

MEDIA STATEMENT
21 April 2017

COTA SA and Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) welcome Oakden facility closure

COTA SA and Aged Rights Advocacy Service - South Australia (ARAS) have welcomed the State Government's decision to close the Oakden Older Persons Mental Health Service and today urged others to speak out and take action if concerned about family members in aged care.

ARAS Chief Executive Carolanne Barkla and COTA SA Chief Executive Jane Mussared said the Oakden mental health facility was "unredeemable and uninhabitable" and they fully supported Mental Health and Substance Abuse Minister Leesa Vlahos' decisive action to close the home as soon as possible.

"The way we care for the most vulnerable and disempowered citizens, whether or not we are in the public eye, is a measure of our civilisation. We must therefore all share in the shame attached to the abuse, neglect, poor practice and archaic conditions suffered by residents of Oakden over a long time," they said.

"But people do still live there and we now urge the State Government to be clear about what the process is to ensure the safety of these residents, as well as the process by which each person will be involved in decision-making about the next steps in their lives.

"We salute the families who, against the odds, kept asking questions, making complaints and compelling action. We also acknowledge the media and public officials who did likewise.

"There is a powerful lesson here that if we see something we're not comfortable with, we must do something, say something, tell someone."

Ms Barkla and Ms Mussared urged members of the public to use the avenues for complaint and advocacy – the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, the Aged Rights Advocacy Service, SA Police and the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner.

Anyone with concerns about people in care also can contact the South Australian Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line on 1800 372 310.

About COTA SA

COTA SA is an older people's movement run by, for and with older people. COTA SA represents the aspirations, interests and rights of 590,000 older South Australians, with 17,000 individual members and 250 organisation members. In 2017 COTA SA turns 60.

About ARAS - Aged Rights Advocacy Service (South Australia)

ARAS is an independent, not-for-profit rights based organisation that aims to promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of older people, through the provision of information, education, support and representation.

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