Council on the Ageing (ACT)

What is COTA ACT?

COTA ACT is the peak organisation for all issues relating to older Canberrans, seniors and their families.

We are an independent organisation working to protect and promote the well-being, rights and interests of all older people in the ACT and region.

COTA ACT is a member of COTA Australia – and contributes to the development of national policies and agendas.

We cover all aspects of the ageing journey.

COTA
For older Australians

History of COTA ACT

COTA ACT has been looking after the needs of older people in the ACT since 1973.

Over the years COTA ACT has been active in identifying gaps in services and policies for older Canberrans and involved in the development of many service groups in the ACT.

COTA ACT delivers a range of programs and services designed to improve the lives of older people by keeping them connected to and informed about the local community.

A local organisation staffed by local Canberrans, our focus is on providing engagement and outcomes for older people in the Canberra region through our programs and services and policy development.

COTA ACT Services and Programs

COTA offers a range of services and programs to seniors and members. These include:

- **Seniors Information and Advisory Line**
- **Outreach sessions (at ACT libraries and other venues)**
- **In-reach sessions for seniors (offering advice on finances, legal issues and advance care planning)**
- **Aged Care Navigation sessions**
- **Housing Options Advisory Service**
- **Get IT – digital mentoring**
- **Community Education**
- **Strength for Life**
- **Hughes Community Shed**
- **ACT Seniors Card**
- **Events (like Silver is Gold)**

Seniors Information and Advisory Line 6282 3777

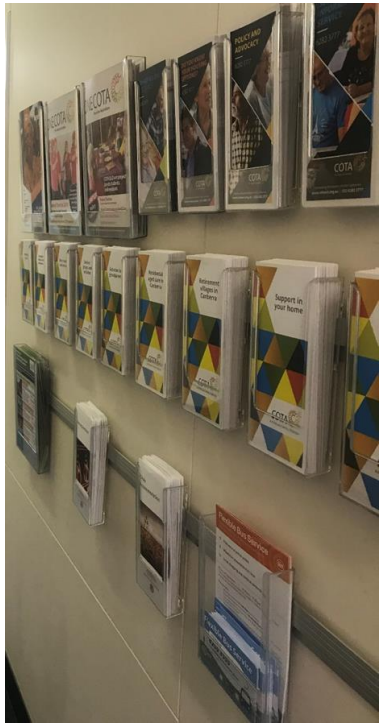
Do you need information for yourself or for an older person in your life?

Then you can call us on this number and ask us anything!

We won't know the answer to everything – but we will do our best to find out for you.

We produce over 20 brochures with information about a range of services, resources and supports across the ACT and region.

In addition, we also have a corridor full of over 200 hard-copy pamphlets, flyers and publications.

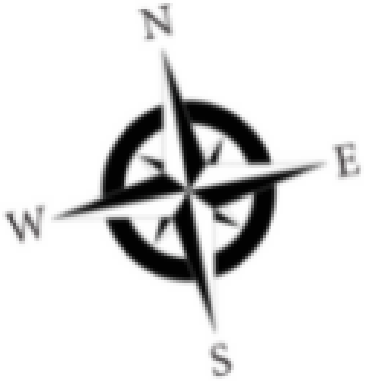


Aged Care Navigation Service

Aged Care Navigators provide one-on-one help to people who need assistance to better understand and use the aged care supports available to them.

Navigators can help you with a range of enquiries, including:

- ✓ understanding the help and supports you can receive to help you remain safely in your own home,
- ✓ understanding your options for residential aged care,
- ✓ helping you to register with My Aged Care,
- ✓ providing referrals and information about ACT services, and
- ✓ helping you find or change a local aged care provider.



Book a free Navigation appointment for yourself or a family member by calling COTA ACT on 6282 3777.

