

# A Sense of Belonging:

## Social Inclusion Issues for Older People in Tasmania

September 2011



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Authorised by Maxine Griffiths, AM CEO.  
Westella, 181 Elizabeth Street  
Hobart 7000  
PH (03)6231 3265  
Email: [admin@cotatas.org.au](mailto:admin@cotatas.org.au)  
Website: [www.cotatas.org.au](http://www.cotatas.org.au)

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This report was researched and written by Linda Jamieson, COTA Project Officer.

COTA prepared this report with funds from the Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

## Acknowledgements

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COTA would like to extend a huge thank you to all the older people who completed a postcard and who participated in the discussions with the COTA Champions. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, opinions and experiences. This report is based on the information you so readily gave to COTA.

COTA acknowledges and appreciates the funding received from the Social Inclusion Unit, Department Premier and Cabinet to research and develop this report.

COTA acknowledges the significant contribution of the COTA Champions in conducting informal consultations with their networks of older people in their local communities and in the development of this report. The COTA Champions are volunteers of COTA whose work COTA greatly appreciates. Thank you to the following COTA Champions:

### *Huon Valley COTA Champions*

Helen Cake  
Edie Clark  
Betty Cook  
Eric Fernandez  
Marrie Myers  
Angela Saunders  
Mike Scott

### *Kingborough COTA Champions*

Margaret Gowland  
Peter Grierson  
Mike Jackson  
Judy Kile  
Pauline Loughhead

### *Southern Midlands COTA Champions*

Jill Burbury  
Marie Connors  
Jenny Mitchell  
Shirley Robson

### *Hobart COTA Champions*

Barbie Rae  
Paul Turvey

COTA appreciates the time Fran Thompson voluntarily gave in transcribing some of the data from the 470 postcards and acknowledges the professional work of Terri Simpkin in coding and collating the data into the Nvivo Database. COTA also greatly appreciates the work of Miriam Herzfeld in the design, presentation and layout of this report.

Finally COTA acknowledges the significant contribution of Dr Megan Woods from the University of Tasmania who supported COTA in using the Nvivo computer program to collate and code the data. Megan voluntarily and enthusiastically guided COTA staff in the use of this program and willingly responded to frustrated “cries for help”. Megan’s support to COTA in developing this report was invaluable and COTA greatly appreciates her time and effort.

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## Executive Summary

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The social inclusion agenda aims to give every Australian the help they need to access the support and opportunities our society has to offer. It is a major policy agenda for both the Australian and Tasmanian governments. Tasmania, like the rest of Australia, has a rapidly ageing population. Nearly one fifth of the state's population is aged 60 years and over.

With the ageing of the Tasmanian population, the significant number of older people living alone and the high number of older people living in rural communities, it is important to focus on social inclusion and older people. Whilst older people were consulted in the development of the state government's *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania*, COTA identified the need to further explore the concept of social inclusion amongst older people in their local communities in Tasmania.

In late 2009 COTA received funding from the Tasmanian Social Inclusion Unit to undertake participatory research to understand the meaning of social inclusion for older people in Tasmania.

COTA utilised two methodologies to undertake this research with older people in Tasmania. The first research method was the COTA *Have Your Say* postcard which asked older people the following questions:

1. What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?
2. What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?
3. What are key issues for you as you age?
4. Your postcode.

A total of 470 postcards were returned to COTA either by free reply paid post or at three Seniors Expos in the three regions of Tasmania in early 2010.

The second research method used by COTA was consultations undertaken by the COTA Champions in the southern region municipalities of Southern Midlands, Huon Valley, Kingborough and Hobart. COTA Champions are volunteers of





COTA who seek opinions from and listen to the needs and issues of older Tasmanians in their local community and provide this information back to COTA.

COTA's 25 COTA Champions from the four municipalities mentioned above undertook informal consultations with their networks around kitchen tables, over the phone and with existing groups of older people on the following questions:

1. Do you feel part of "this" community?
2. If so, what makes you feel part of "this" community?
3. If not, why don't you feel part of "this" community?
4. How can you help others to feel part of "this" community?

The data from the 470 postcards and the COTA Champions discussions in their local communities has provided a wealth of information on the issues that are important in making older people feel connected to their local communities and the factors that prevent older people from feeling this sense of connection. The five key issues of participation, social connections, accessibility, access to information and transport were the issues that the majority of older people identified as important in making them feel connected to their community. Other issues including respect and feeling valued, input into decision making, health and wellbeing and access to support services were also identified by older people as issues of importance in making them feel connected to their local community.

COTA acknowledges that this research provides an initial exploration of the key social inclusion issues for older people in Tasmanian however it is limited both in terms of the sample of older people involved in the research and the research questions themselves. Respondents of the postcards were those who voluntarily completed a postcard and sent it back to COTA and those involved in the discussions with the COTA Champions were people with whom the COTA Champions have contact.

While there are limitations to the data obtained in this research, the data does however provide significant insight into older people's views on their connections to their local communities and the barriers they face in feeling part of their community. COTA has obtained quotes and opinions from older people and this information has been useful in developing the following recommendations to government and community and will enable government, policy makers and key organisations including COTA to further facilitate the social inclusion of older Tasmanians and reduce the impact of social isolation.



## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** That local councils develop positive ageing plans in consultation with the older members of their municipality identifying the needs and issues of older people and strategies to deal with these identified issues.

**Recommendation 2:** That local councils employ community development workers who have a specific responsibility to work with the older residents in the community, facilitating and providing activities and programs.

**Recommendation 3:** COTA to work with the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to encourage and support the development of local councils' plans for positive ageing and greater recognition at a local government level of the needs and issues of older people.

**Recommendation 4:** Increase funding to support initiatives that promote community connectedness and informal social networks amongst older people. Funding could be sought through the Tasmanian Community Fund (TCF), the Community Support Levy (CSL), Sport and Recreation Tasmania, the Department of Education and health and wellbeing funding through the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Recommendation 5:** COTA to work with funding bodies to inform them of the current issues relevant to older people.

**Recommendation 6:** State and local governments continue to develop and promote age-friendly environments through the adoption of universal design principles and age-friendly guidelines.

**Recommendation 7:** Research the information needs of older people including the most desirable methods of distributing information. Such research could be undertaken through a partnership between the University of Tasmania and local government.

**Recommendation 8:** COTA to further the work currently being undertaken in relation to their *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania* report.

**Recommendation 9:** Government and transport providers further explore the recommendations identified in the *Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley* as key responses to improving public transport services for older people in Tasmania.

**Recommendation 10:** That aged based discrimination is removed from DIER's older drivers licensing system in relation to the compulsory annual medical assessment.

**Recommendation 11:** DIER implements a range of strategies to support older drivers to retain their licence and assist those who do lose or forgo their licence to make the transition to non-driver status.

**Recommendation 12:** COTA seek funding to establish a Networking Clubs in the Community program to support local seniors' organisations as resource centres for older people and to support and encourage membership of such organisations.

**Recommendation 13:** That further research is undertaken to explore the social inclusion issues of specific populations of older people in Tasmania, including residents of aged care facilities, older Aboriginal people, older people from non-English speaking backgrounds and older people with a disability.

**Recommendation 14:** That more substantial research is undertaken on social inclusion and older people in Tasmania.





## Introduction

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“What’s important in making you feel connected to your local community” was the key question posed by COTA in exploring social inclusion issues for older people in Tasmania. Responses to this question included comments such as:

*“Sense of safety and belonging, of giving and receiving”*

*“Input into decisions affecting me”*

*“Having a local newspaper to keep in touch with local events”*

*“Good public transport for those who no longer drive”*

Social inclusion is a major policy agenda and priority recognised by governments and community organisations as the key to ensuring everyone has the help they need to access the support and opportunities that society has to offer. It is considered a major factor in the personal, social and economic wellbeing of a local community and the nation as a whole.

Yet what does social inclusion mean to older people? While both the Australian and Tasmanian governments have conducted major studies into social inclusion in our society, neither government has focused specifically on the social inclusion agenda as it relates to older people.

By 2012 it is predicted Tasmania will have the highest proportion of older people in our state compared to all other jurisdictions in Australia. At present nearly one fifth of the Tasmanian population is aged 60 years and over.

With the ageing of the Tasmanian population, the significant number of older people living alone and the high number of older people living in rural communities, it is important to focus on social inclusion and older people. Whilst older people were consulted in the development of the state government’s *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania*, there is a need to further explore the concept of social inclusion amongst older people in their local communities in Tasmania. COTA, the peak body advocating and lobbying for the needs and issues of older people, received funding to undertake such research.

Gaining a greater understanding of what social inclusion means to the significantly increasing population of older people will enable government, policy makers and key organisations including COTA to further facilitate the social inclusion of older Tasmanians and reduce the impact of social isolation.

## Background

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### The Social inclusion agenda

*“The social inclusion agenda aims to give every Australian the help they need to access the support and opportunities our society has to offer”.<sup>1</sup>*

*“It’s about the relationships in life that make us healthy, happy and productive”.<sup>2</sup>*

The above quotes from both the Australian and Tasmanian governments outline the basis of the social inclusion agenda: an agenda which has gained significant prominence throughout government and the broader community, both nationally and internationally over the past decade.

The Australian government define a socially inclusive society as “one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in our society”. In achieving this vision the government “means that all Australians have the resources, opportunities and capacity to” learn, work, engage and have a voice.<sup>3</sup>

The Australian government further states that social inclusion recognises many Australians do not have the opportunities they need to create the life they want. These opportunities are limited by a range of factors including family circumstances, low expectations, community poverty, a lack of suitable and affordable housing and illness or discrimination which can often lead to leaving school early, long-term unemployment and chronic ill-health.<sup>4</sup>

The State government’s Social Inclusion Unit defines social inclusion as “the idea that everyone should have access to the resources and relations that make life healthy, happy and productive”.<sup>5</sup> They further state:

Social inclusion means a fair go at having a decent education, skills, meaningful work, access to services, good relationships and a say on what matters to us.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Social Inclusion Unit, 2011, *What is Social Inclusion?*, viewed 13 July 2011  
<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/about/what-social-inclusion>

<sup>2</sup> Adams, D., 2009, *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p 8

<sup>3</sup> Social Inclusion Unit, 2011, Op Cit

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Adams, 2009, Op Cit, p 5

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p 8

Both the Tasmanian and Australian governments recognise that everyone is responsible for social inclusion including individuals, families, communities and government. Whilst it is acknowledged that all individuals are responsible for making the best of their lives, it is also important to recognise that not everyone begins at the same starting point and many people experience a range of crises and difficulties during their lives.

As Adams emphasises “only where governments, communities and businesses work together can social inclusion be achieved. Governments can enable but not create social inclusion. Ultimately it is individual families and communities that make the difference”.<sup>7</sup> He further states that “families and communities that are caring, confident and resilient are the best buffer against (social) exclusion”.<sup>8</sup>

It is this social inclusion agenda and the meaning of social inclusion for older people in Tasmania which is the topic of discussion in this research.

