining the criteria for eligibility and how individuals can access and use VAD.

Access to VAD should only be available to individuals who meet all the criteria.

**Able to make decisions**  
A person's decision to access VAD must be their own and not a decision made by anyone else.

However, in all Australian states that use VAD, people who have lost the ability to make decisions cannot access voluntary assisted dying.

A doctor is required to assess whether a person can make a free decision. If a doctor thinks that a person's disease or condition (for example, advanced dementia) means that a person cannot make decisions about VAD, that person will not be able to access voluntary assisted dying.

This also means that a person cannot make a decision prior to a condition or disease developing (for example, a person provides consent before they are eligible, to be assessed and access voluntary assisted dying after they have lost their decision making ability).

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

Engage | Listen | Respect | Report

**Guide 3** This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

### What process should a person follow to access VAD?

Territorians should have access to appropriate information and support to help them make decisions about accessing voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

What do you think the process should be for accessing VAD in the Northern Territory?

For your consideration, this is a summary of the process to access VAD in other Australian states:

- The person asks a qualified and experienced doctor (first doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying.
- The first doctor assesses if that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying.
- The person asks a different qualified and experienced doctor (second doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying.
- The second doctor assesses that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying.
- The person makes a written request to the first doctor, witnessed by independent witnesses.
- The person makes a final request to the first doctor.

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

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**Guide 4** This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

### The role of health professionals and health services

What role should health professionals have in the VAD process, and what should be in place to protect their patients?

Helping a person through the VAD process is an important role for health professionals in other places in Australia. We value your input on how health professionals can help from a health professional perspective.

**Reporting by health professionals**  
What should health professionals be required to tell us about their role in helping a person with voluntary assisted dying?

In other Australian states, health professionals are required to provide information at every stage of the VAD process to make sure health professionals are complying with the law. It also provides information to assess how VAD is working in the community. For example, when a person tells a health professional that they are dying, or a person to a health professional, professional record each.

Checking the following information should be followed:  
How should we monitor the process to make sure the process is safe and effective?

In some states, health professionals are required to report to the government how many people have accessed VAD.

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

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**Guide 5** This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

### Monitoring and Compliance - How should we monitor voluntary assisted dying to make sure the process is safe and effective?

We want to know your views on how we can make sure voluntary assisted dying has the right safeguards for individuals and health professionals in the NT.

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

Engage | Listen | Respect | Report

For more information visit [cmc.nt.gov.au/vad](http://cmc.nt.gov.au/vad)

# Grandparents Day events across the NT



Through the support of the Northern Territory Government and event partners, BCC Cinemas Casuarina, Event Cinemas Gateway Palmerston, Alice Springs Cinema and Katherine Cinema 3, COTA NT is holding four grandfamily-friendly movie mornings to celebrate Grandparents Day 2023.

Specially-priced tickets for Sunday screenings of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem* (rated PG) are available via [COTA NT's eventbrite page](#) (not through the cinema box offices).

There are limited seats available and tickets are only available for grandparents/seniors caring for young children who are coming with their grandchildren.

- Grandparents / Older Carers\* \$5 – includes morning tea/coffee and biscuit

- Children\* (under 14) \$2.50 – includes small drink and small popcorn

## Other Grandparents Day events

More events are listed on the [ntgrandparentsday.org.au](http://ntgrandparentsday.org.au) website.

If you are planning to celebrate Grandparents Day, the website also publishes a free event and media kit so you can send invitations, publicise your event online, use customised posters, print colouring and activity sheets and even create your own event bunting.

## Story Telling Competition 2023

COTA NT has already received some wonderful stories as entries to its Story Telling Competition 2023.

Stories can be entered in 3 different age categories (primary school, high school and open age) with winning entries receiving prizes and publication in *Seniors Voice*.

Entries should be sent to [communications@cotant.org.au](mailto:communications@cotant.org.au)

Full terms and conditions are on the [website](#).



## NT Seniors Recognition Scheme



The NT Seniors Recognition Scheme recognises the valuable contribution senior Territorians make to our community through a \$500 prepaid card issued each financial year.

Territorians aged 65 years older may be eligible to register for the NT Seniors Recognition Scheme if you are:

- A current NT resident, living in the NT for 183 days of the financial year; and
- An Australian citizen or permanent resident; or
- A temporary visa holder with a valid Medicare card registered in the NT.

To apply for the scheme:

- [ntconcessions.nt.gov.au](http://ntconcessions.nt.gov.au)
- Visit a Territory Families, Housing and Communities service centre
- 1800 777 704



TERRITORY FAMILIES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES



## Where can I shop?

The NT Seniors Recognition Card can be used to buy a large range of products including:



groceries



travel



clothing



white goods



power and water



bills



driver licence



postage



car registration



coffee



fuel



veterinary services

Use the card by 30 June each year, any remaining funds on the card will be cleared at the end of the financial year. Funds do not accrue.

The NT Seniors Recognition Scheme card is issued by Heritage Bank Limited ABN 32 087 652 024 AFSL 240984, ACL 240984. Please visit [ntconcessions.nt.gov.au/activate](http://ntconcessions.nt.gov.au/activate) to check the card expiry and the card balance.

# New springboard for Berry Springs' seniors

**Seniors voices in the Berry Springs area will be heard by a new board elected to COTA NT's Berry Springs branch at its recent AGM.**

Its new officers are:

- Denise Goodfellow – Chair
- Rodger Pocock – Vice Chair
- Bob McWaters – Secretary
- Michael Scott – Treasurer.

After a sterling effort, outgoing Chair Kerry Steward remains as a Committee Member.

"We are delighted that our COTA Members in the rural area have stepped up into the Committee for Berry Springs regional branch," said Jan Jewell, COTA NT Chair. "The new Committee will play a vital role in making sure the

voices of seniors living in rural areas around Berry Springs are heard by policy makers and stakeholders in the NT.

"We would like to thank outgoing Chair Kerry Steward for all the commitment and hard work she has put into the Berry Springs Branch over the years. It has been a tremendous effort for which we are very grateful. She always has a smile on her face, but now it's time for her to just enjoy catching up with everyone."

The group will continue to meet every 2nd Tuesday at various locations in the Berry Springs area, and new Members are very welcome. All enquiries can be directed to COTA NT Head Office on 08 8941 1004. News and



The new Board for 2023-25: Rodger Pocock, Denise Goodfellow, Bob McWaters and Michael Scott.

events relevant to Berry Springs are also published to the [COTA Berry Springs Facebook page](#).

