

# Submission to the ACT 2018-19 Budget Consultation Process

## ABOUT COTA ACT

### Introduction

COTA ACT is the peak organisation for all issues relating to older Canberra citizens, seniors, those of mature age and their families. It is an independent organisation working to protect and promote the well-being, rights and interests of all older people in the ACT. We cover all aspects of the journey of growing older.

### What COTA Does

COTA ACT talks to Government, the media and the community about issues of direct concern to all older people in the ACT. We make regular submissions to government on issues affecting older people.

As a member of several ACT government standing committees, such as the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, and special committees of enquiry, COTA ACT has ongoing input into the advice going to government.

COTA ACT also provides services – some on behalf of government – for older Canberra citizens.

### Our Services

COTA ACT provides a range of direct services which are partly supported through membership contributions.

These services include:

- Providing advice and referrals to individuals on a wide range of issues through the Seniors Information Line, which receives over 1500 calls per month. You'd be surprised what we can help with.
- Assisting older people to access appropriate housing and aged care, through our Housing Options Advisor.
- Administering the Seniors Card Directory and the ACT Seniors Card.
- Publishing advice for older drivers, through the Older Drivers' Handbook and A Guide to Getting around Canberra.
- Offering health and lifestyle information through our Community Education programs run by peer educators.

COTA ACT produces a number of publications, including the ACT Seniors Card Directory, and A Guide to Getting Around in Canberra

## **ABOUT PLAYGROUPS ACT**

### **Introduction**

**Playgroup is an informal session where parents, carers, babies and children aged birth to school age come together in a relaxed and friendly environment.**

### **About Playgroups ACT**

#### **Playgroup gives children an opportunity to:**

- have fun,
- make new friends, and
- develop new skills through informal play.

#### **Playgroup provides parents and carers with:**

- an opportunity to meet other parents and carers,
- make friends, and
- share ideas and experiences.

#### **Playgroup also allows parents and carers to:**

- spend quality time with their children,
- encouraging, helping or simply playing with their children.

#### **Playgroups are:**

- not-for-profit,
- run by, and for the parents who attend.
- usually held once a week for a two hour session,
- held in a variety of venues such as church halls, community and neighbourhood centres, Scout or Guide halls, schools and in people's homes.

### **Our Services**

- For over 10 years ACT Playgroups has been running early intervention playgroups in the Canberra area. ACT Playgroups Early Intervention Playgroups are run by highly qualified staff in partnership with Tuggeranong and Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, Therapy ACT and Giralang AIU. These playgroups are designed to support the journey of families with young children with additional needs. Our early intervention playgroups for children 0-5 years are free, fun, interactive, evidence based and accessible to all. All family members including siblings and other carers are encouraged to attend.

## ACT Grandparent Support



## Introduction

According to ABS data released in July 2016 "Grandparents are the main providers of informal care for children of working parents". The study went on to say that "grandparents provide child care for almost one-third of 0-12 aged children of working parents". Of the nearly 50% of children accessing some form of child care, grandparent care was used at 1.5 times the rate of long day care.

Yet these carers receive almost no support, resources, help or recognition in this incredibly important role.

Grandparents also often bear a large load in supporting children with additional needs or chronic illness and their families. It is important to take time and make a formal effort to thank those who do such 'heavy lifting' in our community with very little funding, assistance or acknowledgment.



Grandparent carers (whether primary or informal carers) receive little support or resourcing in their caring role. Recent meetings of concerned community organisations (organised by Canberra Mothercraft) have identified a lack of support and resources for Grandparents as well as a lack of awareness of the importance and prevalence of this role.

Most States in Australia celebrate generational family connection through a Grandparents' Day or similar. Such an event allows the highlighting of the role that the senior generation play in the ongoing life and care of Canberra families and children.

A regular celebration of Grandparents' Day in the ACT, with a range of media, awards, celebrations, awareness, promotion and grants could go towards addressing this gap.

Work that ACT Playgroups and COTA ACT have been doing with the ACT Office for Veterans and Seniors have settled on aligning the ACT with both the NSW and national date (set for the last Sunday in October, which will be 28 October 2018).

### **The Purpose**

Grandparents have a unique role in our society

They don't just connect everyone to the values, stories and histories of people's families, but to the values, stories and histories of Australian communities.

The purpose of Grandparents' Day is to celebrate the vital role that grandparents play in our Territory, as custodians of individual

and cultural members and as providers of care and love to their children and grandchildren. Grandparents' Day recognises the irreplaceable role grandparents have in their families in the wider Canberra community.



The Day and activities throughout that week are:

- To honour grandparents,
- To give grandparents an opportunity to show love for their children's children,
- To help children become aware of the strength, information and guidance older Canberrans can provide,
- To recognise and celebrate how much we all benefit from spending time together and connecting across the generations,
- To grandparents from the wide range of cultures and ethnic groups that exist in the ACT and to break down any social isolation that they may experience.

*"Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children."*

Alex Haley

Grandparents are important to children and families in so many ways. They have patience and time when parents are often busy. They have stories to tell and interesting games to play. They are also good for fun and treats and spoiling, which we all need from time to time.

This special time recognises the significant contribution that grandparents make to their families and communities. It also recognises the role that grandparents have with older children and young people (including those away from home), and the significance that this relationship may take on during the challenging teenage/young adult years.