Housing Options Advisory Service

Funded by the ACT Government, the Housing Options Advisory Service can help if you are over the age of 50 and need information or assistance with any of the following housing issues:

- Home modifications and / or downsizing to a smaller home
- De-cluttering / helping someone with a hoarding disorder
- Public, social, community and private housing
- Assistance for carers
- Retirement Villages
- Residential Aged Care
- Rental options
- Information about staying in your own home

In-reach ‘Sessions for Seniors’

Sessions for Seniors

COTA ACT has partnered with a number of organisations to provide free, safe and private consultations for seniors.

Session bookings can be made with:

- ACT Policing Seniors Liaison Unit (safety, crime, and abuse)
- Respecting Patient Choices (Advance Care Planning)
- Legal Aid (legal information and advice)
- Care Inc (financial and consumer law)
- Free taxation help

Sessions are monthly and need to be booked by calling the COTA ACT office on 6282 3777

COTA in the Community

The **COTA ACT Outreach** program happens at a range of community settings, offering information, advice, resources and referrals to older Canberrans on issues of concern or interest. The COTA Outreach program can be delivered in both regular venues (such as fortnightly at the libraries) or booked on a one-off basis by a local club or service organisation.

Currently we are offering drop-in sessions at four major ACT library locations each fortnight:

Week 1	Gungahlin: 10am to 12pm Dickson: 1pm – 3pm
Week 2	Tuggeranong: 10am – 12pm Kippax: 1pm – 3pm

Community Education

COTA ACT runs regular seminars and discussions either online or at the Hughes Community Centre

Our popular Midweek Matters sessions provided online advice and information to a large number of seniors during the 2021 lockdown and pandemic restrictions and is now back in both a face to face and online format.

Make sure to keep in touch with us (via our mailing list or Facebook page) to find out about what session are coming up next

Strength for Life

Strength for Life is an evidence-based exercise program in the ACT, created to help people over the age of 50 (over 40 for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders) improve their physical strength and fitness.

Strength for Life is a progressive training program designed to improve the participant's strength, balance, coordination and endurance.

Other benefits of the program may include:

- increased mobility
- reduced risk of falls
- preventing or managing arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes and heart disease
- speeding up recovery from illness
- reducing lower back pain
- improved ability to undertake daily living tasks
- opportunities for social interaction
- improvement in self-esteem and mental wellbeing

Strength for Life

Live longer, live stronger

Get IT – digital mentoring

One-on-one sessions get support and build confidence using your laptop, mobile phone or other device

COTA ACT offers free one-on-one digital learning sessions to seniors with tech-savvy volunteer mentors.

The **Get IT – digital mentoring program** provides older Canberrans with a safe space to ask questions and learn about how to get online and become confident with using technology.

The learning sessions are designed to assist seniors with staying in touch community, family and friends and be a resource for finding information

Get IT – digital mentoring is available at the COTA ACT office at the Hughes Community Centre and in the Canberra community (such as via our ACT Libraries outreach sessions).

Programs supported by the ACT Government

COTA ACT manages other programs for seniors on behalf of the ACT Government

- ACT Seniors Card program
- ACT Seniors Card Discount Directory
- ACT Seniors Week (Silver is Gold)
- ACT Seniors Expo (Silver is Gold)

ACT Government

ACT Seniors Card and Discount Directory

COTA ACT manages Seniors Cards in the ACT, which are combined with Transport Canberra MyWay cards - one card allows for public transport access, and the Seniors Card discounts and services. You can apply online for the combined Seniors MyWay card.

Who is eligible for a Seniors Card?
If you are over 60 years of age, a permanent resident of the ACT and working 20 hours or less each week you are eligible for an ACT Seniors Card.

What discounts am I entitled to?
Your ACT Seniors Card gives you access to savings on a range of goods and services provided by participating businesses. Discover discounts available by searching on the ACT Seniors Card website, or downloading a copy of the Seniors Card Discount Directory: http://www.actseniorscard.org.au/discounts.html.

SENIORS CARD

ACT Seniors Week and Silver is Gold Festival

The Silver is Gold Festival is a year long series of events to celebrate and connect seniors in the ACT.