More news about activities in the rural areas feature on page 22.



COTA NT staff, Kim Farrar and Lorna McLaughlin (pictured far right) accepted the nomination certificate on behalf of the team.

## Proud nominees

**COTA NT was proud to be nominated for the Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory's Outstanding Customer Service in Not-for-Profit alongside fellow hard-working not-for-profits.**

COTA NT would like to extend its congratulations to winner, Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation and to the Australian Red Cross, Cancer Council NT, Cox Peninsula Country Club and Aboriginal Bush Traders.

## The year that was

**COTA NT reviews the financial year, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 at its annual general meeting on Friday 27 October from 10am at its head office, 65 Smith Street, Darwin.**

This is an opportunity for COTA NT's financial members (individuals, couples and Club and Associate Members) to find out what featured in the 12-month period, meet the outgoing/incoming Board and review the audited financials.

This is also an opportunity for the public to find out more about the organisation's work, especially those with an interest in supporting the organisation's work through

financial membership.

The Annual Report 2022-23 will be released and available in print for those attending the meeting. It will be available online following the meeting.



# Local help for providers needing translation services in care provision

Cecilia Chiolero, PICAC NT

There are various ways to help individuals whose English proficiency is waning, many of which involve translation and interpretation services.

Professional interpreters can facilitate crucial discussions about service provisions or health without inadvertently **filtering** information based on their personal perspective or translating only what they think their relative can comprehend.

Relying on a family member as an interpreter is not necessarily the best or most effective option. It is not always the most cost-effective option either.

Last year, the Australian government launched a [free translation service](#) for eligible aged care providers across the country. This enables providers to get their copyrighted content\* translated (without cost), into the languages of culturally and linguistically diverse groups in their vicinity.

Even speakers, whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE) with a good understanding of the English language, may benefit from receiving content in their native language. Clarity especially around nuances can become critical in decision-making. A limited understanding of English shouldn't be confused with limited understanding overall.

Here's what typically happens when individuals receive



A welcome in other languages alongside translated materials about services can make people from non-English speaking backgrounds feel more comfortable and aware of your efforts to have information translated.

information in a language they're comfortable with:

1. They have a **recorded translated reference** to review, allowing them to revisit details and possibly return with questions.
2. They actively participate in a discussion.
3. They feel empowered and can make informed decisions or influence decisions impacting them.
4. Misunderstandings are minimised, as everything is explained.

Whilst interpreters may be used during meetings, having a documented reference from these meetings – which can be reviewed later – is a convenient tool that helps to avoid confusion and misinterpretation.

Essential documents that should be available in other languages include:

- welcome material such as how the service operates
- form templates such as registration, service agreement and feedback forms
- in-facility wayfinding signage to assist people in getting to rooms and activities
- non-personal documents or letters from friends, family or medical practitioners
- audio and video messages that assist people to better understand or participate in the service.

Professional translators and interpreters are held to strict confidentiality standards, and their operating systems adhere to rigorous regulations to prevent any breaches.

Hence, concerns about internal documents being shared to competitors or other organisations are generally unfounded.

**For help in getting your translations, contact Cecilia Chiolero, PICAC NT Manager on 08 8941 1004 Mondays to Fridays, 9am to 3pm.**



\* Content is any printed or digital assets aged care providers use for administrative purposes.

# Ageing with Grace

Esis Tawfik CEO of Ageing with Grace

**Ageing with Grace offers opportunity to enhance the lives of senior Territorians.**

## James's story

In his Ludmilla home, 86-year-old James walks over to his kitchen counter to pop the kettle on for his morning cup of tea. Moving a bit slower these days, he takes out a single mug and teabag for one – milk, two sugars, just as his late wife Miriam had once made. As he takes the first sip, he begins to think about his day ahead. After having had a rather bad fall a couple of months ago, James starts to feel anxious about getting to the Post Office. However, as his only outing of the day, he looks forward to chatting with the attendants at the desk. His wife has now been gone for 8 years, and life just isn't as joyful and fulfilling as it was with Miriam. James's story is just one of many, reflecting the broader issue facing older Australians today.

## The Solution: ACVVS

Older Australians are at a considerably higher risk of loneliness and isolation than their younger counterparts. This is why the Australian Government introduced the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS) over 30 years ago, previously known as the Community Visitors Scheme. The ACVVS is an initiative designed to combat loneliness and isolation among older Australians by pairing volunteers with seniors

to foster companionship and provide regular social interactions, thereby enhancing their well-being and quality of life.

## Ageing with Grace in the NT

Ageing with Grace is a not-for-profit organisation involved in creating connections and enhancing the lives of older people. Alongside providing independent living services and delivering digital literacy programs, funding through the ACVVS enables Ageing with Grace to match volunteer visitors with older people to build a meaningful connection and help create a sense of purpose.

CEO of Ageing with Grace, Esis Tawfik, is steadfast in the pursuit of a society where older people are valued, supported, and empowered to live their lives to the fullest. "This free service is making a real difference to the lives of older people. We are so grateful to have such dedicated volunteers across Australia, and we are looking forward to expanding our offering to NT residents."

## Benefits of volunteering

Research shows that volunteering can increase happiness, boost self-esteem, has physical and mental wellbeing benefits, and facilitates personal and career growth.

Helen Andrew, a volunteer for close to 2 years, finds the experience incredibly fulfilling. "I enjoy the visits as much as Annette does. She is a wonderful lady, and we have



Helen Andrew, Ageing with Grace Volunteer with her companion, Annette.

become good friends," Helen shares. Annette adds, "Tuesday is my favourite day of the week because that is when Helen visits. She is like a breath of fresh air and a great listener."

Ageing with Grace ensures that all volunteer visitors undergo police screening and are provided with training prior to matching with an older person. Matching is based on shared interests and, where possible, similar cultural and social backgrounds such as those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or from the LGBTIQ+ community.

## Accessing the Service

To access the ACVVS, recipients must either be living in a government-funded aged care home (regardless of age or funding), approved, and waitlisted for a home care package, or be receiving any level home care package. If eligible, it is your right as an older person to access the ACVVS free of charge. Referrals can be made by family, friends,

health professionals, and aged care providers. Isabel referred her grandmother, Dulcie, in 2020, calling it the best decision she ever made. "My Grandma was so lonely and isolated before receiving visits from her volunteer. Now, she's so much happier."

Loneliness affects an estimated 1.5 million older Australians, marking it as a significant public health concern.

