**Media Release: Older, Not Alone campaign to support older Victorians over the winter months**

**Melbourne, [Date] --** COTA Victoria, Seniors Rights Victoria, the Victorian Government, local Councils including [LGA], and the Municipal Association of Victoria have partnered for a new, winter-long campaign called *Older, Not Alone*.

This public campaign targets older people, their families, carers, and practitioners to make them aware of available opportunities. *Older, Not Alone* will be a vital tool in the prevention of loss of independence, isolation, and to bolster mental health and wellbeing.

The campaign has been designed to highlight the increased pressures experienced by older Victorians during the colder, darker winter months. More importantly, it will make our most vulnerable cohort aware of the range of resources and support schemes that are already available.

“Victoria, like the rest of Australia, is currently facing a range of economic pressures,” said CEO of COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, Chris Potaris. “Higher inflation and increased interest rates, amongst a multitude of other issues, lead to increased costs of living. These are expected to continue and grow during the coming months, particularly increasing energy costs.”

At the same time, Victoria will likely see another rise in both influenza and COVID-19 infections in winter. While this is already a danger to the health of older Victorians, increased pressures on the health system will lead to more hospitalisations and workforce shortages.

“The ongoing effects of the pandemic and economic stresses are increasing the forces that contribute to elder abuse, particularly financial elder abuse,” added Mr Potaris. “Around 15 per cent of older people experienced elder abuse in the past year.”

One key aspect that can alleviate these issues is community connection. It has been well established that older people being connected to community support or programs have better outcomes regarding their health, wellbeing, and ability to live independent lives.

Many supports from the community, not-for-profits, local government, and the Victorian Government already exist -- such as financial support for energy costs -- but older Victorians need to be made aware of them. More importantly, they may need help in accessing said schemes. *Older, Not Alone* will challenge Victorians to check on their loved ones, friends, and neighbours to make them aware of available support. Moreover, it will offer up ways to engage with that support over the telephone, online, and in-person.

“Being part of this campaign will help highlight local government’s long history of supporting older community members by providing local social opportunities through community centres, libraries, and events. The MAV is thrilled this many organisations can come together for a campaign to support older Victorians,” MAV President Cr David Clark explained.

[Quote from LGA detailing specific programs and involvement]

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*Older, Not Alone* began in June and runs throughout the winter months. The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, Victorian Minister for Disability, Ageing, and Carers, kicked off the campaign at a special launch event that took place on 7 June.

For more, [visit the *Older, Not Alone* website](https://oldernotalone.com).

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**Further information**

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**About COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV)**

COTA Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged over 50 in Victoria. For over 70 years, we have led government, corporate and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing in the state.

Seniors Rights Victoria is a program of COTA Victoria and the key state-wide service dedicated to advancing the rights of older people and the early intervention into, or prevention of, elder abuse in our community.

**About the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)**

The MAV is a membership association and the legislated peak body for local government in Victoria and the communities it represents.

The MAV offers diverse business services to our council members including specialist policy and advocacy, governance and legislative advice, sector development, insurance and procurement services.

**About [LGA]**