## **Tasmania's ageing population**

Tasmania's population, like the rest of Australia and the developed world, is ageing at a rapid rate. People are living longer, the birth rate is decreasing and migration rates are changing, all of which contribute to the increase in the proportion of older people in our community.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) at 30 June 2009, there were 76,900 people aged 65 years and over in Tasmania, making up 15.3% of the population. This was the second highest proportion of older people of all the states and territories in Australia.<sup>9</sup> It is predicted that by 2012, Tasmania will have the highest proportion of older people compared to all other jurisdictions in Australia.

The ABS further predicts that the proportion of people aged 65 years and over in Australia will increase from 13% in 2007, to 18% in 2020 and to between 23 and 25% by 2056. A significant portion of this rise will be in the number of people aged 85 years and over which is growing rapidly. People aged 85 years and over equated to 1.8% of the Australian population in 2007, and this proportion is expected to increase to between 4.9 and 7.3% by 2056.<sup>10</sup>

The ageing of the population is a recent phenomenon and presents many opportunities and challenges that require recognition and planning. The fact that people are living longer and we

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p5

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, *3235.0 - Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2009*. Viewed 11 August 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3235.0~2009~Main+Features~Tasmania?OpenDocument#PARALINK2>

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, *3222.0 - Population Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2101*. Viewed 11 August 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.0>

have an ageing population is a significant indication of a healthy society. Tasmania has an increasing resource of older people who continue to contribute to their communities and the broader Tasmanian society, who have a wealth of skills and knowledge and who provide invaluable work and support to their communities, families and workforce either in a paid or voluntary capacity. It is also recognised that with the ageing population comes a need to increase both state and Australian government spending in areas such as aged care, age-related pension and health.

## **Social inclusion and older Tasmanians**

Given the significant increase in the number of older people in Tasmania, it is essential that the high profile and important social inclusion agenda specifically considers the needs and issues of older Tasmanians.

Adams' *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania* identifies older people living alone as one of groups who are most at risk in our community. He further identifies that the places most at risk are the outer fringes of cities and towns that once were rural areas, rural towns in decline and older industrial areas,<sup>11</sup> many locations in which older people live. Adams also states that ageing is one of the new forms of exclusion in our society, along with mental illness, information communication technology (ICT), security of supply (food/water/energy) and violence,<sup>12</sup> all factors that many older people in our community experience.

The Victorian government expands on this in identifying the following factors that many people experience as they age and which can lead to the social exclusion of older people:

- The losses of a partner, friends and relatives, who may have died, moved away or visit less often
- Reduced income
- Health problems
- Sensory loss and functional decline
- Transport which is often too expensive and hard to access or not available
- Community venues that are often inaccessible, unwelcoming or do not cater for the needs of older people
- The fear that some older people have about their safety in public places
- The negative responses older people may encounter about their capacity to contribute to community life.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Adams 2009, Op Cit, p 8

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Department of Health 2011, *Social inclusion issues for senior Victorian in residential aged care*. Viewed 3 August 2011, <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/countusin/victorians.htm>

At a Social Inclusion Symposium held in Melbourne in 2008 Naughtin cites research undertaken in the United Kingdom that identifies four dimensions of social exclusion amongst older people in the UK. These are:

- Age-related characteristics which refer to the way in which older people are disproportionately affected by losses or restrictions including income, health and social ties.
- Cumulative disadvantage which refers to the way that the same birth cohorts may become unequal over time due to a range of factors, for example limited education and work opportunities.
- Community characteristics which highlight the way older people, who may have strong attachments to their community, may be vulnerable.
- Aged-based discrimination which refers to the impact of ageism within economic and social policies that contributes to various forms of social exclusion in old age.<sup>14</sup>

Naughtin expands further on these four points noting that family and friendship networks, locality and community networks and transport are important in considering key issues for social inclusion in older age. He states “most older people value having a close family network and extended families over accumulating wealth. Quality of life is strongly valued”<sup>15</sup>. The importance of preventative services and activities is also emphasised by Naughtin as important in preventing inequalities in advanced age, enhancing the quality of life for older people and helping them maintain their independence.

At this same forum, Naughtin stated that in Australia little academic and policy work has been undertaken on social exclusion amongst older people<sup>16</sup> and that there is a significant need to develop a social inclusion strategy for older people in Australia. COTA endorses Naughtin’s sentiments and has identified the need to further explore the meaning of social inclusion for older people in Tasmania



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<sup>14</sup> Naughtin, G., 2008, *Social inclusion and older people*, Brotherhood of St Laurence Social Inclusion Down Under Symposium Proceedings, 26 June 2008, p 8

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p 5



## Research Methodology

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### *Have Your Say* postcards

COTA has utilised two methods to undertake the participatory research to further understand the meaning of social inclusion for older people in Tasmania. The first research method was the COTA *Have Your Say* postcard. This postcard was trialled initially at three Seniors Expos co-hosted by COTA and the National Seniors Association in Glenorchy, Launceston and Ulverstone in March and April 2010. The postcard asked four questions (see Appendix 1):

1. What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?
2. What are key issues for you as you age?
3. What can COTA (Tas) do about these issues?
4. Your postcode

A total of 124 of these postcards were returned to a COTA representative or placed in a specified box at the Expos.

In analysing the responses on these 124 postcards it was decided that question 3 What can COTA (Tas) do about these issues, did not provide significantly meaningful responses and thus the postcard was modified to include the following questions (see Appendix 2):

1. What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?
2. What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?
3. What are key issues for you as you age?
4. Your postcode

The redrafted postcard was also modified to include a free reply paid address which enabled respondents to send the postcard back to COTA at no expense to the respondent. The postcards were distributed throughout Tasmania for 12 months between April 2010 and March 2011. The postcards were distributed via COTA's staff, Peer Educators, Policy Council and COTA Champions at forums, presentations and meetings. Service providers working with older people undertook to distribute the postcards to their clients and consumers, local governments and community health centres displayed the postcards in their reception areas and for a period of six months the postcards were enclosed in the mailing of new and replacement Seniors Cards by the Seniors Bureau. A total of 346 postcards were returned to COTA via the free post.

A combined total of 470 postcards were received by COTA, all of which included question 1 what's important in making you feel connected to your local community and 346 which included the question what prevents you from feeling connected to your local community. It is these two questions which relate specifically to the social inclusion research and will be analysed in the results section of this report.

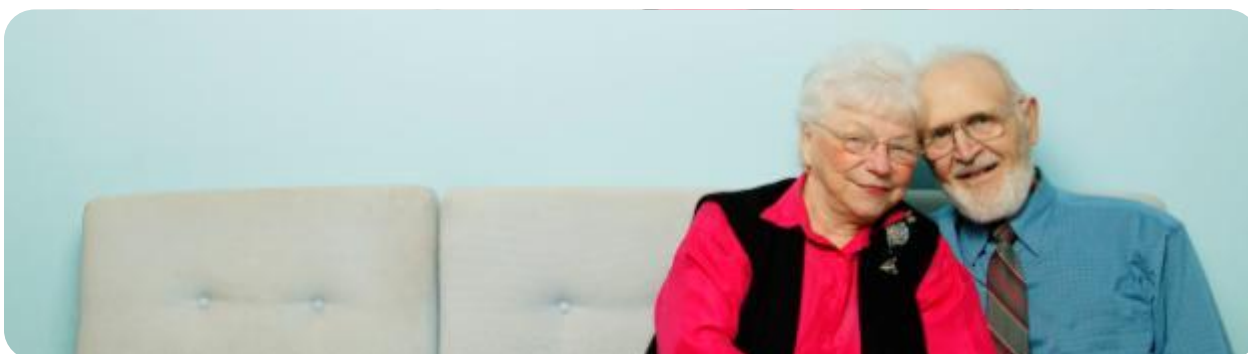
## COTA Champions consultations

The second research method used by COTA was consultations undertaken by the COTA Champions in the southern region municipalities of Southern Midlands, Huon Valley, Kingborough and Hobart. COTA Champions are volunteers of COTA who seek opinions from and listen to the needs and issues of older Tasmanians in their local community and provide this information back to COTA. COTA Champions are recruited, trained and supported by a Project Officer at COTA. This innovative consultation model is funded through the Home and Community Care program (HACC) by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and operates in the southern region of Tasmania.

The COTA Champion consultation model is based on the concept of older people talking and consulting with their peers. For over seven years COTA has run a highly successful Peer Education program using volunteer speakers to educate seniors on a range of health and wellbeing issues. In this program COTA recruits, trains and supports older Tasmanians to provide information sessions to seniors' organisations and services. The COTA Champions model is based on the success of the peer education concept of learning from another person with whom you have something in common.

The COTA Champion consultation model has been operating for 12 months and currently COTA has recruited 25 COTA Champions: four from Southern Midlands, eight from Hobart and Huon Valley and five from Kingborough.

The COTA Project Officer met with the COTA Champions from the four municipalities and sought their assistance to further explore the information on the social inclusion questions that COTA had obtained through the postcard responses. In particular COTA was keen for the COTA Champions to discuss with older people in their local communities how they can contribute to encouraging a sense of connection in their local community.



After much discussion about the concept of social inclusion and what it means to older people the 25 COTA Champions agreed to undertake informal consultations with their networks around kitchen tables, over the phone and with existing groups of older people on the following questions (see Appendix 3):

1. Do you feel part of “this” community?
2. If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?
3. If not, why don’t you feel part of “this” community?
4. How can you help others to feel part of “this” community?

Through this informal consultation method, the COTA Champions consulted with 110 older people in the southern region on the questions outlined above. The information obtained by the COTA Champions will be analysed in results section of the report.

## Clarifying to the methodology

In using the two research methodologies outlined above COTA focused on qualitative research, not quantitative. In so doing COTA acknowledges that the research is not statistically significant but analyses qualitative information older people have provided in response to specific questions.

There are limitations to the data obtained and hence the extent to which it can be analysed. The methods used to obtain the data did not enable COTA to collect any demographic data on the respondents including age, gender, living arrangements, health status and socioeconomic status. Also the postcards were distributed extensively throughout the community but relied on individuals to answer the questions and send the postcard back to COTA. Whilst a total of 470 postcards were returned and there are responses from the majority of municipalities throughout Tasmania, the responses are not proportional to the number of older people in specific municipalities.

Another limitation was the consultation method used by the COTA Champions. The Champions undertook consultations and discussions with their friends, networks and organisations in which they are involved. The information they obtained, therefore only includes the opinions of a limited number of people and from limited backgrounds.

Whilst COTA acknowledges that there are limitations to the data obtained in this research, the data does however provide significant insight into older people’s views on their connections to their local communities and the barriers they face in feeling part of their community. COTA has obtained quotes and opinions from older people and this information will be useful in developing recommendations to government and community, and can also be used to inform the development of themes for more extensive research.

# Results

Analysis of the data obtained through this research will be undertaken separately for the postcard responses and the COTA Champions consultations. Analysis of the postcard data will include the local government area from which responses were received, the key responses to questions one and two and a further analysis of the key responses to the questions by the local government area from which the majority of responses were obtained.