## Get involved

If you know an older person who would benefit from this service or if you want to volunteer, visit [www.ageingwithgrace.org.au](http://www.ageingwithgrace.org.au) and click on 'Get Involved'. For information, phone 0448 440 331 or email [vanessaf@ageingwithgrace.org.au](mailto:vanessaf@ageingwithgrace.org.au).



# Food, nutrition and dining hotline is live

**The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline is now live and can be called on 1800 844 044, 9am to 5pm AEST, Monday to Friday.**

The hotline provides advice and information about food, nutrition and dining in aged care. People receiving aged care, their representatives, approved providers and aged care staff can call the hotline with questions and concerns about food, nutrition and dining.

People receiving their care and their representatives can call the hotline to:

- ask questions

- seek support
- raise concerns or complaints. Examples of issues that might be raised include:
  - the nutritional needs of older people
  - developing a set of menus with aged care residents
  - food selection
  - how to make food more appealing for people with little appetite
  - how to increase the nutritional content of meals
  - how to support people with swallowing difficulties
  - how to make texture modified diets appealing and nutritious
  - how to accommodate religious and cultural needs



*This video outlines what consumers can expect from their food and dining experience in aged care and gives people living in aged care – and their representatives – information and advice about how to speak to their providers and their rights. Watch [here](https://youtu.be/sXGWrK-IBNI) ([youtu.be/sXGWrK-IBNI](https://youtu.be/sXGWrK-IBNI))*

- how older people and aged care staff can work together to improve the overall dining experience.

**Callers may also share a good idea they have seen, experienced or implemented.**

Aged care providers can find resources on food, nutrition and dining on the

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission website [here](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-care-resources/food-nutrition-and-dining-providers) ([www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-care-resources/food-nutrition-and-dining-providers](https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-care-resources/food-nutrition-and-dining-providers)).

They cover topics such as the dining experience, choice, swallowing, eating and drinking with acknowledged risks and oral health.

## Recent health news

### Free shingles vaccinations

Older and immunocompromised Australians will be given free access to a new, more effective shingles vaccine from 1 November. This includes everyone aged 65 years and over.

The jab is more effective than the shingles vaccine currently available on the National Immunisation Program. The risk of developing shingles increases with age.

Find out more [here](#).

### Gastroenteritis

In the NT, gastro cases rose recently. Take measures to protect yourself from rotavirus, norovirus and other causes of

infectious gastroenteritis

For more info visit [www.nt.gov.au/wellbeing/health-conditions-treatments/digestive-health/gastro-diarrhoea](https://www.nt.gov.au/wellbeing/health-conditions-treatments/digestive-health/gastro-diarrhoea).

### Box jellyfish

The stinger season officially started in the Northern Territory on 1 October, with venomous box jellyfish more likely to be in the water up until the end of May next year.

Immediate first aid for a jellyfish sting is important and the victim may need CPR.

For treatment info visit [www.nt.gov.au/wellbeing/emergencies-injuries-and-accidents/bites-and-stings/jellyfish](https://www.nt.gov.au/wellbeing/emergencies-injuries-and-accidents/bites-and-stings/jellyfish)



**Darwin Community LEGAL SERVICE**

*A free and confidential legal service. We can help.*

## Seniors Rights Service

*Centrelink  
Human Rights  
Employment Rights  
Elder Abuse Information Line  
Aged Care Rights & Advocacy*

*Freecall 1800 812 953  
info@dcls.org.au  
dcls.org.au*

# Money saving tips

Small changes to your routines can save money, as well as reduce power usage. When you purchase new appliances, compare energy efficiency and running costs with the [Energy Rating Label](#).

More tips to consider include:

## Air conditioning

- Try running your air conditioner between 24°C and 27°C, use your fan as well. A fan will take humidity and edge out of the heat and circulate the colder air.

- Reduce your system's runtime. Try running a timer.
- Make sure filters are clean.
- In summer, sleep under a sheet rather than a doona.
- Ensure cool air cannot escape and close all windows and doors to rooms that do not need cooling. Close all curtains and drapes.
- If possible, insulate ceilings, walls and window dressings.
- Place the air conditioner on shady side of building.

## Fridges and freezers

- Consider turning off a spare or bar fridge.

You can find tips on the Power and Water website, [www.powerwater.com.au/customers/power/saving-power](http://www.powerwater.com.au/customers/power/saving-power)

- Set your fridge to between 3°C and 4°C and your freezer between -15°C and -18°C.
- Check the magnetic door seals are in good condition.
- Place your fridge/freezer in a cool position and leave enough gap at the back to ensure there is a free flow of air past the coil. A fridge motor should only run about 30 per cent of the time.
- Keep your fridge clean inside and out. Do not let dust build up on the condenser coil at the back.

- Don't open the door too often or for too long. You'll let the cold air out.
- When going away for extended periods, empty, clean and turn off the fridge and leave the door open.
- Choose a fridge size best suited to your needs.

## Lighting

- Switch to LED lights which use less electricity than traditional halogen incandescent bulbs or compact fluorescent lights.



Services  
Australia

## Working and getting Age Pension



### Age Pension and working

Sarah gets \$300 of Work Bonus each fortnight, which she can build up to the maximum Work Bonus limit.



### Fortnightly income from working is \$300

In this fortnight, Sarah is paid \$300 gross in wages from her employer. We'll apply \$300 of the Work Bonus to this income. This means Sarah's wages won't reduce her Age Pension this fortnight.



### Fortnightly income from working is less than \$300

In this fortnight, Sarah is paid \$200 gross in wages from her employer. We'll apply \$200 of the Work Bonus to this income. This means Sarah's wages won't reduce her Age Pension this fortnight. We'll increase Sarah's Work Bonus balance to \$100.



### Fortnightly income from working is more than \$300

In this fortnight, Sarah is paid \$600 gross in wages from her employer. We'll apply \$300 Work Bonus to this income as well as apply her \$100 Work Bonus balance. This means only \$200 of Sarah's wages will be included in the income test this fortnight. Depending on Sarah's circumstances, we may reduce her pension this fortnight.



### Fortnightly income goes over the cut-off point

Sarah gets a promotion at work which increases the amount of wages her employer pays her each fortnight. These wages together with Sarah's other income is now over the Age Pension income test cut-off point and her rate of pension reduces to \$0.



### Fortnightly income goes over the cut-off point for 6 fortnights

Sarah continues to report her income each fortnight. For the next 6 fortnights, Sarah's income is over the cut-off point and her pension remains at \$0.



### Age Pension is suspended

Because Sarah's income has gone over the cut-off point for more than 6 fortnights in a row, we automatically suspend her Age Pension instead of cancelling it.



