

COUNCIL ON THE AGEING TASMANIA
#RETHINKAGEING
LAUNCH REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2016

Good afternoon and welcome to Government House for this special projects launch of the Council on the Ageing Tasmania.

May I take a moment to acknowledge with us today: Senator Catryna Bilyk; Lord Mayor Sue Hickey; Jocelyn King representing the Honourable Jacquie Petrusma; Josh Willie MLC; and COTA Tasmania Sue Leitch and her Board Members.

And of course it is so rewarding to see school students here – may I say to you that your involvement in the topic of building respect for old people and preventing elder abuse is to be congratulated. So – well done to you.

Tomorrow, June 15, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and tomorrow I will be joining COTA and other organisations in a walk in the city to raise awareness about this shameful violation of trust.

Elder Abuse is a human rights issue and all older people in our community deserve to feel safe, valued, and respected.

I'm aware that financial abuse is the most common form of abuse of older people,

You may all have heard about the recent case in Hobart where a financial adviser was convicted of stealing almost a million dollars from a 94 year-old woman and a smaller amount from an elderly man.¹

¹ <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/scales-of-justice/hobart-financial-adviser-kenneth-david-drake-behind-bars-over-940000plus-fraud/news-story/7e24204c7091da5c6f32dbe81d4b2c18>

And financial abuse is closely followed closely by psychological and physical abuse, and these are often closely interwoven.

Sadly, adult children are the main perpetrators, mainly sons against mothers, and the parents report feeling shame and embarrassment that their child would behave this way.

Generally the older person is dependent in some way on the adult child, for physical assistance or transport, for example – and they are more likely to be lonely and isolated from friends and other family.

Sometimes the older person is fearful that they will be sent to a nursing home if they don't give their children the money or assets they demand.

The available data on this social problem is sketchy, as you might imagine, because of significant under-reporting. However, some statistics suggest that financial abuse alone may amount to a figure of around 5% of the older population.

And when physical and psychological and other types of abuse are factored in, the numbers of older people affected may be closer to 7% of those aged 60 years and over. This figure aligns with estimates in other jurisdictions around Australia.

These are alarming and unacceptable statistics, in any society. And so today we are here to try to do something about that. And this is through the launch of the COTA *#RethinkAgeing* Program.

This is a suite of projects aimed at tackling ageism, and the associated clichés and stereotypes about older people.

#RethinkAgeing is comprised of a number of components.

The first is a series of postcards involving both young and older Tasmanians.

“Love Stories” asks young people to tell us about an older person they love, by writing one or two sentences and decorating the back of the postcard.

The colourful works you see around you here today were created by Year 7 students from Kingston High School; as well as some much younger students from Friends’ School.

One of the nicest presents I have had from my grandchildren – not quite a Love Story but similar, was a folded paper basket that my nine-year-old grandson Will gave me last Christmas – it was labelled ‘awesome ideas’. I was flattered to think that he thought his granny capable of awesome ideas.

The second part of the postcards program – “My Ageing” is a set of three postcards, which asks adults of all ages to identify one thing they value about being older. The key principle is that before we can value older people we must first value our own ageing.

Can I make a suggestion here – when you are thinking about that one thing to value, don’t think physical, but rather mental, spiritual, experiential, emotional.

The second component project of *#RethinkAgeing* is a portfolio of specially commissioned photographs of older Tasmanians.

COTA has partnered with professional photographer Peter Mathew to create the first in a series of images highlighting the wealth of active, engaged older people that we have right here in our own community.

On behalf of COTA I would very much like to express appreciation for:

- the contributions of the children and teachers of Friends’ School and Kingston High School;
- the six photographic models for their generous participation;
- and thanks also to Peter Mathew.

And the best way to show that appreciation will be through some presentations.

And then please join me on the walk tomorrow at Parliament Lawns at 2.30 pm, to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2016. And now we'll have refreshments.

Thank you.