

SENIORS RELEASE ACT ELECTION PRIORITIES

DATE: EMBARGOED 12.01 AM - THURSDAY OCTOBER 1, 2020

National Seniors Australia has released a list of issues it wants addressed by all parties contesting the ACT election on October 17.

It has identified three major policy areas as priorities for the election and beyond.

They are:

- Health
- Housing
- End of life.

HEALTH

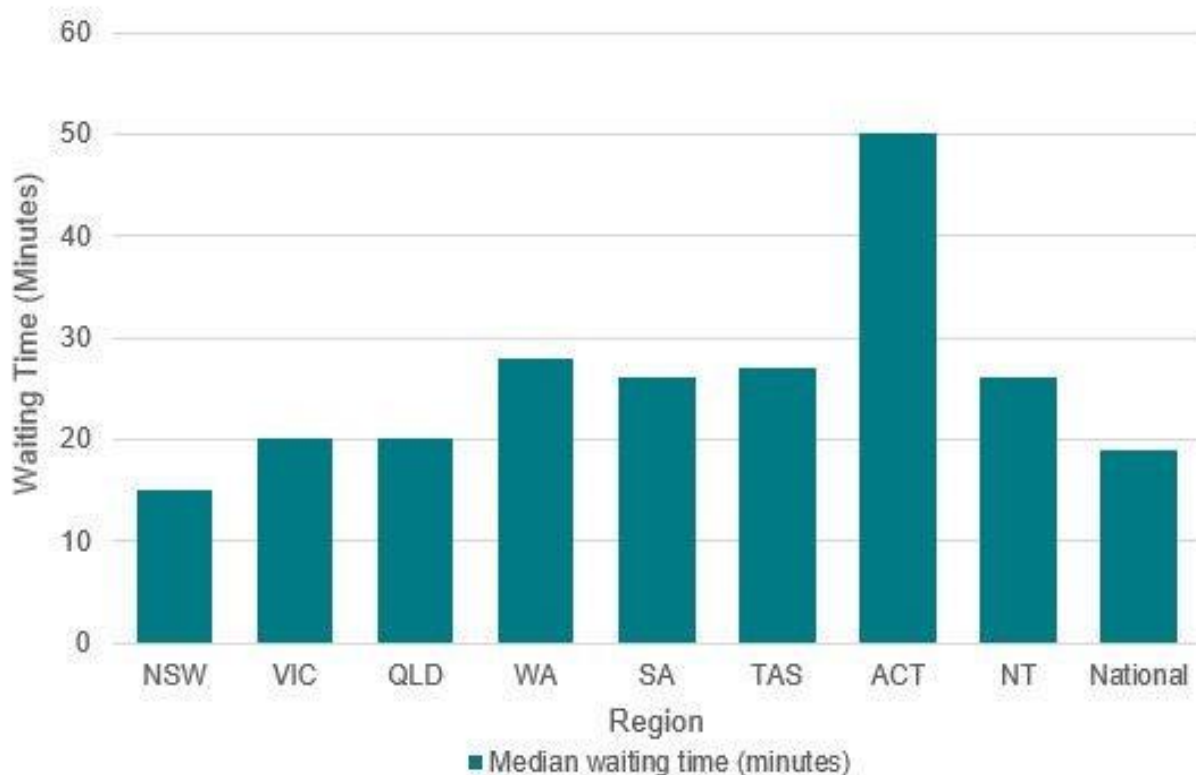
National Seniors Chief Advocate Ian Henschke says the ACT has the longest hospital emergency wait times in the country.

“The health care system is not meeting increasing needs and there is a clear need to boost funding for both elective surgery and for emergency services to meet long wait times,” Mr Henschke said.

He pointed to a graph (see next page) from earlier this year, which illustrates the emergency waiting times in the capital.

“How would the ACT cope if it had a COVID outbreak or similar when its emergency waiting times are almost double that of any other state and territory?”

Median Emergency Waiting Time



Source: Canstar.com.au & AIHW - 09/01/2020. Based on median waiting times reported for patients presenting at hospital emergency departments. 50th Percentile waiting time is equivalent to the time in which 50% of patients were seen

National Seniors says older Australians in the ACT have also expressed concern at excessive specialist fees and would welcome any attempts to respond to this issue.

HOUSING

National Seniors says Canberra has followed other major capital cities in building clusters of high-rise apartments which don't cater for the needs of seniors.

Ian Henschke says the current wave of high-rise buildings alienate older Australians and there is a lack of affordable housing options.

“It seems the ACT has given seniors two choices, a big expensive home or a high-rise apartment.

“What we need is a government which thinks outside the urban square when it comes to senior friendly housing,” he said.

There is also an urgent need to address rising homelessness especially amongst older people in the ACT.

END OF LIFE

Seniors in the ACT have expressed concern about the lack of availability and quality of care as they reach end of life.

National Seniors has identified two hubs in Canberra: Tuggeranong and Gungahlin as areas where there is an urgent need for a better quality of care for end of life.

It says there is a desperate shortage of hospices in those two areas.

The not for profit organisation also wants whoever forms government after the election to pressure the federal government to give the ACT its own powers over voluntary assisted dying.

To download a copy of the 'Priorities for Over 50s' election document, click below:

<https://nationalseniors.com.au/news/featured-news/act-election-here-s-what-we-are-calling-for>

ENDS

Ian Henschke is available for comment, call 0488 047 380

Additional comments: Dr Bill Donovan, Chair ACT Policy Advisory Group 0419 013 963