A highlight of the festival are the Seniors Expo and Seniors and Veterans Expo which provide a one stop shop of information, entertainment, competitions, giveaways and activities.

We also deliver the Chief Minister's Concert featuring the Band of the Royal Military College Canbera and the Seniors Awards ceremony each year.

Keep up to date with the latest events as part of the Silver is Gold Festival on the COTA ACT website.

News and Information

COTA ACT provides a number of printed and web based publication resources for senior Canberrans.

Joining COTA ACT will make sure you never miss out on our news and information services.

You are also welcome to come into the office to pick up printed versions or have a look the products available on our publication web page.

For more information contact the office or send us an email.

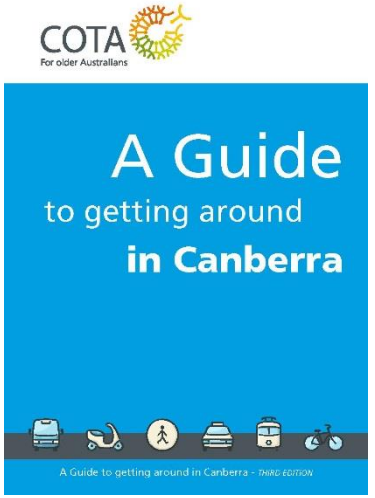
We also share a monthly e-newsletter, members alerts to give advance notice and bookings of events and quarterly hard copy newsletter.

Publications and Resources

COTA ACT produces a range of publications and resources designed to provide up to date and relevant information for seniors and their families.

Our 'Directory of Services' series includes brochures on a vast range of topics, including:

- Computing classes
- Home Care
- Residential Care
- Helplines
- Transport
- Activities for Grandparent Carers



We also produce a wonderful booklet "A Guide to Getting Around Canberra" which describes all the different transport options available in Canberra.

COTA ACT Membership

COTA ACT Membership

All current COTA ACT services and programs are free and available to any ACT senior, and their family or carer, regardless of membership status.

Becoming a COTA ACT member helps us to provide these services and entitles you to access a further range of benefits.

Anyone can join COTA ACT irrespective of their age. An engaged and growing membership enables COTA ACT to become a stronger and more sustainable organisation. Importantly, it also allows us to become more persuasive when fighting for better outcomes for older Australians.

You can find more information about membership and joining us on our website, or please call the office on 6282 3777.

Hughes Community Centre

COTA ACT is responsible for the management and hire of the Hughes Community Centre.

The Hughes Community Centre is the ACT's only community seniors hub, host to a range of services, programs and supports for older Australians, their friends and family members.

This includes the University of the 3rd Age, the Hughes Community Shed and Community Garden, Better Hearing Australia (Canberra) and regular sessions like:

- Alchemy Chorus
- Canberra Bonsai Society
- Hobby groups
- My HeartBEATs
- Musical Moves for Seniors
- Strength for Life
- Church groups etc.

Aged Care Navigation

Aged Care Navigation works one-on-one with clients to support them to build their knowledge and confidence in accessing aged care services and supports. Navigators can guide you through the steps from information to assessment, referrals and receiving care.

*Note the process of each person may be different depending on their individual circumstances

Aged Care Navigation

COTA ACT's Aged Care System Navigation

COTA ACT's Aged Care System Navigation service aims to support older people, their friends or families to work their way through the very complex range of aged care services and supports.

We offer a personalised and client-centred approach as we understand that this process is unique for each individual and also that respect and empathy are just as important as information in this process.

Aged Care Navigation

Relevant information from local experts

COTA ACT's Aged Care Navigation provides locally targeted information in our own Canberra community.

Our expert staff are able to support, educate and assist people by informing and linking them with suitable aged care (and other) services at both the local and federal level.

Registering with My Aged Care

To access Australian Government subsidised aged care services, you will need to register with My Aged Care.

You can register and apply for an assessment by calling 1800 200 422 or using one of the online forms.

Navigators can help you to register with My Aged Care, access or update a previous registration or apply for an assessment.

