



National Seniors Australia

Queensland Election 2020

Priorities for the over 50s



Transport

Help seniors to meet transport costs

A lack of accessible transport exacerbates social isolation and restricts access to health services and social activities essential for quality of life. Transport concessions and subsidies ensure those with limited means have mobility and are socially connected.

Candidates should commit to offering free off-peak travel on public transport for seniors. Pensioners should have access to a concession on vehicle registration. The Council Cabs service should be expanded to all councils in Queensland. Also, the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) should be extended for seniors with disabilities or mobility impairments who are not NDIS participants.



Housing

Ensure more age-friendly housing in Queensland

There is a severe lack of accessible and affordable housing in Queensland that meets the needs of older people. Many seniors are willing to downsize and would benefit from downsizing, but to do this they need more suitable housing options.

Planning laws aren't encouraging appropriately scaled housing developments. There is too much emphasis on large scale apartments and retirement villages, which are not always desirable to seniors. Added to this, current building regulations do not ensure all new housing meets adequate accessibility standards.

Incentives are needed to encourage developers to build housing which meets basic accessibility standards. Ultimately, the national building code should be changed to mandate higher accessibility standards. Planning laws must stop encouraging developments of inappropriate size and scale. Funding is required for more social housing and for research to develop policies that facilitate ageing-in-place. Stamp duty concessions should also be available to encourage seniors to downsize as is already offered in the ACT, Victoria, NT and Tasmania.



End of Life

Introduce funeral industry regulations to protect older Queenslanders

There is an urgent need to develop stronger regulations, which protect consumers from predatory pricing in the funeral industry. Whoever wins office should work with the federal government to implement measures to regulate the funeral industry. This can be achieved by introducing national standards, codes of practice and compliance rules, such as those currently in place for the insurance industry and regulated by the Australian Prudential Authority (APRA) and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).



Rates and water

Cut the cost of essential services, such as rates and water

The cost of essential services is placing seniors under financial pressure. While Pensioner Concession Card holders (connected to the SEQ Water Grid) currently receive a water subsidy of up to \$120 each year, this has not increased since 2011. Since then, the cost of water has increased significantly and will continue to increase under bulk water pricing options recommended by the Queensland Competition Authority. The water subsidy should be increased to \$150 / year, extended to cover Pensioner Concession Card holders throughout Queensland and indexed annually in line with changes to water charges.

The inexorable growth in council rates across Queensland is also of concern. For example, one regional council recently announced a 100 per cent increase in rate charges, which will clearly impact pensioners on low-fixed incomes. The current rates subsidy should therefore be increased to 25% up to a maximum of \$300 each year and be indexed annually to the state average.



Mature-age employment

Ensure that older Queenslanders have access to employment opportunities

The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated the plight of mature age workers in Queensland.

Participation in further education and upskilling will have positive impacts on the employability of mature-age workers. While significant investment in the VET sector has occurred in the past, this has been targeted at younger workers. Funding for Vocational and Educational Training (VET) must be increased to give mature workers opportunities to retrain, especially in the aged care sector where demand for workers is increasing. Mature age students (i.e. over 50s) who apply for an apprenticeship, traineeship or higher-level program, should receive the applicable apprenticeship or traineeship minimum wage on top of the JobSeeker payment.



Energy

Keep energy costs low, while providing opportunities to invest in clean energy

Older Queenslanders are concerned about energy costs. They need adequate concessions that help them manage these costs. Annual indexation should be applied to the Electricity Rebate, so this concession keeps pace with cost increases. The Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate should be increased to \$100 and indexation applied annually. Eligibility for this rebate should also be extended to those reliant on bottled gas.

The current budget arrangements regarding the Solar Bonus Scheme should be maintained. This will ensure that energy costs are kept to a minimum.

Whoever forms government should also offer senior's the chance to invest in large-scale renewable energy production and storage projects (such as those being built by Cleanco Queensland) to improve reliability and affordability.