

COTA NATIONAL SENIORS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

6 May 2005

Ms Carolynne James
The Committee Manger
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms James

Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas

COTA National Seniors Partnership (CNSP) wishes to bring before the Standing Committee on Public Works a number of issues of relevance to the Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas.

Many of the coastal areas of New South Wales have been growing as a result of the migration of retirees. They are now significantly older than other areas and this trend is projected to continue. In other coastal regions, growth is being driven by the migration of both retirees and younger people – these areas will need to respond in ways that promote cohesive communities responsive to the needs of diverse ages.

We would also note that the demand for infrastructure cannot be considered independently from the demand for and provision of services. For example, inadequate provision of services that promote healthy ageing and the capacity for seniors to remain in their own homes can contribute to increased pressure on infrastructure such as hospitals and nursing homes. Inadequate provision of public transport can impact upon reliance on private transport and in turn on the need for roads and the location of service infrastructure.

Similarly the provision of built infrastructure needs to be accompanied by planning that ensures that there are adequate resources, including a suitably skilled workforce, to ensure that the capacity of the infrastructure provided can be fully and appropriately utilised.

In summary the main factors that we would like the Inquiry to consider are as follows:

- greater coordination between all levels of government is urgently needed particularly in relation to planning and provision of infrastructure for hospitals and health services, aged care facilities, and community facilities.

- provision of accessible public transport services is a major factor in ensuring access by seniors to built infrastructure and community services. Planning of new infrastructure needs to include consideration of transport issues. Ideally the planning and development of transport services should occur along side infrastructure development.
- provision of affordable and appropriate housing options is important in enabling older Australians to remain active members of their communities.
- development and recruitment of suitably skilled staff is another critical issue in order to ensure that facilities provided for through built infrastructure can be brought on-line.
- planning processes that take into account not only the needs of the present population but also projected trends including migration and the needs of the population as it ages so that people can 'age in place'.
- provision of education and advice to people considering relocation to coastal areas about the level of services available and the factors that they should consider particularly in relation to retirement planning.

These matters are outlined in greater detail in the attached submission against the terms of reference for this Inquiry.

COTA National Seniors Partnership (CNSP) is the largest membership organisation representing the concerns and interests of Australians aged 50 and over, both nationally and in every State and Territory. CNSP develops policy based on membership input, including through Branches and member organisation forums. Policy Councils in each State and Territory, and our National Policy Council, determine CNSP policies and positions. The NSW Policy Council is co-chaired by Dr Susan Kurrle and Ms Sheila Rimmer AM.

With more than 270,000 individual seniors and over 800 organisations in membership, CNSP is the largest membership organisation representing the concerns and interests of Australians aged 50 and over, both nationally and in every State and Territory. In New South Wales we have more than 70,000 individual members.

With its combined individual and organisational membership representing all aspects of Australian seniors' interests, CNSP has a pre-eminent role in representing, advocating for and serving older Australians.

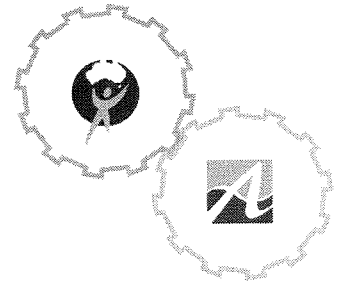
We would be happy to appear before the Committee to discuss the issues raised. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on 02 9251 6088 or email l.cheetham@nationalseniors.com.au for further information on this submission.

Yours sincerely



Lucy Cheetham
NSW Manager - Policy and Programs

COTA NATIONAL SENIORS
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Parliamentary Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas

Submission from COTA National Seniors Partnership

6 May 2005

ABOUT COTA NATIONAL SENIORS PARTNERSHIP

With more than 270,000 individual seniors and over 800 organisations in membership, COTA National Seniors Partnership (CNSP) is the largest membership organisation representing the concerns and interests of Australians aged 50 and over, both nationally and in every State and Territory. In New South Wales we have more than 70,000 individual members.

With its combined individual and organisational membership representing all aspects of Australian seniors' interests, COTA National Seniors Partnership has a pre-eminent role in representing, advocating for and serving older Australians.

Councils on the Ageing (COTAs) and National Seniors Association formed COTA National Seniors Partnership in December 2002 in the first stage of a full merger, which is now in its final phase. COTA National Seniors Partnership operates in all States and Territories.