## Postcard data

### *Responses by local government area*

Table 1 below outlines the local government areas from which the 470 postcards were received. There are 30 postcards from five different postcodes where the postcode lies in two or more local government areas and hence have been counted more than once. This is why the total of Table 1 is 500 when 470 postcards were received.



**Table 1: Number of Postcards by Local Government Area**

Local government area	Number of postcards
Launceston	103
Hobart	56
Huon Valley	41
Glenorchy	38
Kingborough	33
Clarence	31
Meander Valley	26
Nil postcode	25
Burnie	14
Devonport	14
Sorrell	14
Central Coast	13
Central Highlands	12
Southern Midlands	12
Waratah Wynyard	12
Circular Head	9
Northern Midlands	7
Glamorgan/Spring Bay	6
West Tamar	6
Break O'Day	5
New Norfolk	5
Kentish	4
King Island	4
Georgetown	3
West Coast	3
Dorset	2
Brighton	1
Tasman	1
Flinders Island	0
Latrobe	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>



Table 2 shows the number of postcards received from postcodes that cover more than one local government area.

**Table 2: Postcodes represented across more than one local government area by number of postcards returned**

Postcode	Local government areas	Number of postcards
7017	Brighton, Clarence	1
7030	Southern Midlands, Central Highlands	7
7054	Hobart, Kingborough	8
7140	New Norfolk, Central Highlands	5
7321	Burnie, Circular Head, Waratah Wynyard	9

Table 1 shows that over 100 postcards (21%) were received from Launceston, compared to 56 (11%) from Hobart, 41 (8%) from Huon Valley, 38 (7.6%) from Glenorchy, 33 (6.6%) from Kingborough, 31 (6.2%) from Clarence, 26 (5.2%) from Meander Valley and 25 (5%) with nil postcode. The remaining 147 (29%) postcards were received from a total of 20 local government areas. No postcards were received from Flinders Island or Latrobe.

Given the extensive distribution and the variety of methods in which the postcards were distributed it is not possible to ascertain the reasons for the number of postcards received from the various local government areas.



## Key Issues

### Question 1: What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

In analysing the responses to Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community? 25 key issues were identified. Table 3 outlines the responses to question 1 under the 25 key issues. It must be noted that many respondents outlined more than one issue in their response hence why there are more responses than the number of postcards returned and why percentage of respondents cannot be calculated.

**Table 3: Question 1 key issues by number of responses**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Personal and or social contact	125
Local community involvement	84
Engaging in activities and functions or events	83
Transport	52
Availability of information	36
Other	35
Access to events and activities	31
Access to shops and/or facilities	31
Volunteering	26
Communication	20
Respect and feeling valued	20
Access to health services and facilities	18
Personal mobility	13
Input into decision making	12
Government and policy	11
Health and wellbeing	11
Media	10
Making a contribution	8
Cost of facilities or access to amenities	6
General services	6
Support	6
Work	6
Personal safety and security	3
Physical facilities for ease of mobility and access	3
Money or funding	2

As Table 3 indicates 125 respondents identified personal and social contact as the most important issue in making them feel connected to their local community. Direct quotes made about personal and social contact include:

*“neighbours being known by name at local shops and cafes”*  
*“friendliness to and from passers-by”*  
*“people smiling and saying “hi” in the street”*  
*“having a corner shop where I am known and trusted, even if I’m a dollar short”*  
*“people feeling free to borrow a cup of sugar”*  
*“the occasional community event such as a street party, bush dance or block party so that we get to know each other”*  
*“maintaining a regular group of friends “*  
*“having family members in the local community “*  
*“interaction with people of the same age”*  
*“friends as neighbours”*  
*“contacts in community organisations and businesses”*  
*“exchange of views with people of similar background/experience/intellect/interests*  
*meeting locals at local venues and events”*  
*“welcoming attitude of people”*  
*“contact with other community members other than say shopping. European communities are very good at this.”*

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Local community involvement was identified by 84 respondents as a key issue in making them feel connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*“loyal neighbours. Plus some of our shops who provide caring services.”*  
*“friendliness to and from passers-by. Network of corner shops and facilities. Sense of safety and belonging, of giving and receiving.”*  
*“being a member of clubs/organisations with like-minded people”*  
*“communication with, participation in and awareness of my local community”*  
*“knowing neighbours, using nearby shops regularly – within walking distance”*  
*“staying in my neighbourhood”*

*"being involved in community groups"*

*"we have lived in the same house for 45 years and have made a large number of friends"*

*"skills to offer some community groups"*

*"knowing your neighbours and the physical country vs big town living, ability for me to do the contacting"*

*"being a part of the community, being involved"*

*"long period of residence – friends – family member of community groups – church"*

*"friendly, patient staff in our local shops"*

*"supporting whenever one can what happens in ones local area. Its a great place to live."*

*"being aware of interest groups and activities. Wanting to join in."*

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A total of 83 respondents identified engaging in activities, functions or events as the key issue in making them feel part of their community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"going to any function that is held in our area"*

*"making it easier to find groups and activities to meet new people and do activities"*

*"participating in group activities (sporting, cultural)"*

*"things to do"*

*"local small group activities to join in – specially for 55 + years"*

*"being involved with social functions and voluntary services as a participant."*

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In addition to the above comments many respondents listed the particular groups, organisations and activities to which they belong or pursue and which are important in making them feel part of their community. Such organisations and activities included: U3A, Probus, walking, senior citizens clubs, church, AIR, social clubs, sing-a-longs and day centres.

Transport was identified by 52 respondents as the key issue in making them feel connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"good public transport services "*

*"accessibility to my car in order to keep up with my normal habits (ie shopping, choir practice and performance)"*

*"frequent reasonably-priced public transport "*

*"a better, safer bus service, very important to be able to move around"*

*"bigger bus shelter in the centre"*

*"more bus shelters"*

*"community bus and car"*

*"my license"*

*"important to be mobile – generally walking but able to use cars"*

*"good public transport for those who no longer drive"*

*"being able to keep my driving licence."*

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A total of 36 respondents identified availability of information as a key issue in making them feel connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"being able to access and know what's out there"*

*"accessible information"*

*"information about activities for seniors"*

*"ability to remain in touch with information"*

*"news about what's happening in our community"*

*"lots of info re what's available to me"*

*"local newsletters and newspapers"*

*"a calendar of events- on the internet letting me know what is happening"*

*"more groups available, through much better system of knowledge (not just computer emails)"*

*"a lot more information posted out as to what is happening"*

*"knowing what is on and how to get there"*

*"easy access to relevant information"*

*"I'd like to see a section of the local newspaper devoted to seniors and their activities (weekly)."*

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Access to events and activities and access to shops and/or facilities were identified by 31 respondents each as separate issues in making people feel connected to their local communities. Quotes on these issues include:

*"accessible events for the elderly"*

*"being able to buy/access goods and services of consistent quality and reasonable price"*

*"being able to access/join in"*

*"easily accessible and sincere neighbourhood house"*



*“having activities I can access easily – affordable on a fixed income”*

*“better access to building, shop, theatre”*

*“having understanding easily accessible groups”*

*“good meeting rooms appropriate for the aged”*

*“by shopping locally and paying accounts at local post office”*

*“being able to get about being near bus, doctor, supermarkets, able still to drive”*

*“provision of “senior friendly” facilities”*

*“library with internet access and volunteers offering their help”*

*“not have to beg for a toilet say at the local library”*

*“safe environment, ability to access shops, car parks that are well lit at night/winter, ability to access services.”*



**Volunteering (26 responses)**

*"being a volunteer with 2 wonderful local organisations. I work with great people, am stimulated, feel useful and have fun."*

*"involving in the community by helping people (volunteering)"*

*"by being a volunteer for many organisations who always thank the volunteers"*

**Communication (20 responses)**

*"communication with, participation in and awareness of my local community"*

*"contact and communication"*

*"communicating with neighbours/family"*

*"to be able to communicate with persons in work and community life"*

**Respect and feeling valued (20 responses)**

*"to feel accepted and respected by neighbours and the general community"*

*"being treated equitably"*

*"recognition – a voice with experience – recognition by politicians"*

*"knowing I will not be taken for a ride or seen as vulnerable because of age"*

*"recognition of our generations efforts in establishing/building this wonderful country"*

*"based on past life experience - being made to feel worthwhile in passing on expertise and still contributing to community"*

**Access to health services and facilities (18 responses)**

*"continued good health with medical services near and available"*

*"proper health care services"*

**Input into decision making (12 responses)**

*"input into decisions affecting me"*

*"opportunities for input/contribution to add value to participation – physical, mental, social"*

*"local authorities should take note of what the community wants. The older community is the sector that has "been there, done that" and therefore knows what is needed – through experience"*

**Personal mobility (13 responses)**

*"my physical ability to be able to get about"*

*"an electric wheelchair so I can get about to meet people or joining a club"*

*"being mobile"*

**Health and wellbeing (11 responses)**

*"staying healthy"*

*"good health – ability to walk around community and be involved with people"*

*"cognitive ability"*

**Government and policy** (11 responses)

*"policies that support us and hear what we want"*

*"greater awareness from government to the needs of ageing Australians"*

*"having a State Government that keeps and honours its election promises"*

**Media** (10 responses)

*"communications including more intelligent local media"*

*"having a local newspaper to keep in touch with local events"*

*"community radio"*

**Making a contribution** (8 responses)

*"a sense of belonging and contribution"*

*"acceptances of what I have to offer"*

*"if one can help others in some practical way"*

**General services** (6 responses)

*"good community services"*

*"with the help I get with ECA I'm very much connected"*

**Cost of facilities or access to amenities** (6 responses)

*"cheaper local telephone fixed line calls. Telstra is making this difficult".*

*"Internet. Living in a rural area, wireless internet is the only option. The cost is high on a pension."*

**Work** (6 responses)

*"I started a home-based business when I retired that keeps me feeling connected to the outside world"*

*"currently having work is great"*

**Support** (6 responses)

*"CACP packages that have lifestyle and leisure"*

*"knowing there's support out there"*

*"social and emotional support"*

**Personal safety and security** (3 responses)

*"personal safety when going out"*

*"being able to walk safely through suburban streets and the city"*

**Physical facilities for ease of mobility and access** (3 responses)

*"pleasant common areas - e.g. seats overlooking a lovely view, a few wild spaces, old trees, historic buildings, an air of permanence"*

*"facilities for the older people such as ramps, lifts, toilets"*

**Money or funding** (2 responses)

*"ability (financial and physical) to participate and recreate"*

*"enough money to access services"*

## Question 2: What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

In analysing the responses to Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community? 18 key issues were identified. Table 4 outlines the responses to question 2 under the 18 key issues. As with Question 1, many respondents outlined more than one issue in their response hence why there are more responses than the number of postcards returned. As previously mentioned, Question 2 was not asked on the initial postcard of which COTA received 124 completed postcards. Of the 470 postcards returned, 346 included responses to Question 2.