It is also an occasion for acknowledging the efforts and devotion of grandparents who are full-time carers for their grandchildren. Also to give something back to those grandparents from other cultures and languages who may otherwise feel isolated and disengaged.



### **Objectives of Grandparents' Day**

- Raise community awareness of the role, needs, rights and achievements of grandparents in the ACT
- Encourage the community, children's services, support groups, schools, community groups to plan and conduct events to celebrate grand parenting
- To highlight issues involved in grand-parenting in Canberra
- To make community and service organisations aware of the need to offer support and resources to Grandparent carers
- Honour grandparents and recognise the contribution they make as carers in families and in children's development
- Assist individuals, groups and organisations to organise local activities and events that support and involve grandparents and children and their families, through the provision of small seeding grants
- Encourage the participation of both grandparents and children in activities and events as another dimension to ACT Children's Week
- Provide opportunities for groups, organisations and schools to 'open their doors' to give the community an opportunity to thank grandparents
- Help promote the work that people are doing to support children and youth in our community
- Recognise grandparents who are an example and role model for others through the presentation of Awards
- Assist grandparents to be active with their grandchildren, in line with the Active Ageing Framework of the ACT

### **Incorporating Grandparents' Day into ACT Children's Week**

Grandparents' Day can dovetail into ACT Children's Week (20 – 28 October 2018) so shared activities can occur across the ACT.

By placing Grandparents' Day within the Children's Week umbrella, activities can be scheduled for children and grandparents all week - allowing a much greater involvement from organisations and the media etc. It also allows us to use the infrastructure and resourcing that ACT Children's Week has developed over many years in the ACT.

## How the ACT can celebrate Grandparents' Day

Many families can celebrate thorough family get-togethers, picnics by the Lake or outings to Canberra's national institutions when they come "on board".

It can be celebrated across the ACT through:

- Community run events
- Activities in schools (morning tea or shared lunch or afternoon tea - given so many grandparents in Canberra do the school pick up of children)
- Activities in preschools and child care centres
- Activities in libraries such as shared story time and shared story reading
- Link with Canberra business to run a Grandparents' playgroup and activity session in Garema Place, Civic (transport to be provided by the Flexible Bus Service)
- Activities in the national institutions (such as the gallery, museum etc)
- Small grants to allow organisations, individuals and businesses to find unique and innovative ways of recognising and celebrating grandparents in their community



## Playgroups

- The major event of ACT Children's Week (PlayFEST) is to be held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 with over 2,000 people in attendance at ACT Playgroups in Cook, ACT
- Universal Children's Day is held on the fourth Wednesday each October, and this can be expanded to include the valuable role that grandparents have in their family and community (and to the ACT economy)
- Grandparents' Playgroups and Paint and Plays around Canberra (also for grandparents and their grandchildren)

- Intergenerational Playgroups run at different aged care facilities around the ACT

**Note – all of these events will be ideal for the attendance of the Minister – and for updates on ACT Playgroups, COTA ACT and the ACT government social media). Pre-publicity will also be available during the Seniors Expo and National Playgroup Week in March 2018.**

Other activities may incorporate:

- Grandparents shared activity ideas
- Advice and support for grandparents from Parentline ACT
- Special deals or offers for grandparent carers during the week
- Social media/technology focus (getting younger people involved in giving back to their grandparents by helping them access and learn new technologies)



**And, with a focus on grandparents themselves:**

Active grandparents make all the difference for their grandchildren so lots of publicity about keeping active and active ageing in Canberra. For example:

- Heartmoves
- Beat It - Physical Activity and Lifestyle Program
- Heart Foundation Walking
- Nutrition Australia

A grandparents website and Facebook page can be set up by the Office for Veterans and Seniors and can be co-hosted by COTA ACT and ACT Playgroups.

Publicity can be provided through the Seniors and Veterans e-newsletter, the COTA ACT monthly e-newsletter and quarterly hard copy newsletter, City News and Canberra Weekly which will achieve maximum publicity for minimum cost.

This is also an opportunity to publicise the issue of the prevention of Elder Abuse and the support helpline, APRIL.

Primary support for the program can be provided by ACT Playgroups and COTA ACT. Partnerships will also be sought with a range of local organisations including the ACT Children's Week Committee, Kidsafe ACT, and Canberra Parenting.

### **Funding**

This project requires an initial start-up fund of about \$20,000 and then ongoing resourcing of about \$15,000 per year to succeed. These funds would be used to provide small seeding/activities grants (about \$6,000 p/a) as well as event/award funding (of about \$5,000) and admin/media/publication etc funding (of \$4,000) to maintain websites, engage media, assess awards and grants, organise events etc. This funding will be more than matched by financial and in-kind contributions by partners and organisations involved in the program as well as through synergies and efficiencies created by linking this project with ongoing programs and processes.

### **More support/information**

The proposal for establishing an ongoing Grandparents' Day in the ACT already has the support of a working group formed to discuss this issue. This group includes the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (MACA), COTA ACT, ACT Playgroups, Youth Advisory Council, Senior Clubs ACT and the ACT Children's Week Committee and all parties have committed to progress this project through their own organisations and networks should this budget bid be successful. COTA ACT and ACT Playgroups would be happy to provide any further information required or to meet to answer any questions or concerns that may arise.

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