COTA National Seniors Partnership develops policy based on membership input, including through Branches and member organisation forums. Policy Councils in each State and Territory, and our National Policy Council, determine CNSP policies and positions.

The policies on which this submission is based come from membership input through a network of local branches and at State level through the New South Wales Policy Council co-chaired by Dr Susan Kurrle and Ms Sheila Rimmer AM.

For further information on this submission please contact:
Lucy Cheetham, NSW Manager Policy and Programs,
Post: COTA National Seniors Partnership GPO Box 9892 SYDNEY 2001
Email: l.cheetham@nationalseniors.com.au
Phone: 02 9251 6088
Fax: 02 9251 6755

RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

1 Key coastal population growth and urban consolidation trends in NSW

While most older residents in New South Wales live in Sydney, 36.8% of people aged 65 or over live elsewhere in the State and a significant proportion of these are in coastal areas.

In 2000, the south coast of New South Wales from the Victorian boarder to Kiama and many parts of the north coast from Gosford to the Queensland border already had high concentrations of older people (more than 13% of the population over the age of 65)¹.

Population projections by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that by 2019, the oldest statistical local areas (SLAs) are most likely to be those situated along the coast in south-eastern Queensland, New South Wales, south-eastern Victoria and south-eastern South Australia. By 2019, the second oldest SLA in New South Wales is projected to be Great Lakes with an anticipated 30.1% of the population aged 65 and over².

While many coastal regions, for example Gosford, The Entrance and Wyong, are also experiencing an influx of younger home owners, they remain popular destinations for retirees. These regions therefore will need to respond to the needs of a diverse population.

¹ ABS Population Projections for Statistical Local Areas 1999-2019 – 2000 Population Estimates by Age and Sex.

² ABS Population Projects for Statistical Local Areas 1999-2019. Note that this analysis uses the 1996 SLA boundaries and excludes SLAs with fewer than 1000 people.

2 Short and long term needs of coastal communities for basic infrastructure (such as roads, power, water and sewage) and human services infrastructure (such as hospitals, schools, aged care centres and sporting facilities)

Short term planning needs to take account of the immediate needs of coastal communities. Issues of particular concern to seniors including access to hospitals and other health services and access to residential aged care services in areas where there are already significant numbers of older people.

Access to these services at the local and regional level is a major factor in enabling seniors to maintain health and wellbeing and to sustain links with their community. The frail elderly and their carers and couples who live separately due to health reasons also benefit greatly if they are able to access services in the area in which they have hitherto resided.

Access to public transport is also of great concern in some areas and lack of access may often lead to significant isolation of older people. Public transport impacts on the extent to which infrastructure facilities are used and upon patterns of unmet demand. In coastal areas it is important to consider the provision of public transport within townships and residential areas, between these areas and regional centres and linkages to major and metropolitan centres. It is the policy of CNSP to encourage all levels of government to invest in upgrading and expanding all forms of public transport, particularly rail services, for travel within and between regional centres and for travel within and between outer urban areas, while keeping fares at easily affordable rates.

COTA National Seniors would like longer term infrastructure planning take account not only the needs of the existing populations in coastal areas but also of projected population trends. We would like to see an integrated approach that takes into account a number of factors including:

- Community facilities:
 - provision for appropriate community meeting facilities, such as halls or community centres, to allow seniors to congregate for general meetings and social occasions.
 - provision of facilities for community education, internet based learning options and education and training including opportunities for 'mature age' people seeking to remain active in the workforce. Organisations such as U3A and WEA are important providers of cultural and recreational courses. They contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of seniors and should be supported.
 - the development of practical, innovative community education and access programs to assist take-up and effective use of electronic services. Programs should include those with a specific focus on seniors, on mature aged workers and community organisations.