Australian Government | myagedcare

How the assessment process works

Once you have applied for an assessment (either online or via the phone) you should hear from an assessment organisation within a few weeks. They will tell you whether you are eligible for an assessment and, if so, you can agree a time for the assessor to come to your home.

Our advice when you have the assessment is to be sure to talk about the hardest times, not just to focus on the easy days when all is fine.

Aged Care Navigation

What happens at the assessment?

An assessor will either ring you or come to your home to assess your care needs and eligibility for services. The assessor will work with you (and any support person you wish to include) to develop a support plan about your care needs, goals and service preferences.

Language and interpreter support is also available (just make sure you ask myagedcare for this in advance).

You will need ID (medicare card and licence or passport) and it is good to have thought about (maybe make a list) of your issues, questions that you have and the areas you are looking for support.

Aged Care Navigation

What happens next?

After the assessment you will be notified about your eligibility for government subsidised aged care services and which type and level of funding. You can then choose a provider for those services from the online list at myagedcare (the Navigator can help with this process).

You will also need to think about the funding amount, fees and additional costs. Navigators can help you to understand and compare these amounts and to access financial advice if you require.

Aged Care Navigation

Your support. Your choice

You have control over the provider

Keep in mind that while you have choice of provider – many providers have limited, or no, availability to take on new clients or expand services.

Navigators can help with choosing providers and finding out about fees, availability and wait times, as well as tips and tricks we have found to speed up this process.

Aged Care Navigation

Tips and tricks - When having an assessment

- Have someone with you (could be a friend or family member)
- Make a list of the things you need help with (you can start by checking out what type of supports are available at myagedcare.
- Talk about the days when things are most difficult, or those times when you might need help (like transport to the eye doctor when you can't drive yourself)
- Say "yes" to any supports that the assessor suggests, just because you don't need them today, doesn't mean you won't in a few months (and you won't pay for things you don't use).

Tips and tricks - When accessing support

- Choose a provider that you feel comfortable with or that you have heard good things about
- Check their fees and availability
- You can ask for an extension to decide on a provider before accepting a package, but remember the funds will not start accruing until you nominate a provider and accept the package.
- You can change providers at any time – if you are unhappy for any reason.
- If your package is not enough (either not enough service or funding) or your needs have changed, you can always ask for a new assessment.

Aged Care Navigation

Respite and Residential Aged Care

Eligibility for accessing respite or permanent residential aged care (nursing home accommodation) is part of the myagedcare assessment process.

There are many possible and complex fees and charges that are involved with residential aged care

Navigators can help you to understand some of these issues, help you to find the best residential aged care facility for your needs and also refer you to specialist financial advice – before making any decisions.

Aged Care Navigation

Not quite ready?

Just because you are eligible for supports does not mean you need to access them. We can help you to accept packages, but also how to delay (if you choose) or if you need to organise additional help in a hurry.

Otherwise our Housing Options Advisory Service (funded by the ACT Government) can provide you with some alternative options for your housing – including downsizing and decluttering, retirement villages and accessing public and private rentals.

Aged Care Navigation

Need more information?

The Aged Care Navigation Service at COTA ACT is funded at least until the end of 2022. Free, one-hour appointments are available Monday to Thursday either face-to-face at our offices in Hughes or over the phone or by zoom (if you prefer). You can have multiple appointments and we can even loop myagedcare into the conversation at the time.

To book you can call 02 6282 3777 or email to: contact@cotaact.org.au

Aged Care Navigation

Questions?

We are happy to take general questions.

If you need to ask about your personal circumstances or your individual situation please make a free appointment where we can go through your issues in detail and in confidence.

To book you can call 02 6282 3777 or email to:
contact@cotaact.org.au

How to contact us

COTA ACT
(02) 6282 3777
www.cotaact.org.au
contact@cotaact.org.au

Hughes Community Centre
2 Wisdom St. Hughes

COTA ACT is open 9am to 5pm weekdays

COTA
For older Australians