

Queensland Election 2024:

Priorities for older Queenslanders

HOUSING

1. Introduce a one-off seniors stamp duty concession to promote downsizing.

Older Queenslanders who wish to downsize to a more suitable and age-friendly dwelling are reluctant because of the high cost of stamp duty. Along with a lack of suitable age-friendly homes, this restricts older people from moving in later life if they want to.

The Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, and Tasmania, recognise this problem, offering seniors stamp duty concessions to support older people to downsize.

We call on candidates to:

- *support a stamp duty concession scheme for seniors like those offered in other states and territories.*

2. Facilitate the construction of housing that serves the needs of older people.

There is a need to build more medium density housing in areas where older people already live to provide feasible downsizing and rental options suitable for seniors.

We call on candidates to:

- support moves to encourage the development of a mixture of owner-occupier, rental, and social housing suitable for older people.
- support shared equity arrangements which give older renters with some savings (particularly women) the opportunity to co-invest in the construction of housing offering life tenancy.
- oppose any moves to roll back new livable housing design features recently introduced into the National Construction Code. These features, such as step free entrances, are critical to promote ageing in place and accessibility because they make new homes suitable for older people and people with disabilities.



1/3

of Qld voters
are aged 60+



3. Work with state and federal counterparts to create nationally consistent and strengthened retirement villages legislation.

Retirement villages should offer older people an age-friendly housing option but there are significant concerns about hidden costs related to the complexity of village contracts.

Retirement villages are very different from traditional freehold and strata housing. It is critical that legislation governing retirement villages is simplified to make it easier for consumers to understand their longer-term financial implications.

We call on candidates to:

- commit to further reform of the retirement villages sector. Ideally, this should include a move towards nationally consistent legislation; reductions in the timeframes for compulsory buy back and restrictions on egregious exit fees.



COST OF LIVING

4. Increase the South-East Queensland (SEQ) Pensioner Water Subsidy Scheme to \$150 and extend eligibility for the scheme.

Queensland Pensioner Concession Card holders who own properties connected to the SEQ Water Grid receive a water subsidy of up to \$120 each year. The last time the water subsidy was increased was in 2011-12, from \$100 to \$120.

Compared to other states and territories, the water subsidy in Queensland is low. Victoria offers a water concession of 50% up to a maximum of \$177.05. South Australia subsidises water costs to 30% of a water bill up to a maximum of \$359.70 per year.

We call on candidates to:

- **increase in the SEQ Pensioner water subsidy from \$120 to \$150;**
- **introduce a \$75 per year subsidy for Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders and**
- **extend water subsidies to older people living outside of SEQ.**

5. Continue 50c fares and improve the availability and frequency of public transport services.

Mobility is a key concern of older Queenslanders, especially those who no longer hold a driver's licence. Good public transport systems allow older people to remain healthy and active as they age by providing access to services and programs.

Reducing fares to encourage more seniors to use public transport is good public policy because it makes it cheaper for them to get where they need to go. The policy also helps to ease congestion and reduce transport emissions.

We call on candidates to:

- **commit to continuing the policy of 50c fares and improve the availability and frequency of public transport services.**



6 ■ Support the Federal Government to introduce a Pensioners Concession Card Plus (PCC+) to enable delivery of additional support to pensioners most in need.

NSA research shows low-income seniors are more likely to be severely impacted by rising living costs and are more likely to be prohibited from accessing health care interventions due to cost.

State and territory governments provide many concessions to the community to help reduce living costs. However, they rely on Commonwealth concession cards to administer these concessions.

We call on candidates to:

- support the introduction of a new targeted PCC+ to deliver additional concessions and supports to older people in need.



ENERGY

7. **Oppose the use of demand tariffs by energy retailers; and ensure flat tariffs remain available to customers installing a smart meter and cost-reflective tariffs are not forced onto customers with smart meters.**

NSA opposes the introduction of demand tariffs for electricity customers. Demand tariffs impose unfair charges on consumers. They do not reflect day-to-day energy consumption but instead base consumption on a single point in a billing period, even if usage on all other days is lower. This will punish consumers who have irregularly high consumption on a single day.

NSA is also concerned a plan to accelerate the roll out of smart meters across the energy grid will negatively impact customers. Smart meters allow retailers to use cost-reflective tariffs (such as demand and time-of-use tariffs) that could cause households to experience higher energy bills.

While smart meters, and the cost-reflective tariffs they enable, benefit retailers, NSA believes customers should continue to have access to a flat tariff and not be forced onto time-of-use tariffs if they do not have the means to manage their energy use.

We call on candidates to:

- ***reject demand tariffs and support consumer protections associated with smart meters so that customers are not forced onto cost-reflective tariffs.***





8 ■ Improve the existing Solar Bonus Scheme to help reduce energy prices and stabilise energy supply by:

- a. Removing the cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme from network charges until the scheme expires in 2028
- b. Giving scheme participants the option to install a battery with an appropriate feed-in tariff.