- design of public buildings, sports grounds and other facilities which are accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.
- provision of application processes for disabled parking that are as simple as possible so as not discourage potential applicants.
- improvement in the level of home and community care services to allow seniors to remain living in the community for as long as practicable.
- Hospitals and health services
 - resourcing of provincial hospitals in line with population trends in the surrounding areas and to reduce waiting time for elective surgery within the public hospital system.
 - adequate support services in discharge, post-acute, convalescence and rehabilitation to back-up acute hospital service facilities.
 - reopening of closed public hospital wards and providing more rehabilitation and transitional care places to overcome early discharge and assist with convalescence of older patients.
 - provision of medical services including dental services, palliative care, audiology assessments and preventative health screening.
- Appropriate Housing
 - the overall stock of affordable and appropriate housing needs to be improved and seniors need to be assisted to move into appropriate housing or to modify and maintain existing housing as their needs change.
 - there needs to be an adequate stock of public/community housing to meet the needs of seniors and enable seniors on the full Age Pension in private rental accommodation to access good quality community and public housing.
 - provision of low cost housing for single persons in retirement and those of aged pension age who are made redundant.
 - provision of water, gas and electricity services at concessional rates and concessions on council rates and charges.
- Residential Aged Care
 - COTA National Seniors urges all levels of Government to develop a strategy to support and encourage the development of Aged Care facilities with a full range of services particularly in areas where there is a high concentration of seniors and the ratio of services and residential care places to seniors aged 70 or more is seriously below the national average.

- Telecommunications
 - in addition to providing telecommunications services to regional, rural and newly developed areas there is a need to address the telecommunications needs of consumers in aged care facilities and other institutions, and group accommodation such as caravan parks and rooming houses.
 - local government authorities should ensure that all building codes specify that all new dwellings must be connected to the phone network.

- Public Transport
 - the transport requirements of seniors in all rural and regional areas of New South Wales require particular consideration and this is also true of coastal growth areas. Public transport services, particularly rail services, for travel within and between regional centres and for travel within and between outer urban areas need to be expanded while keeping fares at easily affordable rates.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - Expand geographically accessible and culturally appropriate health services, community services and residential aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander seniors.

3 Coordination of commonwealth, state and local government strategies to deliver sustainable coastal growth and supporting infrastructure

CNSP strongly supports coordination of commonwealth, state and local government strategies. Areas in which we would like to see great coordination include:

- planning and resource allocation for residential aged care.
- planning and resource allocation for health services including hospitals and community health services.
- planning and resourcing of adequate home and community care services to enable people to remain living in their own homes for as long as is practicable.
- planning and resourcing of public and community housing including housing provision that meets the needs of seniors and people with a disability.
- provision of affordable and accessible dental services.
- provision of public transport including rail services at both local and regional levels and including links to regional towns and metropolitan centres.
- planning and provision of telecommunications, electronic services and educational opportunities.
- workforce planning and resourcing and incentives to increase the availability of appropriately trained staff for the aged care sector including aged care staff trained in the care of patients with dementia.
- training for general practitioners in coastal regions in geriatric health care and strategies to provide an adequate supply of relevant professionals such as: gerontic nurses and palliative care workers.

We would also note that the demand for infrastructure cannot be considered independently from the demand for services. For example, inadequate provision of services that promote healthy ageing and the capacity for seniors to remain in their own homes can contribute to increased pressure on infrastructure such as hospitals and nursing homes. Inadequate provision of public transport can impact upon reliance on private transport and in turn of the need for roads and location of service infrastructure.

Effective infrastructure planning would also benefit from a wider coordinated planning approach which takes account of the need for services such as:

- Information and referral services including:
 - careers advice centres, specifically to meet the needs of workers and potential workers aged 50 and over.

- transition to retirement programs to provide information and advice on income needs and lifestyle expectations in retirement and to provide assistance in moving away from full-time paid employment.
 - information services which assist people planning to move to coastal areas and advise them about the levels of service available.
- Home and Community Care
 - there is a need for improved targeting and resource allocation to ensure that seniors with low, medium and high care needs have access to services which allows them to ‘age in place’ in their own home for as long as they choose and for as long as is practicable.

4 Best practice methods to plan, manage and provide infrastructure to coastal growth areas

Best practice planning methods need to take account not only of the current population but future population projections and the needs of an aging population. It is of concern that the provision of health and aged care services has lagged behind the growth in population of many coastal areas due to patterns in sea-change retirement.

5 Management of social, environmental and economic considerations associated with infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas.

Management of social, environmental and economic considerations are all vitally important and interdependent. With respect to the ageing population in many coastal regions, we would note several key issues:

- the potential impacts on regional economies of shifts in demographic balance. This impact includes positive opportunities for economic growth in the provision of services to meet emergent markets.
- the need, particularly in locations where growth is driven by increased migration by both young people and retirees, to develop policies that promote inter-generational harmony and community cohesion.
- the need to provide independent information and education to people contemplating retirement to coastal areas about the levels of service available and the factors they may wish to consider particularly in regard to their needs in later life.