**Table 4: Question 2 key issues by number of responses**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Transport – limitations to	63
Nothing	46
Other	42
Interaction with others – lack of	32
Information and communication – lack of	30
Health and wellbeing	29
Activities or events – lack of	19
Government and/or policy	18
Cost of activities or being involved	15
Sense of fear or insecurity	12
Dismissal – felt sense of	9
Support services – lack of	9
Cost of living	8
Location – geographical isolation	8
Motivation – lack of	7
Time – lack of	7
Infrastructure	6
Lack of access	6
Consultation – lack of	1

Table 4 shows that 63 of the respondents indicate that a limitation to transport is the key issue that prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*“bus costs are expensive so limit my travel and being part of community activities”*

*“buses are too infrequent outside of commuter times. No buses in evenings “*

*“lack of public transport”*

*“no transport on weekends”*

*"transport that is supportive eg, people who can help me"*  
*"buses are too limiting – always entails a lot of walking"*  
*"driving at night therefore do not go to evening functions"*  
*"lack of public transport in rural areas"*  
*"transport eg even one's own transport requires finding appropriate parking"*  
*"pedestrian access in and around Hobart is poor"*  
*"not enough bus shelters at bus stops"*  
*"poor public transport excludes evening activities compelling those who live outside the CBD to maintain licence and car beyond preferred relinquishment date."*

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A total of 46 of respondents report that nothing prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"nothing. Everything is there you have to take the first step."*  
*"nothing - you have to involve yourself and not sit back waiting for things to happen"*  
*"nothing at this stage of my life"*  
*"nothing should prevent anyone being involved – it's all out there"*  
*"at the moment – nothing, because I'm fit and healthy and I have a car!!"*  
*"too busy working either at home or out in the community"*  
*"personally nothing as I live in a residential village."*

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Lack of interaction with others was identified by 32 of respondents as the key issue that prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"no communication with, no participation and no awareness of my local community"*  
*"lack of social connections/networks and resources"*  
*"reaching venues alone"*  
*"new neighbourhood and I am amazed at the selfishness of rel's and friends in Tasmania"*  
*"feel am on the outside looking in"*  
*"a lack of warmth on the part of locals"*  
*"relocated from WA. Need to meet like people. Unsure of acceptance or where to go."*  
*"didn't realise that you didn't get 'invited' as you get older (to play sport)"*  
*"retirement, I no longer have daily contact with other workers"*  
*"loneliness."*



A total of 30 of respondents reported lack of information and communication as a key issue that prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. Quotes include:

*"lack of communication re what is on, what is available"*

*"governments take it for granted when dealing/informing the public that everyone has the internet or access there to"*

*"am unaware of events until after! Need more advertising."*

*"the rapid development of technology and the presumption that everyone has email – many do not"*

*"no comprehensive list of local senior activities"*

*"lack of personal contact when using phone if ringing Telstra, Centrelink, Banks, etc"*

*"voice mail on answer phones"*

*"lack of local TV and FM reception (currently use FTA Satellite 7 central)."*

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Health and wellbeing was identified by 29 of respondents as the key issue that prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. Quotes on this issue include:

*"deafness, in spite of expensive hearing aids"*

*"arthritis - particularly back problems"*

*"I have a chronic illness (chronic fatigue syndrome) which greatly limits my capacity to participate and relate"*

*"my vision is very poor hence I cannot do all the activities at the centre"*

*"not being able to do as much as I used to be able to achieve easily!"*

*"health not too good. Hips a bit iffy!"*

*"now cost for dental no longer free."*

**Lack of activities and events**  
(19 responses)

*"there is no community centre where I could join in with activities – arts, crafts, exchanges, etc"*

*"lack of council involvement in organising programs, classes"*

*"more swimming facilities for older Tasmanians"*

*"lack of suitable sports activities - pools, walking tracks, gym activities for elder people"*

**Government and/or policy**  
(18 responses)

*"promises by gvt that are never kept. Waste of money by agency systems"*

*"lack of local government action and state government action"*

*"hard to deal with local council issues"*

*"lack of interest in older folk by politicians and the "y" generation"*

**Cost of activities or being involved**  
(15 responses)

*"bus costs are expensive so limit my travel and being part of community activities"*

*"rising costs, which prevent use of community activities"*

*"telephone is getting too expensive"*

*"too expensive to join clubs"*

*"not having a lot of spare money to go on outings or entertainment events"*

**Sense of fear or insecurity**  
(12 responses)

*"after hours hooligans coming from hotels near by"*

*"fear – generated by media"*

*"impact of antisocial behaviour/safety concerns"*

*"safety on the streets and in homes"*

**Dismissal – felt sense of**  
(9 responses)

*"when people ignore me as I am older"*

*"feeling like we're not heard"*

*"being "invisible" because of ageing"*

**Location – geographical isolation**  
(8 responses)

*"the isolation and being so far away from the city"*

*"distance from general shopping – no postal or newspaper delivery"*

*"living out of town makes contact a little harder"*

**Support services – lack of**  
(9 responses)

*"lack of facility coordinators"*

*"having to stay home without help"*

*"inadequate health services and deteriorating library services"*

**Cost of living (8 responses)**

*"constantly rising prices - e.g. power, water, fuel, etc which means less discretionary income for small pleasures - a cup of coffee a movie etc, even a drive, new shoes, clothes"*

*"pensioner couples pay as individuals for clothes, to eat out, entry to events, medical and dental spectacles, travel, accommodation, no "discounts" for being a couple"*

**Motivation – lack of (7 responses)**

*"the desire to be connected"*

*"my apathy and lack of commitment"*

*"only apathy on my part from not joining voluntary organisations"*

**Time – lack of (7 responses)**

*"not enough time to do everything I'd like"*

*"people being too busy and caught up in day-to-day living to see they are part of a community"*

**Lack of access (6 responses)**

*"lack of senior handicap"*

*"shopping access"*

*"busy roads for much of day"*

**Infrastructure (6 responses)**

*"there are not enough public seats at the shopping centres. Elderly people need somewhere to sit in between shopping without having to buy food or a drink."*

*"lack of certain facilities – more support needed from state gvt and local council to assist provision of facilities, eg walking/cycling tracks."*

*"there are no clean and convenient community/aged meeting rooms in town centre"*

**Consultation – lack of (1 responses)**

*"lack of community consultation therefore COTA needs to get out there and talk and LEARN"*

## Key responses by local government areas

In reporting on the responses received, it is worth taking a snapshot of the key issues identified in specific local government areas. The results below identify the responses to questions 1 and 2 from the local government areas from which the majority of postcards were received.

A total of 328 postcards (66%) were received from the following seven local government areas: Launceston (103 postcards), Hobart (56 postcards), Huon Valley (41 postcards), Glenorchy (38 postcards), Kingborough (33 postcards), Clarence (31 postcards) and Meander Valley (26 postcards). Fourteen or less postcards were received from each of the remaining local government areas. Responses from these local government areas are tabled in Appendix 4.

The tables below show the key responses to questions 1 and 2 from specific local government areas. Note that in many cases the total number of responses exceeds the number of postcards received from a specific local government area because respondents often listed more than one key issue.

## Key responses from Clarence local government area

**Table 5: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	2
Access to health services and facilities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	3
Availability of information	4
Communication	2
Engaging in activities and functions or events	7
Local community involvement	4
Other	3
Personal and or social contact	11
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	5
Volunteering	4

**Table 6: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	2
Information and communication – lack of	3
Interaction with others – lack of	3
Motivation – lack of	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	5
Other	2
Sense of fear or insecurity	2
Transport – limitations to	6

#### Key responses from Glenorchy local government area

**Table 7: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	3
Access to shops and/or facilities	3
Availability of information	4
Cost of facilities or access to amenities	2
Engaging in activities and functions or events	9
General services	1
Government and policy	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Local community involvement	7
Other	4
Personal and or social contact	10
Personal mobility	1
Personal safety and security	1
Physical facilities for ease of mobility and access	1
Respect and feeling valued	3
Support	2
Transport	7
Volunteering	3

**Table 8: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access – lack of	2
Activities or events – lack of	3
Cost of living	1
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Dismissal – felt sense of	2
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	2
Information and communication – lack or	10
Interaction with others – lack of	3
Motivation – lack of	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	4
Other	1
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Transport – limitations to	4





## Key responses from Hobart local government area

**Table 9: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	2
Access to health services and facilities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	5
Availability of information	5
Communication	3
Cost of facilities or access to amenities	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	15
General services	1
Government and policy	2
Health and wellbeing	1
Input into decision making	3
Local community involvement	12
Making a contribution	4
Media	2
Other	7
Personal and or social contact	21
Personal mobility	2
Physical facilities for ease of mobility and access	1
Respect and feeling valued	5
Support	1
Transport	5
Volunteering	2



**Table 10: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access – lack of	1
Activities or events – lack of	2
Cost of living	1
Cost of activities or being involved	3
Dismissal – felt sense of	3
Government and/or policy	2
Health and wellbeing	4
Information and communication – lack or	2
Infrastructure	3
Interaction with others – lack of	7
Nothing	7
Other	7
Sense of fear or insecurity	4
Time – lack of	5
Transport – limitations to	11

#### Key responses from Huon Valley local government area

**Table 11: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	2
Access to shops and/or facilities	3
Availability of information	1
Communication	3
Cost of facilities or access to amenities	2
Engaging in activities and functions or events	17
Health and wellbeing	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	9
Making a contribution	1
Media	1
Personal and or social contact	13
Transport	2

**Table 12: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Activities or events – lack of	3
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Information and communication – lack of	4
Interaction with others – lack of	2
Not applicable	3
Nothing	3
Other	3
Support services – lack of	1
Transport – limitations to	6

**Key responses from Kingborough local government area**

**Table 13: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to shops and/or facilities	3
Availability of information	4
Cost of facilities or access to amenities	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	3
Government and policy	1
Local community involvement	8
Other	2
Personal and or social contact	7
Transport	7
Volunteering	3
Work	1

**Table 14: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Infrastructure	1
Interaction with others – lack of	5
Motivation – lack of	2
Nothing	2
Other	4
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Transport – limitations to	8

#### Key responses from Launceston local government area

**Table 15: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	5
Access to health services and facilities	12
Access to shops and/or facilities	5
Availability of information	11
Communication	4
Engaging in activities and functions or events	18
Government and policy	4
Health and wellbeing	4
Input into decision making	2
Local community involvement	13
Making a contribution	2
Media	3
Money or funding	1
Other	4
Personal and or social contact	31
Personal mobility	7
Personal safety and security	1
Respect and feeling valued	3
Support	3
Transport	8
Volunteering	6
Work	3

**Table 16: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access – lack of	2
Activities or events – lack of	2
Cost of living	1
Cost of activities or being involved	5
Dismissal – felt sense of	2
Government and/or policy	2
Health and wellbeing	9
Information and communication – lack or	1
Interaction with others – lack of	9
Nothing	11
Other	6
Sense of fear or insecurity	3
Support services – lack of	6
Transport – limitations to	15

**Key responses from Meander Valley local government area**

**Table 17: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?**

Question 1 Key Issues	Number of responses
Access to events and activities	2
Availability of information	2
Communication	
Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
Local community involvement	4
Money or funding	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	6
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	4

**Table 18: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?**

Question 2 Key Issues	Number of responses
Health and wellbeing	1
Information and communication – lack of	1
Motivation – lack of	1
Nothing	2
Other	3
Transport – limitations to	2





## COTA Champions consultations

As outlined in the methodology section above, the 25 COTA Champions in the southern region municipalities of Southern Midlands, Huon Valley, Kingborough and Hobart undertook informal consultations with their networks around kitchen tables, over the phone and with existing groups of older people on the following questions:

- Do you feel part of “this” community?
- If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?
- If not, why don’t you feel part of “this” community?
- How can you help others to feel part of “this” community?