### Suspension confirmation

We'll send a confirmation of her suspension. It includes the date Sarah must contact us by to restore her payment, which is up to 2 years.



### Pensioner Concession Card

Sarah gets to keep her Pensioner Concession Card and doesn't have to report her income during the suspension.



### Stops working

Sarah continues to work for the next 18 months. Then her situation changes and she decides to stop working.



### Restoring Age Pension

Sarah calls our Centrelink older Australians line on 132 300 to ask us to restore her Age Pension. We restore her payment without her needing to reclaim.



For more information go to [servicesaustralia.gov.au/agepensionworking](http://servicesaustralia.gov.au/agepensionworking)

# A little relief on energy bills for those eligible

Source: Northern Territory Government  
Website: [Energy Bill Relief – households](#)

## The Australian and Northern Territory (NT) governments are jointly funding electricity bill relief.

If eligible, households can get relief on power bills of up to \$350. To be eligible, you must be the person named on your household electricity, and one of the following:

- an NT Concessions Scheme member
- living in an eligible remote community (eligible communities are those that are Indigenous Essential Services customers

- receiving another eligible benefit.

Other eligible benefits include: all other Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold cards, Carer Allowance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Family Tax Benefit, Health Care Card, Indigenous Essential Services and the Low Income Health Care Card.

*The Energy Bill Relief is different to the NT Concession Scheme [electricity concession](#).*

**For those online, full details are available on the NTG website [here](#)**

[www.nt.gov.au/community/grants-and-volunteers/grants/energy-bill-relief-households](http://www.nt.gov.au/community/grants-and-volunteers/grants/energy-bill-relief-households)



**You can contact the Energy Bill Relief team by:**

**phone: 1800 296 900**

**email: [ntenergy.billrelief@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntenergy.billrelief@nt.gov.au)**

**finding your nearest NT Concession and Recognition Unit**

(see office locations online [here](#))

[www.nt.gov.au/community/concessions-and-payments/nt-concession-scheme/contact-us](http://www.nt.gov.au/community/concessions-and-payments/nt-concession-scheme/contact-us)

## Part of the team

**Community Bank  
Nightcliff,  
Coolalinga,  
Katherine and  
Alice Springs**

**1300 236 344**

**B Bendigo Bank**



**independence  
matters**

Association of  
Independent Retirees

## AIR NT

**AIR NT promotes the independent lifestyle of Territorians aged 50+**

**We aim to assist fully or part self-funded retirees (and those planning their retirement) to enjoy the benefits of living in the Territory while ensuring our unique needs are met**

**Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month 5.30pm  
Tracy Village Social and Sports Club  
28 Tambling Terrace, Lyons or via Zoom**

**Presentations on topics of interest for people approaching or in retirement**

[www.airnt.org](http://www.airnt.org)

[info@airnt.org](mailto:info@airnt.org)

**Contact Jill: 0422 002 408**

# Alice came out to play for the day!

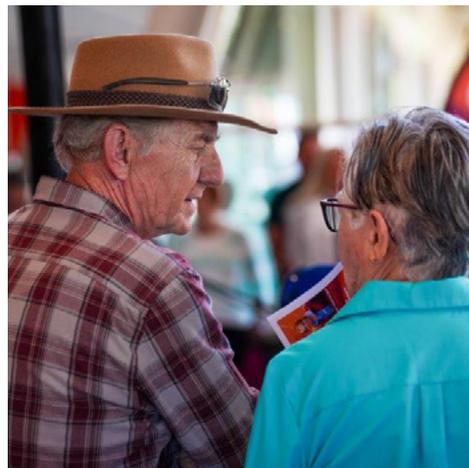


Stephanie Kendall, COTA NT

**Alice Springs celebrated its Seniors Expo and Seniors Still Got Rhythm 2023 event in Seniors Month. Jointly hosted by COTA NT and Alice Springs Town Council with the assistance of the Northern Territory Government, the event was a great success with over 500 people attending, 54 exhibitors, 5 performances plus Open Mic talent.**

Local talent, harpist Sally Westaway made the event welcome particularly beautiful.

Photos: Lemon Tree Media Productions for COTA NT



Over 500 people came through the doors of Seniors Expo and Seniors Still Got Rhythm to enjoy a full program of activities which included visiting 54 exhibitors, live music, dancing and refreshments (full program online [here](#) and more photos [here](#)).



The Hon Lauren Moss MLA, Minister for Seniors, formally opened the event which featured plenty of conversations around personal and home safety, banking, legal services, palliative care, advance personal plans, food bank, scams awareness, civic services, retirement, aged care services, consumer and human rights, complaint processes and dispute resolution, pension, cost of living, concessions, mobility aids, health and well-being and possibly hundreds more besides.

COTA NT would like to acknowledge the support of Sponsors, Power and Water who enabled COTA NT to give away free personal alarms at the event. (Personal safety alarms are still available via



Happy recipients of safety alarms

the COTA NT Office in the 50+ Community Centre – contact Fran on 0438 635 354 for information regarding these).

Thanks to everyone who attended the event, especially the COTA volunteers, COTA NT Club and Associate Members and the Rotary volunteers for the community barbecue.

*This event was funded by a Northern Territory Community Events grant.*



# Coming up at COTA Central Australia

**Grandparents Day Movie in Alice Springs: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem**

Sunday 29 October, 10.30am – 12.30pm, Alice Springs Cinema, Todd Plaza, 11 Todd Street, Alice Springs

Buy tickets [here](#)

**Scam Safety Workshop**

Wednesday 8 November, 10am – 12pm, 50+ Community Centre, 11 Wills Terrace Bookings 0438 635 354

**Christmas Morning Tea**

Wednesday 6 December Golf Club Alice Springs (by invitation only)



**Get news and event info**

Follow the COTA NT Central Australia Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/COTANTAliceSprings](http://www.facebook.com/COTANTAliceSprings) to get the latest news or visit the COTA NT office in the 50+ Community Centre, mornings 8.30am to 1pm.

# News from Katherine Senior Citizens

Gillian Hagger, Katherine Senior Citizens



COTA NT Club and Associates Katherine Senior Citizens

**We had a very enjoyable Seniors Month and our thanks go to NT Government and COTA NT for their assistance.**

We commenced with Katherine Town Council hosting a *Sip and Paint* event, which expanded our painting skills in the grounds of O’Keefe House, complemented with an enjoyable morning tea. Mayor Lis Clark provided an overall view on town matters and thanks to Shanaye and Jenny for their instructions. Many of us had talents we were not aware of.