The existing Solar Bonus Scheme poses a significant cost to consumers. Currently, the cost of the scheme is accounted for within the cost of electricity, resulting in higher electricity bills.

In the past, the Queensland Government spread the cost of the scheme across the wider budget in recognition of the wider societal benefits of promoting roof-top solar.

The scheme also restricts participants from installing a battery, despite many being the ones most likely to do so. This undermines the market for household batteries during a time that increased storage capacity is urgently required. Allowing scheme participants to install a battery (with appropriate feed-in rates) could help to increase storage capacity across the energy network.

We call on candidates to:

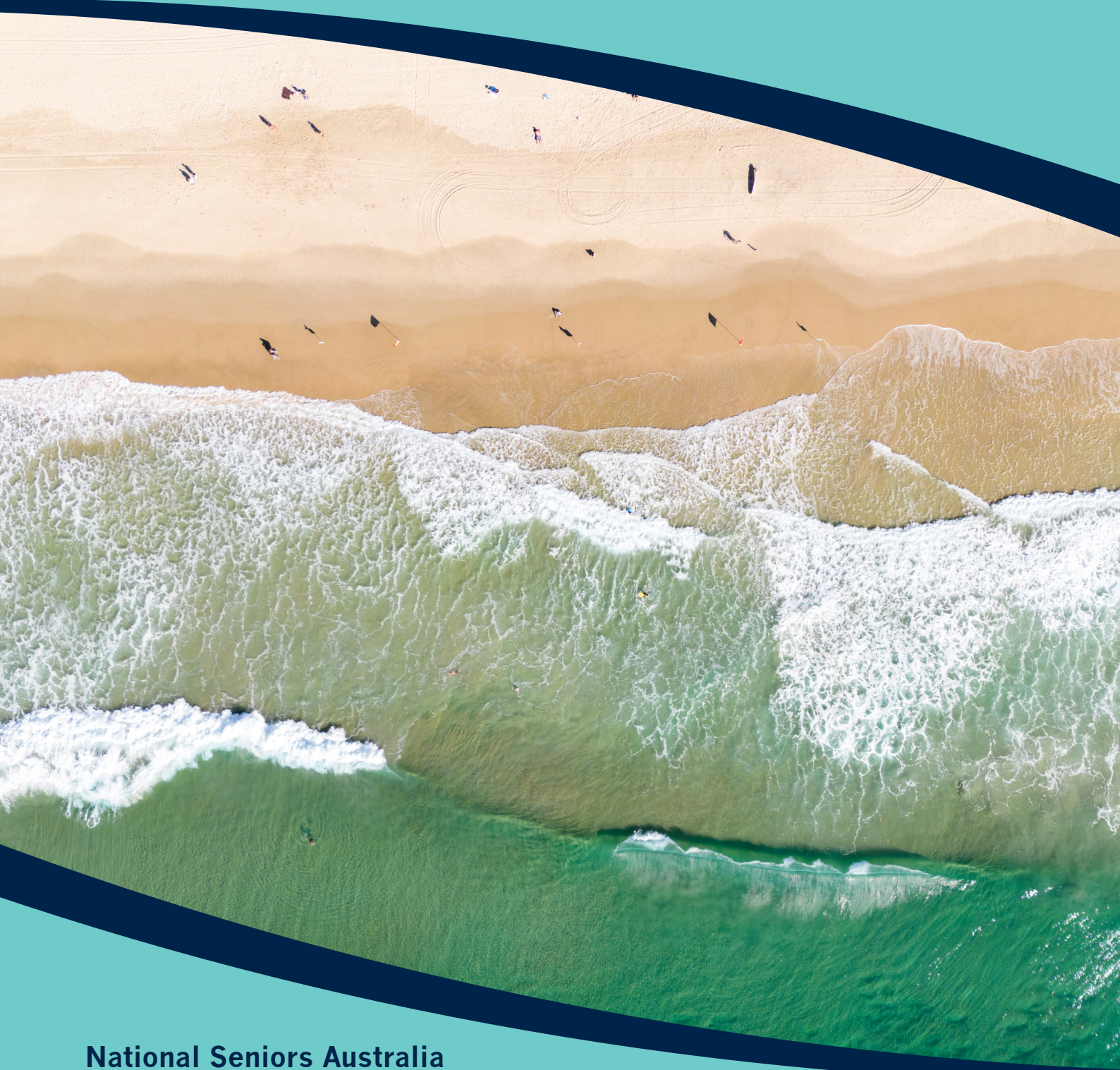
- support a move to account for the scheme within the broader budget to reduce electricity prices until the scheme expires in 2028.
- allow scheme participants to opt in to install a battery with a reduced feed-in tariff.



National Seniors Australia (NSA)

NSA is the peak advocacy organisation representing the interests of older Australians. Established in 1976 in Queensland, NSA continues to have a strong presence in the state with our headquarters located

in Brisbane. With a community approaching 60,000 in Queensland including 30,000 paid members and 31 branches, NSA is a strong voice for older people in the 'Sunshine State'.



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