Through this informal consultation method, the COTA Champions consulted with 110 older people in the southern region on the questions outlined above. The following provides a summary of the responses and discussions obtained by the COTA Champions in the four municipalities.

### Kingborough

1. Do you feel part of “this” community?

Only one person (2%) indicated that they did not feel part of the community.

Comments included:

*“Snug lacks community activities as far as the elderly are concerned and decent seating (with arms) around the town”*

*“working in the community made me feel part of it”.*

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2. If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?

Responses to this question included:

*“using the shops and supporting local businesses”*

*“through regular contact with friends and other people out and about in Kingston”*

*“using the many facilities available through the council, library, etc”*

*“being aware of up and coming events through free brochures and regular monthly supplements in the Mercury on Kingborough”*

*“the friendly attitudes of people I meet”*

*"I am a long term resident of Kingston Beach which is a reasonably small established area of Kingston"*

*"have done voluntary work at Illawarra school which I enjoyed, again this helps to feel part of things"*

*"taking part in public meetings relating to community concerns"*

*"having family members living in the area"*

*"companionship of friends"*

*"by joining many of the activities offered by council, LINC, sports centres and churches and adult ed and seniors schools"*

*"meeting people when collecting the mail"*

*"the local shop where smaller groups have coffee"*

*"exchanging pleasantries while walking the dog"*

*"the community newsletter which gave local activities and groups to join"*

*"friendly community and always ready to help"*

*"the Seniors Citizens group and support from Westwinds people. These groups are caring and lend support where it is needed."*

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3. If not, why don't you feel part of "this" community?

Response to this question included:

*"we would like to be involved with other communities"*

*"moved from interstate and don't feel part of where I live because it is very "arty crafty" and I don't fit in to that scenario, and still feel an outsider"*

*"inevitable problems of cliques or apparent cliques"*

*"people go to individual events however remain outside the community"*

*"loss of:*

*meaningful work environment which gave the feeling of belonging and contributing to the community (due to retirement)"*

*lifestyle change over the years of residency, eg becoming a "unit" living community that contracts the feeling of space and privacy"*

*hard to get to know working neighbours."*

4. How can you help others to feel part of “this” community?

Responses included:

*“in smaller communities if a house changes hands people go and introduce themselves”*

*“communities need a neutral central place to meet”*

*“one young couple who moved to a small community put a sign up in the front of their house “Open House” on a particular day and provided nibble, cup of tea/coffee, told people what they were planning to do to the house, etc and lots of people went and everyone enjoyed themselves”*

*“provide information on social activities and services”*

*“by reaching out to those who live alone and some who are possibly housebound”*

*“perhaps a feature in the Chronicle advertising meals on wheels and availability of transport to events such as Channel seniors afternoon”*

*“due to self internal reasons”*

*“offering help to newcomers and sharing any new information to regular groups of friends”*

*“networking”*

*“volunteering to help where necessary”*

*“by inviting others to become involved in community meetings, upcoming events”*

*“have a friendly, accepting attitude to others”*

*“maintain an awareness of common-unity: that we are all connected all ONE!”*

*“after attending a public meeting at Kingston Beach Hall recently regarding the future of the old high school, many people there wanted a place in central Kingston for community (young and old) to meet. It was such a good feeling to hear people who live here express their views. I would like to be able to have more of these discussion events.”*

Other issues discussed with COTA Champions:

*“community workers who visit in homes play a key role in providing information to residents about opportunities”*

*“physical location, layout and amenities are important”*

*“personality of individuals is a key issue”*

*“it’s easier for women – more opportunities”*

*“intergenerational activities are important”*

*“sense of contributing, being involved and needed is important”*

*“you get more out of a community than you give”.*

1. Do you feel part of “this” community?

Only one person (8%) indicated they did not feel part of the community.

2. If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?

Responses to this question included:

*“have lived here all my life, attended school here, church. Used to knock on doors of new comers and present with a cake but now feel this would not be accepted.”*

*“the people. The way the existing residents accepted me and my husband. How friendly the residents have been.”*

*“I am related to half the town!! I find it a warm community, people are easy to get on with. It’s a pleasant, easy town to live in.”*

*“people have been very friendly and welcoming. I have joined various committees and I invite new and ‘old’ residents to functions I find out about.”*

*“communication is the key issue”*

*“up to the individual to make an effort to get involved in the community”*

*“phone calls”*

*“friends”*

*“after living here for 70 years. Strong feeling of being part of the community.”*

*“Regular contact through groups.”*

---

3. If not, why don’t you feel part of “this” community?

*“the town is losing people faster than I can make friends with them. People don’t stay long anymore.”*

*“many ‘older’ long standing residents are moving away because of lack of facilities and they are ageing and need care or will do soon”.*

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4. How can you help others to feel part of “this” community?

*“put information on the internet”*

*“make sure you read the information sent to you”*

*“place posters on walls in public places, eg outside shop windows, supermarkets and newsagents”*

*“sharing my knowledge of what has gone on in the past”*

*“by inviting people to events that go on”*

*“taking people with me when I go out if they wish to go where I am going that day”*

*“knock on the door of a new comer and tell them about the local club and an activities that are coming up”.*

## Huon Valley

1. Do you feel part of “this” community?

Only 2 people (5%) indicated they did not feel part of the community.

Responses included:

*“need more awareness of groups”*

*“people to introduce themselves to others”*

*“have a feeling of isolation. Especially since husband died. Don’t like to drive. Don’t hear about activities that are happening. Health precludes getting out and about. There is also a safety issue. I don’t feel safe where I am. Intending to move to Huonville but don’t want neighbours on top of me. Never had to make my own decisions before. My husband paid all the bills and took care of everything.”*

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2. If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?

Responses to this question include:

*“local and have been a volunteer all my life”*

*“as newcomers we have to make the effort to incorporate ourselves into the community. At church took three visits until we felt no longer strangers, but we persevered”*

*"by joining in groups, church, activities become known and therefore part of the community"*

*"being acknowledged when you are shopping or walking down the street"*

*"being welcomed by the groups"*

*"the community centre makes a difference to Geeveston – welcomes all clubs"*

*"when first arriving in Geeveston neighbours visit with hot scones and jam"*

*"because it is a small community it is a lot easier to find out what is going on eg post office, shops, walks in the park"*

*"acts of kindness – friendliness"*

*"just saying Hi".*

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3. If not, why don't you feel part of "this" community?

*"I don't drive and now I am a widow have to rely on others to take me out shopping, doctors appointments, etc"*

*"I came here to be near my daughter but she is too busy"*

*"it is hard to make new friends when you are older"*

*"I feel isolated because I don't hear about upcoming events and more often than not I feel too ill to attend"*

*"it's your own 'damn' fault"*

*"moved here from Sydney. ...They don't play the right sort of football."*

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4. How can you help others to feel part of "this" community?

*"offer to take them to community groups"*

*"invite them around for a cuppa"*

*"if not busy, talk to people in the street and make them feel welcome"*

*"get involved in activities"*

*"local council could produce a welcome pack with local information, who to contact"*

*"local noticeboard with information on groups, activities"*



*"local Green Jackets being knowledgeable about the community – history, people, activities"*

*"if someone appears 'reluctant' then we leave them alone, after offering our help if required"*

*"extend the hand of friendship to everyone"*

*"sharing your experiences"*

*"groups to combine occasionally "*

*"getting to know you luncheons"*

*"take an interest in what a person is interested in and take the time to discuss with them their interests".*

Other issues discussed with COTA Champions:

*"two-way street – can't expect community to do it all"*

*"nothing we can do to help those who don't want help"*

*"invasion of privacy"*

*"issue of pride"*

*"isolation doesn't always mean 'alone'"*

*"inclusion is implicit in the way people interact within an organisation – encouraged to have your say in the way the organisation is run and activities".*

## Hobart

1. Do you feel part of "this" community?

Two people indicated they did not feel part of their community. One made the following comments:

*"my local area is a mixture of very young working couples and a lot of retirees who keep to themselves".*

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2. If so, what makes you feel part of "this" community?

*"I know my neighbours and speak or wave to them whenever I see them"*

*"I am involved in local community events"*

*"I shop at the local shops and speak with staff and other customers about neighbourhood matters"*

*"lots of friendly neighbours"*

*"easy access to schools, shops, parks but NO service stations unfortunately".*

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3. If not, why don't you feel part of "this" community?

*"our local shop on Main Road has so many changes of staff it is hard to make a good relationship with staff"*

*"we live on a hill, most neighbours still work – only see them on weekends"*

*"most people keep to themselves"*

*"the local supermarket shop staff are not friendly people"*

*"there are not many local activities in my area to attend".*

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4. How can you help others to feel part of "this" community?

*"be friendly towards others and always have a smile on your face"*

*"have neighbours in for a BBQ or and/or coffee"*

*"welcome new residents to neighbourhood"*

*"offering to assist with babysitting, lawn mowing, taking out rubbish bin".*

Other comments to COTA Champions:

*"don't underestimate the importance of informal networks"*

*"walking a dog is a good activity to meet people"*

*"people are afraid to go out by themselves"*

*"not having someone to go out with is an issue"*

*"cost of activities and transport are barriers to feeling part of the community".*

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## Discussion and Recommendations

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Data from the 470 postcards and the COTA Champions discussions in local communities has provided a wealth of information on the issues that are important in making older people feel connected to their local communities and the factors that prevent older people feeling this sense of connection. As was stated previously, there is little research or policy work on social inclusion issues amongst older people. This COTA research provides an initial exploration of the key social inclusion issues for older people in Tasmania and enables the identification of further research to be undertaken.

The following section will discuss at length the five key issues of participation, social connections, accessibility, access to information and transport which were the issues that the majority of older people identified as important in making them feel connected to their community. There will also be a brief discussion on other identified issues.

### Participation

Participation in activities, events, local community functions, groups and paid or voluntary work was the key issue that makes people feel connected to their local community. A total of 204 respondents indicated that this was important to them. Similarly those interviewed by the COTA Champions made comments about taking part in public meetings, attending regular clubs or organisations, volunteering with a local community group or continuing in paid employment.