Katherine Rotary hosted a morning of *Seniors Olympics* in their park. An assortment of activities, from ball games to riding bikes, followed by lunch provided by our local MLA, Jo Hersey. Thanks to Chris, Pam, their helpers and Jo.

*Katherine Outback Experience* was a treat and thanks go to management and staff.

*Merrie Melodies* held at the Katherine Club was a time of harmonising “songs of our youth” with assistance from Megan and Ali. Thanks to all for a pleasant day with lunch served by friendly staff.

*Celebrate Ageing* at the Katherine Country Club with lunch and 6 locals giving us their views on ageing. Most enjoyable with advice and personal experiences expressed. Thanks to Dr. PJ, Jo Hersey, Ezlyn Fletcher, Chris Dixon, Sue Moran, Bev Dickens, club management and staff.

*Just Pottering Around* with local Gary Beaumont at O’Keefe House included a Devonshire morning tea provided by National Trust ladies. Gary demonstrated mixing soils, fertilizers, dividing plants and re-potting. A most enjoyable and interesting morning. Thank you once again Gary and the ladies at O’Keefe House.

**New Members Welcome**

Weekly meetings continue on Wednesdays, 10.00am at rooms in Bernard Street. A variety of activities and outings are arranged.

We hosted a meeting with the Commissioner of Police on 27th September discussing *Safety in the Home*.

**Further information from G. Hagger phone 8972 2201.**

# Empowering Seniors to Live Their Best Lives



 08 8944 4888

 [carersnt@carersnt.asn.au](mailto:carersnt@carersnt.asn.au)

 Carer  
Gateway  
An Australian Government Initiative

 CarersNT  
Australia



# The legal sides to life (and death)

Janet Brown, Aged Care Navigator,  
COTA NT

## Wills Week 2023 in September highlighted the need for advance life planning for ALL people, not just seniors.

By making a Will you can make sure the things that are important to you are looked after or given to your loved ones. This could include a pet, car, savings account, insurance, gaming gear, your wardrobe, collectables, loans, inheritances, payouts etc.

Alternatively, if you have an accident and can no longer make decisions for yourself – it’s important to make sure you have the necessary plans in place for your future.

End of life planning was at the centre of COTA NT’s *Dying to Know Day* presentation and workshop held in September. The session introduced topics such as the importance of a current valid Will, what happens if you die without one, understanding how the NT’s Advance Personal Plan allows you some control of your end of life, understanding what “losing capacity” means in terms of decision-making, communicating final wishes and your final resting place.

The “getting ready to drop off” meeting, so described by one of the attendees, included an introduction to COTA NT’s first edition of *The Goodbye Guide*. This is an “invaluable list of checklists” for anyone preparing and planning to get

their paperwork and affairs in order.

*My Life Story*, a short booklet helping people to write and share their memories and their life story was also distributed.

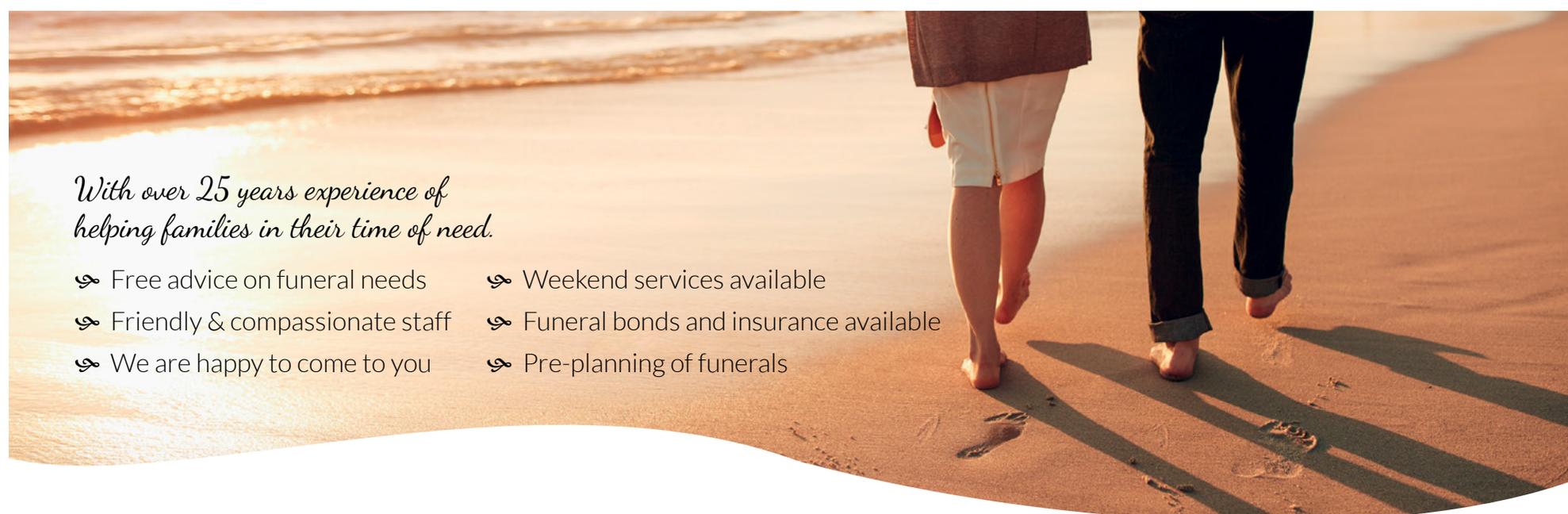
*Dying to Know Day* is formally marked on the 8 August, but COTA NT will also be delivering the same presentation in Alice Springs early next year. Requests for this presentation to ‘travel’ will be considered and should be made to Sue Shearer, Chief Executive Officer at [ceo@cotant.org.au](mailto:ceo@cotant.org.au).

One of the questions that arose from the first workshop was, “Can I upload my Advance Personal Plan to My Health Record on MyGov?” The answer is yes, you can. See Letters, page 18 for advice.

*My Health Record* is a safe and secure place to keep your key health information, available to you and your healthcare providers anytime, including in an emergency.

**Call 1800 723 471 for general enquiries or concerns about My Health Record.**

Copies of *The Goodbye Guide* can be downloaded from the COTA NT website free of charge [here](#) (choose from two editions).



