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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# OLDER QUEENSLANDERS IN DANGER OF BEING DIGITALLY EXCLUDED

The Queensland Government must commit to a comprehensive Digital Inclusion Strategy to ensure no Queenslanders are left behind, says Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, the state's peak organisation for seniors.

COTA Queensland's Chief Executive, Mark Tucker-Evans, said that closure of services and restrictions on movement during the COVID pandemic has highlighted the digital divide.

"We have all had to make a shift online, for school, business, and even our social lives. The virtual events for Queensland Seniors Week last week showed how many people have embraced the opportunities to connect and share in new ways." Mr Tucker-Evans said.

"But that's harder for some than others. Not everyone has the same access to a good internet connection or can afford to pay. Not everyone has a device they can use to connect or has learned how to use its features.

As more and more of our news, activities, and businesses move online, some people can become socially excluded and can have trouble accessing information, products and services."

Queensland currently has a digital transformation strategy, but more needs to be done to make sure people can take advantage of these opportunities.

Recent figures have shown people over 65 in Australia are among those most digitally excluded and are among those experiencing a widening affordability gap.

"There is a myth that older people can't or don't want to use technology. What is needed is equitable, affordable access and practical support to help people keep up with technological changes." Mr Tucker-Evans said.

"It is critical that the transformation to digital services is focused on people of all ages and does not leave anyone behind. This must be a priority issue for Queensland."

COTA Queensland's proposal as part of their priorities for the October election is for a digital inclusion strategy that addresses access, affordability, and capability.

COTA is also asking that the Government ensures equity of access to Government and other services for those who are not online.

"We need a comprehensive statewide approach that supports people of all ages and in all areas of Queensland to get online and to participate fully in the life of our state. We cannot continue to leave some Queenslanders behind."

**END**

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