In responding to question 2, 19 postcard respondents indicated that a lack of activities in their local area prevented them from feeling connected to their local community. Comments such as the lack of council involvement in organising programs and the lack of suitable activities and community centres for older people highlight the need to provide specific opportunities and activities for older people.

In working across the various local government areas COTA notices the difference between the activities provided for older people in those local councils that have specific community development staff who work with older people compared to those that do not. In some local government areas, the councils have positive ageing plans and/or positive ageing advisory committees or working groups of older people.

These positive ageing plans have usually been developed through significant consultation with older people and highlight the council's responsibility and suggested strategies in providing for the needs and issues of older people. The positive ageing advisory committees or groups provide advice and support to the councils on older peoples' issues and support the council in implementing a range of strategies to deal with the identified needs. Some councils also have dedicated community development staff who work with older people in developing activities, programs and services.

It is interesting to note that the majority of local councils employ youth workers or community development staff who work with youth, yet as the demographic data indicates, the proportion of older people in the community is increasing significantly and in many areas is higher than the proportion of young people. There needs to be recognition from local councils of this

significantly increasing cohort in their community and of the council's responsibility in providing specific activities and services for their older residents.

**Recommendation 1:** That local councils develop positive ageing plans in consultation with the older members of their municipality identifying the needs and issues of older people and strategies to deal with these identified issues.

**Recommendation 2:** That local councils employ community development workers who have a specific responsibility to work with the older residents in the community, facilitating and providing activities and programs.

**Recommendation 3:** COTA to work with the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to encourage and support the development of local councils' plans for positive ageing and greater recognition at a local government level of the needs and issues of older people.



## Social connections

A total of 125 respondents and the majority of those interviewed by the COTA Champions indicated that the personal and social contact is a key issue in making them feeling connected to their local community and 32 identified a lack of interaction with others as a key issue that prevents this connection. The social connection described was both formal including belonging to community groups and participating in specific social, recreational or physical activities and informal including maintaining friendships, exchanging pleasantries at the local shop, having neighbours to say “hi” to or exchange a cuppa with.

The importance of this informal networking and social contact cannot be underestimated. Older people need the opportunity to socialise and get together. The majority of older people are independent and lead busy, active lives maintaining their own friendships and organising their own activities. The government and service providers however need to promote community connectedness and social networks in their funding and service delivery to those older people who require support. So often deliverers of HACC services state that the older person values the company of the person delivering or providing the service more than the service itself whether it is a meal, having their house cleaned or nursing services.

The findings in this report are consistent with issues identified in *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania*. In this Strategy Adams highlights that “supportive networks provide people with resources and experiences that make life meaningful”. “When supportive networks are missing, people are more likely to experience isolation and exclusion, which in turn can impact negatively on their physical and mental health and wellbeing”<sup>17</sup>.

**Recommendation 4:** Increase funding to support initiatives that promote community connectedness and informal social networks amongst older people. Funding could be sought through the Tasmanian Community Fund (TCF), the Community Support Levy (CSL), Sport and Recreation Tasmania, the Department of Education and health and wellbeing funding through the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Recommendation 5:** COTA to work with funding bodies to inform them of the current issues relevant to older people.

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<sup>17</sup> Adams, 2009, Op Cit, p 43

A total of 83 respondents to question 1 indicated that access issues were important in making them feel connected to their local community. Access to shops, facilities, health services and accessible infrastructure were identified. Comments such as “better access to buildings, shops, theatre”, “good meeting rooms appropriate for the aged”, “proper health care services” and “facilities for older people such as ramps, lifts, toilets” were commonly expressed.

The concept of age-friendly communities and ageing in place has been discussed at a national and international level for many years. Making cities age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches in responding to demographic ageing. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines an age-friendly city as “an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing”<sup>18</sup>.

In 2007 WHO published the *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* which encourages cities to become more age-friendly “so as to tap the potential that older people represent for humanity”<sup>19</sup>. An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age. An age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

The WHO developed the *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* through consultation with older people in 33 cities throughout the world. They asked older people, carers and services providers to describe the advantages and barriers they experience in city living. From this they developed a set of age-friendly city checklists that form the basis of the Guide to inform and educate city planners, developers, builders and architects on developing cities with the access issues of older people in mind<sup>20</sup>.

Appropriate planning and good design at a local community level can play a major role in allowing older people to age in place and remain active and socially included in their local community. The Australian Local Government Association’s *Planning for an Ageing Community 2004 – 2008* policy highlighted that “a safe pedestrian environment, easy access to shopping centres, a mix of housing choices, nearby health centres and recreational facilities are all important elements that can positively affect the ageing experience”<sup>21</sup>.

Ramps, handrails, street lighting, seats, obvious signage, wide doorways, accessible toilets, non-slip surfaces and other structural features enhance the accessibility of a community and encourage greater social inclusion of the local community. These features are not only important to people as they age but also for parents with young children in prams and people with permanent or temporary disabilities. Communities with such features are inclusive of all

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<sup>18</sup> World Health Organisation, *WHO Age-Friendly Environments Programme*, viewed 16 August 2011, [http://www.who.int/ageing/age\\_friendly\\_cities/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/index.html)

<sup>19</sup> World Health Organisation, 2007, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*, p 1

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Australian Local Government Association, 2005, *Planning for an Ageing Community 2004 – 2008*, viewed 16 August 2011, <http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/healthAgeing/ageing/resources/publications/builtEnv.php#a1>



the community. As Bernard Isaacs, founding Director of the Birmingham Centre for Applied Gerontology stated "design for the young and you exclude the old; design for the old and you include the young"<sup>22</sup>.

In 2010 the Australian Government convened a Roundtable on Universal Design of which COTA Australia was a member. From this Roundtable the Liveable Housing Australia not-for-profit organisation was established to promote the adoption of a voluntary code of universal design principles in the planning, design and building of communities. This organisation is made up of architects, the Property Council of Australia, the Masters Builders Association, COTA Australia and other key organisation who will work together to promote universal design principles in encouraging a more accessible and liveable community not just for older people, but for the benefit of all.

Whilst it is noted that some local governments have developed plans for positive ageing that include physical infrastructure issues, developers and builders are beginning to consider the physical needs of older people in their developments and many communities are becoming more physically accessible, there is still significant work to be undertaken in Tasmania to achieve an age-friendly accessible environment.

**Recommendation 6:** State and local governments continue to develop and promote age-friendly environments through the adoption of universal design principles and age-friendly guidelines.



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<sup>22</sup> Isaacs, B., as cited by Australian Local Government Association, 2005 *Age-friendly built environments: Opportunities for local government*, viewed 16 August 2011, <http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/healthAgeing/ageing/resources/publications/builtEnv.php#a1>

## Access to information

“News about what’s happening in our community” was a common issue expressed by both respondents to the postcards and older people the COTA Champions consulted. A total of 66 respondents to the postcards listed availability to information, communication or the media as key issues which make them feel connected to their local community and a lack of information and communication was identified by 30 respondents as an issue that prevents them from feeling this connection.

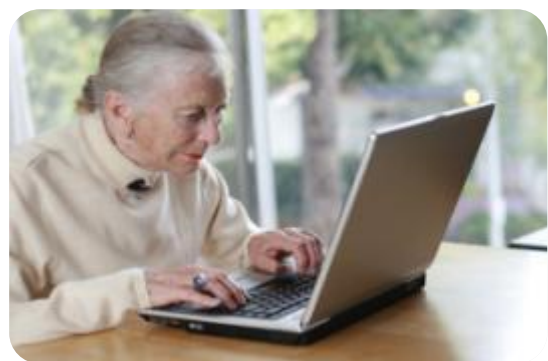
A common concern expressed by older people is that “governments take it for granted when dealing/informing the public that everyone has the internet or access there to”. The “lack of personal contact when using the phone if ringing Telstra, Centrelink, Banks, etc” is also a commonly expressed concern of older people.

Timely and appropriate information presented in a variety of media, languages and at various locations is essential in supporting the social inclusion of older people, in informing people of the opportunities available to them and in encouraging participation. Yet many service providers, local councils and community organisations would claim that they do provide extensive information on their activities either through posters, mail outs, flyers, ads in newspapers and on community radio and links on websites.

One respondent’s suggestion that “I’d like to see a section of the local newspaper devoted to seniors and their activities (weekly)” could address some of the information needs of some people but many older people have poor literacy and may not be able to read their local newspaper. Similarly the suggestion that “a calendar of events – on the internet letting me know what is happening” would be useful to those who have internet access, but again many older people do not have such access.

Further investigation into the information needs of older people is required to understand why the existing methods of information distribution are not adequate and what would suit the needs of older people. COTA has received funding from the Hobart City Council to scope information needs of older people research project. Once this scoping has been completed funding will be required to undertake such research.

**Recommendation 7:** Research the information needs of older people including the most desirable methods of distributing information. Such research could be undertaken through a partnership between the University of Tasmania and local government.



## Transport

Having access to private or public transport is identified as a key issue that makes people feel connected to their local community and also limitations to transport prevents people from feeling connected to their local community. Comments such as “being able to keep my driver’s licence”, “accessibility to my car in order to keep up with my normal habits”, “frequent reasonably priced public transport”, “buses are too infrequent outside of commuter times”, “lack of public transport in rural area”, poor “pedestrian access” and “buses are too expensive” are examples of comments made by 52 postcard respondents to question 1 and 63 postcard respondents to question 2.

Again the findings in this report are consistent with *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania* in which Adams highlights “transport has emerged as a critical factor in the ability of Tasmanians to access the services they need” and that “transport is fundamental to connecting people to opportunity”.<sup>23</sup>

Access to transport is a major issue guaranteed to be identified in any consultations undertaken with older people. In recognition of this COTA’s Policy Council in August 2010 identified access to transport as the key focus of the Council. Resulting from this, in September 2010 COTA wrote to a number of government agencies, transport providers and councils seeking information regarding transport services, issues and gaps for older Tasmanians. COTA’s report *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania* summarises key transport issues and identifies options for action by COTA<sup>24</sup>.

One of the key points highlighted in the COTA transport report is the need for greater coordination of transport services across existing transport providers, utilising existing transport resources. In many communities there are a number of transport options for older people including their own private car, public transport, community transport services through Community Transport Services Tasmania, Red Cross and other providers and family and friends. What is sometimes missing is the promotion and coordination of these transport services and flexible guidelines enabling providers to operate services that truly meets the needs of older people.

COTA is further analysing their *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania* report and is investigating ways to work in partnership with Community Transport Services Tasmania to further some of the recommendations within the report.

**Recommendation 8:** COTA to further the work currently being undertaken in relation to their *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania* report.

In addition, public transport is often limiting to older people because of timetabling, cost, physical accessibility and the location, safety and accessibility including seating at local bus

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<sup>23</sup> Adams, 2009, p 32 & 33

<sup>24</sup> COTA, February 2011, *Access to transport for older people in Tasmania*, unpublished report

stops. Older people also report a lack of knowledge of the available public transport services because they have never accessed these services before and a lack of confidence in accessing an unfamiliar service.