*With over 25 years experience of helping families in their time of need.*

- ☞ Free advice on funeral needs
- ☞ Friendly & compassionate staff
- ☞ We are happy to come to you
- ☞ Weekend services available
- ☞ Funeral bonds and insurance available
- ☞ Pre-planning of funerals

## Caring for you and your family in your time of need

Our services are personalised and tailored for families to celebrate the life of their loved ones. We listen to what each family needs and wants are and ensure we carry out their wishes. We help guide families throughout each stage of the funeral process. We help take the stress away at this difficult time.

*We offer:*

Burials ☞ Cremations ☞ Memorial Urns & Jewellery ☞ Interstate & Overseas Repatriations



# Real life: letters, Qs and NT chats

Can I upload my Advance Personal Plan to My Health Record on MyGov?

Yes, you can.

My Health Record works with your MyGov account and your doctor can help you. Information about My Health Record below is sourced from the [beconnected.esafety.gov.au](https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au) website. Digital health has become a part of our

healthcare system. You can find out more about digital health services on the website, [www.digitalhealth.gov.au](https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au). Digital health services include My Health Record, electronic prescriptions and telehealth.

## My Health Record enquiries

- Phone: 1800 723 471 (select option 1)
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Be Connected  
Every Australian online.

## My Health Record and myGov

Learn what My Health Record is, how it works with your MyGov account, and how your doctor can help.

### What you need

To follow along with this course, you will need:

- A **myGov account** set up with **email** and **password**
- Your mobile phone, to receive a **special code** to sign in to myGov
- Your **Medicare account** linked to your **myGov account**.



### What is My Health Record?

**My Health Record** is a secure service that lets you see important details about your health. You can:

- Check information about recent doctor visits
- See your **prescriptions** and your **allergies**
- Manage who is allowed to see your medical records
- Control which records are visible or even **delete** them from your **My Health Record**
- Decide who will be a **Nominated Representative** with access to your records (in case you are too ill to access them yourself)
- Secure this private information with your **MyGov account**.

Information in your **My Health Record** comes from **Medicare**, your **doctor**, and you can also add notes and make updates **yourself**.

You can learn more about My Health Record in the **Digital health services** panel on the [digitalhealth.gov.au](https://digitalhealth.gov.au) website.

Your **My Health Record** is a voluntary service, and you don't have to use it. If you are uncomfortable with the information it collects, you can **cancel** your entire My Health Record.

## How to link to My Health Record

To access My Health Record you need to link it to your myGov account. This is much easier to do if you link to **Medicare** first. Once you have Medicare linked, follow the steps below to link My Health Record.

1. Visit [my.gov.au](https://my.gov.au) and sign in with your **email**, **password**, and the **code** sent to your mobile phone.
2. Go to the **Profile: Linked services** page.
3. Find **My Health Record** in the list and click **Link**.
4. If you have already linked **Medicare** to myGov, a message appears saying your **Medicare online identity** has been detected and linking will finish.
5. If you don't have Medicare linked, the **How do you want to link My Health Record?** page appears, and you can follow the steps to finish linking.
6. When linking is complete, your **My Health Record home page** loads, and a **Welcome tour** will play.

## Setting up My Health Record

When you start using **My Health Record** there won't be much information on the page:

- Go to your **My Health Record home page** by signing in to **myGov** and clicking **Go to My Health Record**
- Click your **name** in the top right corner and choose **Set up record** from the menu that appears
- Click any category on the page that appears, to update or add information to it.

## Using the Health Snapshot section

On your **My Health Record home page**, lots of information is listed under the **Health Snapshot** section.

When this page loads, some of this information is hidden. Click **Expand** to show all the information

## The Shared Health Summary

Ask your doctor to upload a **Shared Health Summary** to your **My Health Record**. This has important current health information about you, including:

- Your current **medical conditions** (if any)
- The medicines you are taking - **prescriptions** and **over the counter (OTC)**
- Your known **allergies** and adverse reactions
- A section called **Key Information I've Added** where you can type in extra information about any allergies and medication.

## My Health Record and Advanced Care Planning

You can use My Health Record to manage your **Advanced Care Plan**. This includes:

- What treatment and care you would and wouldn't like to have
- The name of a **Custodian** who can speak on your behalf (usually a family member).

## Using My Health Record, day to day

Mostly your **My Health Record** will be updated automatically by your doctor or Medicare, but sometimes there are delays or things go wrong. The **Documents** menu has useful information:

- The **Medicare Overview** page shows recent visits or check-ups, including any **prescriptions**
- You can click **Manage Access** on any Medicare record to make it more private or even **remove it**
- The **Clinical Records** page shows items like **Pathology Reports**
- You can check this for results of, for example, a recent blood test, and if the results are not there, you can ring your provider to ask why
- The **Key information I've added** page lets you add a **Personal Health Note**, such as any details you want to remember at a later date.

## Remember to sign out safely!

Before closing your browser, click **your name** in the top right, then from the menu choose **Log out of My Health Record**. This will log you out of My Health Record also sign you out of myGov and, after a moment, you will see the **You've signed out of myGov** message. You can now close your browser window.

[beconnected.esafety.gov.au](https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au)

## Useful numbers



**Interpreter services:** If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450. For hearing or speech assistance, contact the National Relay Service or call 1300 555 727.

**myGov helpdesk:** 132 307 (option 1), available 7am – 10pm, Monday – Friday and 10am – 5pm, Saturday – Sunday in local Australian time zones.

## Medicare enquiries

Medicare: 132 011, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Tax rebates for older workers

Hi guys could u pls tell me if there is a special tax rebate for those who continue working past retirement age...there should be!...im 72 have to continue working.

J.M. [name withheld for privacy]

We can only refer you to the ATO for advice relating to your specific circumstances, but I gave them a call to get what information I could.

There is a Seniors and pensions tax offset which you may be eligible for – see below for key points.

To be eligible for the seniors and pensioners tax offset (SAPTO) you must:

- be eligible for an Australian Government pension or allowance
- meet income limits for you and your spouse.

### 1. Income limits

You meet this condition if any of the following applied to you in the income year of your claim:

- You didn't have a spouse and your rebate income was less than \$50,119.
- You had a spouse and the combined rebate income for you and your spouse was less than \$83,580.
- At any time during the year
  - you and your spouse had to live apart due to illness or because one of you was in a nursing home, and
  - the combined rebate income of you and your spouse was less than \$95,198 (less than \$47,599 for each partner).

Beneficiary tax offset and seniors and pensioners tax offset calculator

[www.ato.gov.au/Calculators-and-tools](http://www.ato.gov.au/Calculators-and-tools)

Full details are on this page: [www.ato.gov.au/individuals/income-deductions-offsets-and-records/tax-offsets/seniors-and-pensioners-tax-offset](http://www.ato.gov.au/individuals/income-deductions-offsets-and-records/tax-offsets/seniors-and-pensioners-tax-offset)

The ATO call line is 13 28 61 (I requested a callback so I didn't have to wait on hold and they phoned me back in about 35 minutes).

**SEARCH TIP – enter the page number in this case QC72197**

See also, Finance on page 12.

## Signs of stroke

Is having a nose running on one side only a sign of stroke?

*This question arose from a Stroke Safe talk held earlier this year. We referred it to Karina at Strokeline for reply, see below.*

I have spoken to the team, and we have concluded that having a runny nose on just one side, is not currently recognised as a sign of stroke.

When speaking about the signs of stroke, we refer to F.A.S.T and other signs listed here: [Signs of stroke](#)



We are also unaware of any research pertaining to this sign. However, if anyone is concerned that someone is experiencing a stroke, please do not hesitate to call 000 or a health professional. I hope this information is helpful.

Please let us know if you require further information at 1800 787 653 or [strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au](mailto:strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au)

## Do not delay applying for support services

An 84 year old lady needing assistance with cleaning contacted COTA NT's Aged Care Navigator in Darwin.

Our ACN provided her with the My Aged Care contact number 1800 200 422 and explained that she would probably be most successful in applying for support under the *Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)*.

However, as there may be a substantial wait time to access support (cleaning is one of the most in demand supports and there are worker shortages), she was advised to apply as soon as possible.

## Changing service providers

I am considering moving to Brisbane. Do I need to re-apply for my home care support?

Our ACN advised No. As My Aged Care is a national organisation, home care support can be transferred, and your current provider *must* support you in the move. Information on the process is available on the My Aged Care website under "Changing Service Providers." [www.myagedcare.gov.au/manage-your-home-care-package-services](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/manage-your-home-care-package-services).

But changing service providers can also be a choice.

If you're looking for a better fit, you may want to change to a provider that better suits you. You can do this at any time.



## Free help in accessing aged care

COTA NT's Aged Care Navigators are based in Darwin and Alice Springs

ACNs ensure the aged care needs of older people from all backgrounds are met, that people have access to relevant information before making decisions about aged care including but not limited to:

- Up-to-date and relevant information about aged care options and the system
- Help to access aged care support
- Rights and choices
- Changing aged care service providers
- Making formal complaints.

Call COTA NT on 08 8941 1004 for assistance.

Send your letters, questions or comments to the Ed.



By post

NT Seniors Voice  
GPO Box 852  
Darwin NT  
0800

By email

[ntseniorsvoice@cotant.org.au](mailto:ntseniorsvoice@cotant.org.au)



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# Global inspiration

Sue Shearer, COTA NT

**Travelling to Glasgow recently provided me not only with an appreciation of how beautiful Scotland and the UK are, but also with professional inspiration and further aspirations for what Territory seniors need to grow older with dignity, as our organisation envisions.**

I attended the 2023 *Global Ageing Conference* by Scottish Care and the National Care Forum. Topics presented included upholding human rights in aged care, using technology in person-centred care and emerging roles of Care Technologists, education around end of life care and bereavement, using inclusive built environments for those living with dementia, time-cushion volunteer care services and time credits, inclusivity and memory support programs for those living in aged care villages, impact of poverty on carers, community programs, importance of environment design and build in outdoor and indoor spaces, palliative care in nursing homes and use of AI (artificial intelligence) in aged care.

It was apparent that Australia is not alone in trying to attract workers, especially in the social care sector. One of the major inhibitors being housing, a worldwide problem – for carers and those needing care. How can you attract workers when they will pay exorbitant rent or worse, have nowhere to live?

An Expo showcased products



Global Ageing Conference 2023

such as an App that calculates pain level, simply by placing the smartphone near a patient's face. An innovative way to gauge clients' pain level instead of asking, "from 1 to 10, what is your pain level?"

There were discussions on appropriate accommodation for dementia patients, making it more inclusive and connected to the outside world. As an example, in the Netherlands, one facility has a childcare centre and elderly people can watch and engage in activities.

Another idea is an apartment complex which is all two-bedrooms – if one of the couple is diagnosed with dementia and needs more constant care, they can move and rent the particular apartment without selling their home. If one of the couple passes away, the other one can stay as long as they like but they can also move back into their home. The benefit here is that people who have been together long-term are not separated, which as we all know, causes stress and heartache for both people.

I was left wondering *why* is Australia so stuck in providing such clinical settings for dementia patients?

Let's advocate for bravery, innovation and hope that one day Australia will lead the way in providing client-focused aged care accommodation.



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# Staying social through the whole year...

Lorna McLaughlin, COTA NT

**Seniors Month has finished and there were over 200 events and activities held across the Territory. One of the wonderful aspects of Seniors Month is the showcasing of the many diverse activities enjoyed by senior Territorians in the NT and connecting people through them.**

One of the many activities hosted by COTA NT was an *Ageing Purposefully Workshop* designed to provide tips and advice about living a healthy happy life. This fun, lively session, an opportunity for socialising, also included a talk on nutrition, skin care, exercise, diet, positivity and a laughter yoga session.



Stacie Ashlett aka Hyper the Clown comes from an entertainment family and is a laughter specialist and humanitarian Clown based in Darwin.

Laughter yoga is a brilliant and totally under-promoted stress reliever. It does not require any previous experience, a specific wardrobe or equipment. It does not require postural changes that affect vertigo or blood pressure. At

worst, it makes mouth muscles move into smiles, and at best, it provokes hearty laughter.

Not every social interaction needs to be hosted of course, sometimes simply contacting an old friend can help allay feelings of loneliness and isolation.

As we age, it's inevitable of course that life includes conditions and changes we haven't chosen. We may experience physical and mental health changes, chronic pain, memory loss, side-effects of medication; life events like losing loved ones, relationships, independence, work and income, mobility; and significant changes in living arrangements. It is not surprising, that sometimes these factors impact our ability to stay social and active, happy and healthy.

So as we approach our change of seasons, it's an opportune time to remember that when August is over, most of these activities designed to connect us continue all year round.

Some groups may not have the resources to promote and showcase what they're doing, so you may have to dig around to find them. Good locations to find information include libraries, electoral offices, community centres, shopping centres and stores, social media posts, newspapers/newsletters and online calendars such as the Territory Seniors Calendar.