These factors are recognised by Tassielink Transit who contracted COTA in February 2011 to undertake consultations with older people in the Huon Valley to develop a greater understanding of the factors that would encourage older people to use Tassielink services and the barriers they face in accessing Tassielink services. The ensuing report *Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley*<sup>25</sup> highlights key recommendations in improving Tassielink services, many of which are applicable to other public transport providers.

**Recommendation 9:** Government and transport providers further explore the recommendations identified in the *Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley* as key responses to improving public transport services for older people in Tasmania.

Retaining their drivers' licence is a key issue for older people in maintaining their independence, pursuing interests, keeping involved in the community and thus having a major affect on their health and wellbeing. For many older people surrendering their drivers' licence heralds the onset of dependence, vulnerability and loss of autonomy.

Over the last 12 months the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) has been undertaking a review of the older driver licensing system. Previously in Tasmania drivers 75 years and older were required to undertake an annual medical assessment and drivers 85 years and over were required to undertake an annual on road driving assessment. COTA considered these requirements discriminatory as they are based on age not ability.

COTA made the following key points in its submission to DIER in October 2010:

1. COTA does not support mandatory age based driver testing either on road or medical.
2. COTA recognises that abolishing both assessments may not be well received politically or by the public. COTA therefore recommends DIER partners with COTA to conduct a public education campaign to dispel the incorrect perception that older drivers are a risk.
3. COTA encourages DIER to consider the issue of older drivers in the broader context of older people's transport needs, including the transition to non-driver status through information, access and availability of appropriate public and community transport options<sup>26</sup>.

In August 2011 DIER released *The Alternative Older Driver Licensing System for Tasmania Final Report* which now states that drivers 85 years and over do not have to undertake a compulsory

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<sup>25</sup> COTA, May 2011, *Improving Tassielink Transit Bus Services for Older People in the Huon Valley*, unpublished report

<sup>26</sup> COTA, 2010, *The Review of the Older Driver Licensing System By DIER*, Response by Council on the Ageing (COTA (Tas))

annual driving assessment<sup>27</sup>. COTA welcomes this change as this requirement was based on age not ability. There is still the requirement however for drivers 75 years and over are to undertake an annual medical assessment. COTA considers this discriminatory as again, it is based on age not ability.

**Recommendation 10:** That aged based discrimination is removed from DIER's older drivers licensing system in relation to the compulsory annual medical assessment.

**Recommendation 11:** DIER implements a range of strategies to support older drivers to retain their licence and assist those who do lose or forgo their licence to make the transition to non-driver status.



<sup>27</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, August 2011, *The Alternative Older Driver Licensing System for Tasmania Final Report*, unpublished paper



## Helping others to feel part of their community

The COTA Champions discussed with older people in their community what they themselves could do to help others feel part of the community. It is interesting to note that one of the major responses to this question was the informal and friendly initiatives of inviting newcomers or neighbours in for cuppas and catch ups, taking someone along to a group or organisation to which they belong, sharing information about events or activities in their local community and having “a friendly, accepting attitude to others”.

The placement of local noticeboards and the promotion of information on these boards were discussed by many older people. COTA believes there is merit in further exploring the suggestion from the Huon Valley of local “Green Jackets” who are knowledgeable about their local community including the history and the activities available in the community. This initiative could be available to both locals and tourists and staffed by volunteers. Such simple initiatives could enhance the friendliness of the local community, especially in rural areas and be promoted as key sources of information.

Welcoming new members to an organisation and encouraging existing members to support others to join their organisation are also quite simple initiatives. They are important as they can make a real difference to a newcomer in the local community or an older person recently retired or widowed who is looking to engage more in their local community.

It is interesting to consider these initiatives in light of the fact that many local community groups are experiencing a decline in membership. COTA in South Australia is funded by HACC for a Networking Clubs in the Community program. This program aims to give an opportunity for South Australian Seniors Clubs and groups to be developed as resource centres for older people with the community. The program aims to help seniors’ clubs develop club activities and programs in a variety of ways such as providing the support of trained Clubs Liaison Volunteers, offering “Running a club” training and assisting clubs with networking with other seniors’ clubs, local government and other community organisations.

**Recommendation 12:** COTA seek funding to establish a Networking Clubs in the Community program to support local seniors’ organisations as resource centres for older people and to support and encourage membership of such organisations.

## Other issues

The issues of respect, feeling valued and having a say were identified as important in helping people feel connected to their local communities. Comments such as “when people ignore me as I am older”, “input into decisions affecting me” and “feeling like we’re not heard” are concerning. It is essential that older people are consulted and involved in the design and delivery of services and programs, in policy development and in any changes impacting on their lives.

A lack of motivation and the desire for privacy were identified by people as preventing them from feeling connected to their community. Significant discussions occurred with the COTA Champions in all four municipalities about the need to respect the wishes of those older people who choose to remain isolated and resent the invasion of privacy when others try to encourage them to participate in activities or community events.

It is also interesting to note that 46 postcard respondents indicated that nothing prevents them from feeling connected to their local community. “Everything is there you have to take the first step” states one respondent, while another acknowledges that nothing at the moment prevents them from feeling connected to their community “because I am fit and healthy and I have a car”.

Health and wellbeing was a factor that prevented 29 postcard respondents and some of those interviewed by the COTA Champions from feeling connected to their local community. The impact of losing one’s hearing was a factor that led to social isolation of some people, despite wearing hearing aids and making other adjustments.

Providing activities that enhance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of older people is essential in promoting social inclusion of older people. It is important to acknowledge however that factors such as transport, cost, access to information and accessible communities impact on the ability of an older person to participate in such activities as does the desire and motivation of the person themselves.





## Ageing well and social inclusion

It is interesting to compare the key findings in this research with the Benevolent Society's discussion on "*Ageing well and the social inclusion of older people*"<sup>28</sup>. In this Social Issues paper the Benevolent Society suggest that the factors which contribute to ageing well and social inclusion include:

- adequate income and material assets
- appropriate and affordable housing
- access to good quality health services
- access to support and care according to need
- access to transport
- an age-friendly built environment
- community attitudes of respect and acceptance
- community connection and social networks
- feeling safe
- opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life.

Many of the issues identified in the COTA research concur with those outlined above.

The Benevolent Society further states "older age can compound other aspects of disadvantage, with particular vulnerability linked to low income, inadequate housing, poor physical and or mental health, disability and social isolation"<sup>29</sup>. The Society then makes suggestions about what can be done to support the social and economic inclusion of older people and promote ageing well. Many of their suggestions concur with the recommendations in this report.

## Further research

As stated previously, this COTA research provides an initial exploration of the key social inclusion issues for older people in Tasmania however it is limited both in terms of the sample of older people involved in the research and the research questions themselves. As mentioned in the Research Methodology section of this report, respondents of the postcards were those who voluntarily completed a postcard and sent it back to COTA and those involved in the discussions with the COTA Champions were people with whom the COTA Champions have contact. This research methodology is therefore limited.

COTA assumes, for example, that very few older people living in residential facilities would have completed a postcard. Yet their needs and issues in relation to social inclusion are important. According to the Department of Health and Ageing, in 2009 approximately 7.6% of people aged 70 years and over in Tasmania lived in residential aged care facilities<sup>30</sup>. People living in such facilities are at increased risk of being seen as passive recipients of institutional care who are too frail to benefit from and contribute to the community. They often have less choice and

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<sup>28</sup> The Benevolent Society, 2009, *Ageing well and the social inclusion of older people*, viewed 13 July 2011 <http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/issues-paper-2-ageing-well-jul2009.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Department of Health and Ageing, 2010 unpublished email to COTA CEO

control over many aspects of their daily life, including their opportunity to be involved in community activities of their choice.

As research by the Department of Health in Victoria highlights there needs to be more emphasis on social inclusion issues for people living in residential aged care, “providing variety, choice and improved quality of life...People who live in residential aged care should be valued citizens who are enabled and supported to maintain their involvement in the social, recreational, economic and family aspects of life and society”.<sup>31</sup>

It is unlikely that many people living in residential aged care facilities participated in this research, yet their social inclusion issues need to be explored and addressed. Similarly older Aboriginal people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and older people with a disability may not have participated in the research and their social inclusion needs and issues need identifying.

In addition to the limited sample population in the research, COTA also acknowledges that this research only looked at what is important and what prevents older people from feeling connected to their community. This is considered a key exploratory and general issue however it only focuses on one aspect of social inclusion. Whilst the findings highlight issues of importance including transport, family and friendships, social networks and access, more comprehensive research is needed to explore these and other social inclusion issues at greater depth.

**Recommendation 13:** That further research is undertaken to explore the social inclusion issues of specific populations of older people in Tasmania, including residents of aged care facilities, older Aboriginal people, older people from non-English speaking backgrounds and older people with a disability.

**Recommendation 14:** That more substantial research is undertaken on social inclusion and older people in Tasmania.

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<sup>31</sup> Department of Health, 2011, Op Cit

## Conclusion

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Gaining a greater understanding of what social inclusion means to the significantly increasing population of older people in Tasmania was the aim of this research undertaken by COTA with funding assistance from the Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Through the information obtained from the returned postcards and the COTA Champions discussion in their local communities COTA now has a wealth of information on the issues that are important in making older people feel connected to their local communities and the factors that prevent older people from feeling this sense of connection. The five key issues of participation, social connections, accessibility, access to information and transport were the issues that the majority of older people identified as important in making them feel connected to their community. Other issues including respect and feeling valued, input into decision making, health and wellbeing and access to support services were also identified by older people as important in making them feel connected to their local community.

This information and the recommendations within this report will be useful to government and community and will enable government, policy makers and key organisations including COTA to further facilitate the social inclusion of older Tasmanians and reduce the impact of social isolation. COTA acknowledges however that this research provides an initial exploration of the key social inclusion issues for older people in Tasmanian but it is limited both in terms of the sample of older people involved in the research and the research questions themselves.

In researching this report COTA endorses the comments from Naughtin of the Brotherhood of St Laurence that little academic and policy work has been undertaken on social exclusion amongst older people in Australia<sup>32</sup>. Naughtin quotes research undertaken in the United Kingdom that identified the multiple and cumulative nature of social exclusion amongst older people. They found for example, “that compared to the older population as a whole, those on low income, living alone and suffering from depression are between two and five times more likely to experience multiple exclusion”<sup>33</sup>. It would be interesting to understand further the social inclusion issues of specific populations of older people in Tasmania to further unpack the issues and factors identified in this report.

COTA acknowledges that the Community Development Division in Tasmania’s Department of Premier and Cabinet is currently looking at the future directions of the Seniors Bureau. It is anticipated that the Seniors Bureau will have a social policy agenda into the future and COTA looks forward to working the Seniors Bureau on this social policy agenda.