COTA runs activities throughout the year to help people – its Members and



COTA NT's Seniors Month including (from left, anti-clockwise) Pottering Around, Berry Springs 6th Birthday Bash (raffle winners), Ageing Purposefully Workshop.

members of the community – stay socially active, connected, informed and engaged. Our activities are designed to be affordable, accessible, safe, comfortable, relevant and enjoyable for older people. Whether you attend a simple morning tea with a speaker-feature, a fitness class, a musical or sewing group session, you will be made to feel very welcome.

## Personal Safety Workshop

November 23 @ 9:30 am – 12:30 pm (\$10 pp)  
Humpty Doo Golf Club  
Tickets [here](#) (or call 8941 1004)

To find out more about activities run by COTA in Darwin and surrounding region, Coomalie, Berry Springs and Alice Springs, call Head Office on 08 8941 1004 during office hours, Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm or visit our [online events calendar](#)

([www.cotant.org.au/territory-seniors-calendar/](http://www.cotant.org.au/territory-seniors-calendar/)).

This calendar also lists activities provided by other groups and organisations. Online read: [www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/older-people/starts-at-sixty](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/older-people/starts-at-sixty)



## Rural regulars

### COTA NT in Berry Springs & Coomalie

Both groups meet regularly and welcome new people along for activities and outings. Contact COTA NT 08 8941 1004 for info.



### Berry Springs Markets

Last Sunday of each month, March to December, 8am – 12pm, Berry Springs Hall, 1130 Cox Peninsula Road, Berry Springs Phone: 08 8988 6272 + Last Sunday of October Berry Springs Mango Festival



**Freds Pass Rural Markets**  
Association Incorporated



Saturdays (All Year), 8am – 1pm  
Fred's Pass Sport and Recreation Reserve. Phone: 0428 802 833

Adelaide River Markets start again during Easter Weekend 2024.

# Navigating the holiday fitness slump

Sharon Kelly, Super Ageing

**The festive season, decorated with shimmering lights and jubilant moods, often brings a mix of feelings. It's undoubtedly a time of happiness and togetherness, but it also marks the climax of the year's trials, tribulations and accomplishments. The rush of gift shopping, event preparations, and the overall year-end wind-down can be simultaneously thrilling and exhausting. Drawing from my experience with those over 50, I've noticed a tendency for fitness dedication to dip during these times.**

I'd like to stress that it's entirely natural to feel this way. Many of us share the sentiments of being swamped or tired. However, instead of pushing your fitness regimen to the back burner, consider adapting it to suit your current mindset and the season's requirements. Here are some strategies to help you manage the holiday fitness slump.

**Prioritise Effectiveness:** Concentrate on the core of your exercise. Even a concise 10-minute routine can be highly advantageous, minimising injury risks and promoting joint well-being. It's the regularity that counts, not the intensity.

**Opt for Open Air:**

Amidst festive chores, think about walking to close-by destinations. It's an excellent mode of staying active, and the sun offers the much-needed Vitamin D, essential for bone vitality. If the climate isn't favourable, a quick stroll around the shopping centre before shopping can serve the purpose.

**Domestic Exercise Regimens:**

If gym sessions seem intimidating, there's a plethora of online guides. Explore my YouTube channel, "[Super Ageing](#)," specifically for over 50's. It's more than calorie burning; it's about dedicating the time for yourself!

**Realign Your Objectives:**

Reconfigure your fitness goals for the season. Instead of intense benchmarks, set sights on objectives that emphasise joint care, agility, flexibility, and balance. The primary objective? *Sustain the routine.*

**Pay Attention to Your Physiological Cues:**

Some days might be bursting with energy, while others might demand relaxation. It's crucial to listen to your body.

**Conscious Activities:**

Engage in exercises like Pilates, renowned for boosting core stability, alignment, and suppleness, which become increasingly vital with age. Gentle stretches can also offer a feeling of calmness both mentally and physically, amongst the seasonal chaos.

**Set Achievable Goals:**

Understand that this holiday time is special.



It's okay if you're not doing as much as usual. Make goals you can reach and be nice to yourself.

**Stay Hydrated and Eat Mindfully:**

Amidst festive treats, ensure you're hydrating adequately, vital for joint health. While indulging is part of the joy, balance it with nutritious choices to maintain energy levels.

To sum up, the festive season is a whirlwind of emotions and duties. While maintaining fitness is paramount, it's equally important to respect and comprehend your emotions. By adjusting your routine and setting realistic expectations, you can navigate this season with grace, poised to welcome the upcoming year with fresh enthusiasm and intent.



Sharon showcased Seated Aerobics at COTA NT's Seniors Expo in Darwin.

**COTA NT has worked with Sharon of Super Ageing for 8 years championing health and fitness for seniors.**

During this time, Sharon extended her in-person classes in Seated Aerobics and Pilates to the ZOOM platform, enabling all Internet-connected senior Territorians to participate.

Since 2017, Super Ageing has offered discounts to COTA NT's financial members for each class. Classes currently cost \$7 for COTA NT members and

\$9 for non-Members.

All classes are designed and tailored for senior adults of all ages and abilities. The current program includes:

- Pilates (face-to-face\* and via ZOOM), Mondays 9.30am
- Strong and Functional (face-to-face only), Tuesdays 9am
- Seated Aerobics (face-to-face and via ZOOM), Wednesdays 9.30am

\* face-to-face classes are held in Spillett House, Darwin.

**For more information, call Sharon on 0438 890 089.**

Grandparents Day 2023  
is Sunday 29 October

NT  
Grandparents  
Day

Grandparents are storytellers,  
gatekeepers of family tradition,  
knowledge and experience.  
We thank our grandparents  
for their sharing stories.

Competition 2023  
**STORY TELLING**

COTA NT invites you to share your grandest stories with us.  
You choose the topic – it could be a funny shared moment, the best ever tall tale,  
a life-changing piece of advice, a letter written, a memory recalled. The choice is yours.

Enter your story in one of three categories:

- Primary school students: 250 word limit
- Secondary school students: 500 word limit
- Open age: 1000 word limit

There is no entry fee. Entries close 1 October 2023.

**WINNING ENTRIES**

- \$100 for one winner from each category
- Winning stories published in Seniors Voice
- Selected entries published to the  
NT Grandparents Day website

**TO ENTER**

On the first page, include your name, contact details, story title  
and for school categories, the name of the school you attend.

Double check the terms and conditions on the  
NT Grandparents Day website. Save your story  
in PDF format. Send as an email attachment  
to [communications@cotant.org.au](mailto:communications@cotant.org.au)

COTA NT  
events celebrating  
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