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<sup>32</sup> Naughtin, Op Cit p 5

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p 7

Finally COTA supports Naughtin's push that there is a significant need to develop a social inclusion strategy for older people in Australia. As Naughtin states "Australia has the opportunity to build on overseas experience and develop a strategy in which all older Australians age well. A strategy on social inclusion and older people should be one of the elements of a broader social inclusion framework"<sup>34</sup>. The development of such a strategy could begin in Tasmania.



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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p 12

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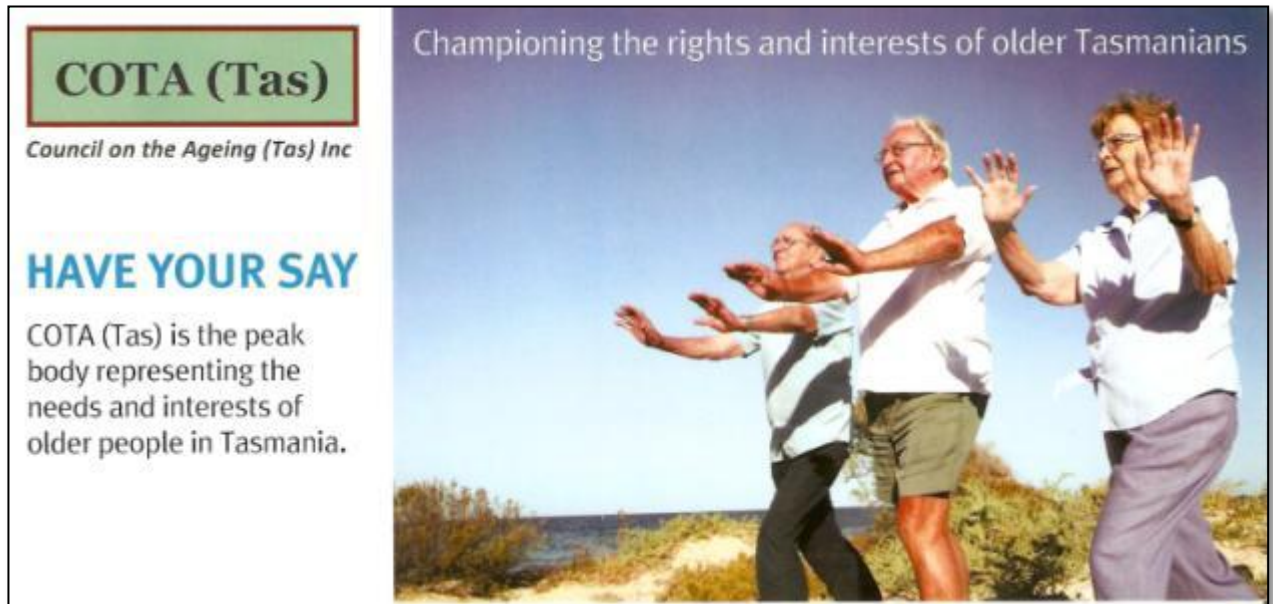
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## Appendix I: Original postcard



**COTA (Tas) wants to hear from you**

What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are key issues for you as you age?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What can COTA (Tas) do about these issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please place this in the COTA (Tas) box provided or give to a COTA (Tas) representative



## Appendix 2: Modified postcard



<p style="text-align: center;">COTA (Tas) wants to hear from you</p> <p>What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What are key issues for you as you age?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Your postcode <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/></p>	<p style="font-size: small;">No stamp required if posted in Australia</p> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin: 10px 0;">   </div> <p>Council on the Ageing 2 St Johns Ave Reply Paid 83056 NEW TOWN TAS 7008</p>
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## Appendix 3: COTA Champions' questions for discussion

***SOCIAL INCLUSION RESEARCH***

## Research Aim

To undertake participatory research to further understand the meaning and implications of social inclusion for older people in Tasmania.

COTA Champions to undertake informal discussions around kitchen tables, over the phone, with existing networks of older people, etc on the following questions:

1. Do you feel part of “this” community?
2. If so, what makes you feel part of “this” community?
3. If not, why don’t you feel part of “this” community?
4. How can you help others to feel part of “this” community?

## Appendix 4: Local Government area responses to Questions 1 and 2

### Local Government area responses to Questions 1 and 2

The following tables lists the responses to Questions 1 and 2 from specific local government areas. The local government areas not included in this information are Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart, Huon Valley, Kingborough, Launceston and Meander Valley as their responses are reported on in the body of the report. No postcard responses were received from Flinders Island or Latrobe.

#### Key responses from Break O'Day local government area

Table 1: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Communication	1
Local community involvement	1
Media	1
Other	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2
Volunteering	1

Table 2: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of living	1
Government and/or policy	1
Information and communication – lack or	3

#### Key responses from Brighton local government area

Table 3: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
General services	1
Local community involvement	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	1
Transport	1

Table 4: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Access – lack of	1
Government and/or policy	1
Information and communication – lack or	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	2
Transport – limitations to	2

### Key responses from Burnie local government area

Table 5: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Availability of information	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	2
General services	1
Government and policy	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	1
Other	4
Personal and or social contact	2
Physical facilities for ease of mobility and access	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2
Volunteering	1

Table 6: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of living	1
Cost of activities or being involved	2
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	3
Information and communication – lack or	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Nothing	1
Other	3
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Support services – lack of	1
Transport – limitations to	4

## Key responses from Central Coast local government area

Table 7: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	4
Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Availability of information	1
Cost of facilities of access to amenities	1
Government and policy	2
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	10
Media	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	5
Personal mobility	2
Respect and feeling valued	3
Transport	2
Volunteering	1
work	1

Table 8: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	1
Government and/or policy	3
Health and wellbeing	1
Information and communication – lack or	3
Interaction with others – lack of	2
Location – geographical isolation	1
Motivation – lack of	1
Nothing	1
Other	2
Transport – limitations to	5

## Key responses from Central Highlands local government area

Table 9: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to health services and facilities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	2
General services	1
Local community involvement	3
Other	2
Personal and or social contact	3
Volunteering	1

Table 10: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Access – lack of	1
Dismissal – felt sense of	1
Government and/or policy	1
Information and communication – lack of	3
Infrastructure	1
Interaction with others – lack of	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	3
Other	3
Transport – limitations to	1

Table 11: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
General services	1
Government and policy	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	1
Other	3
Personal and or social contact	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2

Table 12: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of living	1
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	3
Information and communication – lack or	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Motivation – lack of	1
Other	1
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Transport – limitations to	4

## Key responses from Devonport local government area

Table 13: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	2
Availability of information	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	8
Media	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	3
Personal mobility	1
Transport	2
work	1

Table 14: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Health and wellbeing	1
Information and communication – lack of	1
Interaction with others – lack of	1
Nothing	1
Other	2
Transport – limitations to	2

## Key responses from Dorset local government area

Table 15: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Communication	2
General services	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Personal and or social contact	2

Table 16: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Access – lack of	1
Activities or events – lack of	1
Location – geographical isolation	2
Other	1
Transport – limitations to	1

## Key responses from George Town local government area

Table 17: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Availability of information	1
Communication	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Input into decision making	1
Personal and or social contact	2
Transport	1

Table 18: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Dismissal – felt sense of	1
Government and/or policy	1
Other	1
Transport – limitations to	1

## Key responses from Glamorgan/Spring Bay local government area

Table 19: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	2
Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
Local community involvement	1
Personal and or social contact	3
Personal mobility	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	1
Volunteering	2

Table 20: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	2
Cost of living	1
Information and communication – lack or	2
Infrastructure	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Nothing	1
Transport – limitations to	1



## Key responses from Kentish local government area

Table 21: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	2
Availability of information	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	8
Media	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	3
Personal mobility	1
Transport	2
Work	1

Table 22: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Health and wellbeing	1
Information and communication – lack of	1
Interaction with others – lack of	1
Nothing	1
Other	2
Transport – limitations to	2

## Key responses from King Island local government area

Table 23: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Local community involvement	1
Other	3
Personal and or social contact	2

Table 24: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	1
Cost of living	2
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Other	1
Support services – lack of	1

## Key responses from New Norfolk local government area

Table 25: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Local community involvement	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	1
Volunteering	1

Table 26: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Dismissal – felt sense of	1
Infrastructure	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Other	3

## Key responses from Northern Midlands local government area

Table 27: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	2
Access to health services and facilities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
Health and wellbeing	1
Money or funding	1
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	2
Transport	1

Table 28: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of activities or being involved	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Other	2

## Key responses from Sorrell local government area

Table 29: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	1
Access to health services and facilities	1
Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	5
General services	1
Health and wellbeing	2
Local community involvement	4
Personal and or social contact	2
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2

Table 30: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	2
Government and/or policy	1
Interaction with others – lack of	2
Nothing	1
Other	1
Time – lack of	2
Transport – limitations to	2

## Key responses from Southern Midlands local government area

Table 31: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to health services and facilities	1
Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	2
General services	1
Local community involvement	2
Other	1
Personal and or social contact	3
Respect and feeling valued	1

Table 32: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Access – lack of	1
Activities or events – lack of	1
Government and/or policy	2
Information and communication – lack or	3
Interaction with others – lack of	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	3
Transport – limitations to	1

### Key responses from Tasman local government area

Table 33: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	1
Money or funding	1

Table 34: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Nothing	1
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### Key responses from Waratah/Wynyard local government area

Table 35: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
General services	1
Government and policy	1
Input into decision making	2
Local community involvement	2
Other	3
Personal and or social contact	3
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	4
Volunteering	1

Table 36: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of living	1
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	4
Information and communication – lack or	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Nothing	2
Other	2
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Transport – limitations to	4

### Key responses from West Coast local government area

Table 37: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Engaging in activities and functions or events	2
General services	2
Government and policy	1
Input into decision making	1
Local community involvement	2
Other	3
Personal and or social contact	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2

Table 38: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Cost of living	1
Government and/or policy	1
Health and wellbeing	4
Information and communication – lack or	1
Location – geographical isolation	1
Other	2
Sense of fear or insecurity	1
Transport – limitations to	4

## Key responses from West Tamar local government area

Table 39: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to health services and facilities	1
Access to shops and/or facilities	1
Communication	2
Engaging in activities and functions or events	1
Local community involvement	4
Personal and or social contact	2
Transport	1
Volunteering	2

Table 40: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	1
Nothing	1

## Key responses from postcards without a postcode

Table 41: Question 1 What's important in making you feel connected to your local community?

Access to events and activities	3
Access to shops and/or facilities	3
Availability of information	3
Communication	1
Engaging in activities and functions or events	2
Government and policy	1
Input into decision making	2
Local community involvement	5
Making a contribution	1
Media	1
Other	4
Personal and or social contact	6
Personal safety and security	1
Respect and feeling valued	1
Transport	2
Volunteering	1
Work	1

Table 42: Question 2 What prevents you from feeling connected to your local community?

Activities or events – lack of	1
Consultation – lack of	1
Cost of living	1
Cost of activities or being involved	1
Government and/or policy	4
Health and wellbeing	3
Interaction with others – lack of	1
Not applicable	1
Nothing	3
Other	3
Transport – limitations to	1



**COTA**  
For older Australians

