

**WELCOME** – It was good to see so many members at our March meeting participate in our *Be Seen In Green* theme to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Murphy certainly got us back with the few hiccups we experienced, but it was a fun day. Congratulations to Jenny who was named best dressed in green and with her sparkling hair by our guest speaker, Paul Hobbs from Caring Cuisine. All members enjoyed the treats Paul provided on the day and hopefully he has encouraged some to enjoy ordering their balanced and freshly cooked meals. Congratulations also to those who showed their knowledge of Ireland during our quick quiz competition. Our thanks as always to everyone who contributed to our donations to Care Kits For Kids and the community pantry which are always greatly appreciated by those in need.

## BRANCH MEETINGS

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday 9 April** at the Parkside Community & Services Club. Arrival will be at 9:30am for a 9:45am start with guest speaker, updates on branch and national activities, raffles and refreshments. The cost will be \$10.00 cash per person payable at the door. As our meeting is just after Easter, we encourage members to be creative by wearing or bringing something themed to Easter.

Our guest speaker will be Patrick Roach, Lead Occupational Therapist from *Drawing Your Optimal*, a new service with broadly experienced creators that envisages many exciting services in the interplaying fields of Health, Wellbeing, Lifelong Learning and Personalised Participation.

Extensive facilities are available for members to stay for a light lunch after the meeting (at your own cost).

Meeting dates for 2026 are:

14 May	11 June
9 July	13 August (& AGM)
10 September	8 October
12 November	

## MORNING TEA CATCH-UP

Our next morning tea catch will be on **Monday 20 April** from 10am at Easts Leagues Club. This is always a great informal way to get to know fellow members outside the confines of a branch meeting.

The remaining dates for 2026 are:

18 May	15 June
20 July	17 August
21 September	19 October
16 November	

## EXPLORE BRISBANE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT...LET'S VISIT SANDGATE BY TRAIN!

Our first local transport outing is scheduled for **Monday 30 March** where we plan to catch the Shorncliffe train from Buranda station departing at 9:56am, arriving at Sandgate at 10:48am. Members can enjoy morning tea or brunch at one of the local cafes, do some shopping, take a short walk to either

the beach on Flinders Parade or visit the Einbunpin Lagoon Park. As this is a 50 min train journey, perhaps we can return on the 1:11pm service, arriving back at Buranda at 2:02pm.

If you plan to catch the train at a different station, please ensure you are on the service that departs Buranda at 9:56am and use the disability service carriage. If you are interested in joining us for this day trip please advise Freya Tienan on 0409 397 330 so we can finalise arrangements.

## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Best wishes to *Karin Chambers, Elsie Debney, Sophia Feulbach and Lyn Potter* who celebrate birthdays in April. We hope you enjoy your special day with family and friends.

## CARE KITS FOR KIDS

Coorparoo Branch continues to support this not-for-profit organisation through monthly donations of items suitable for children aged from babies to 16 years. There are some suggestions of items listed below that can be brought to our monthly meetings and will be delivered to Care Kits For Kids. Most can be purchased at discount shops, and not everything needs to be provided each month. Every donation will help Queensland children in need.

**April** – Face washer, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush

**May** – Long pants, jackets, tops, beanies (sizes 0-16)

**June** – Underwear, socks (all sizes to 16)

**July** – Hairbrush, comb, bands, clips, baseball cap

**August** – roll-on deodorant (no glass or spray), shampoo, conditioner (travel or small size)

**September** – Summer pyjamas, girls crop tops (all sizes to 16)

**October** – Reading book (all genres & ages), small soft toy or doll (no beads or stick on eyes)

**November** – Backpack, small lunch box

## COMMUNITY PANTRY DRIVE

If you would like to provide good quality non-perishable food items that can be passed on to a local community organisation to assist those in need in our area, please bring them along to each meeting where

we will collect and distribute them. Please ensure that all items are well within use by date.

## WELLBEING OFFICER

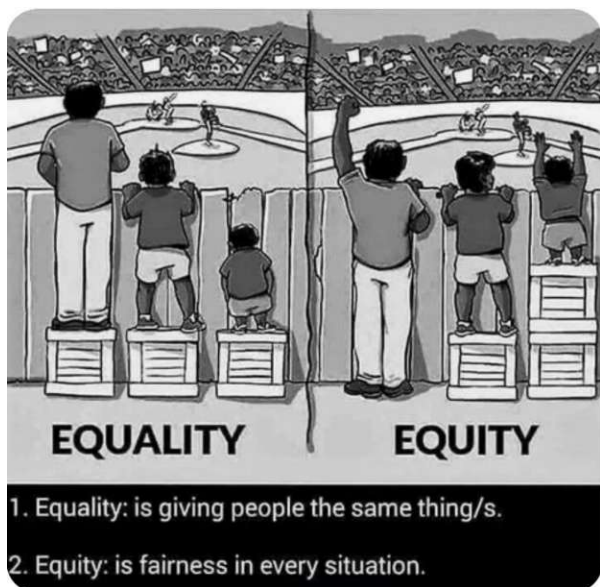
If you are, or know of any member who is ill, injured, or in need of help please notify Jan Jackson on 0411 987 174 so we can give our support where needed.

## BRANCH RECYCLING ITEMS

If you are interested in recycling any of the following items, please bring them along to any of our branch meetings where we will arrange recycling:

- Plastic bottle tops (ONLY coded 2, 4)
- Pens, highlighters, white outs
- Batteries
- Blister tablet packs
- PLASTIC bread tags
- Corks
- Soaps
- Stamps

Please note we can no longer recycle empty toothpaste tubes or tooth brushes.



## NAME BADGES

Please remember to wear your name badge to each meeting to assist new members. If you don't have a name badge and would like to obtain one, please advise our secretary Graham Tienan on 0407 736 453 or nsacooparoosec@gmail.com so we can organise for them to be made before the first meeting. Cost will be \$12.00 for either pin-on type or magnet type. Please note the magnet type is not suitable if you have a pacemaker.

## NSA's FEDERAL BUDGET 2026 SUBMISSION

With the war with Iran threatening to stoke global inflation and the cost-of-living crisis continuing to

squeeze household budgets, many older Australians worry about making ends meet. Rising insurance premiums, out-of-pocket medical costs, and everyday expenses are stretching retirees and pre-retirees to their limits.

According to the most recent NSA social survey, conducted in February 2026, older people who rely on the pension as their sole income source worry most if they can afford energy and insurance over the next 12 months. Those doing a bit better, who receive a combination of pension and private income or are self-funded retirees, are most concerned about their ability to afford private health insurance.

In NSA's latest Federal Budget Submission, they are calling for bold, practical reforms that will directly ease these pressures – and they want you to know exactly what they're fighting for:

**Why private health needs to be reviewed** – Private health insurance has become increasingly expensive, yet many older Australians rely on it to access timely care. With premium rises often outpacing inflation, many retirees are stuck between paying more or downgrading cover. Without reform, premiums will continue to climb, putting affordable healthcare further out of reach.

Yet it's not just insurance that is causing problems for seniors, the out-of-pocket costs charged by specialists are also getting out of hand. Unfortunately, the system is complex. Insurers point the finger at hospitals; hospitals point the finger at insurers, while governments and doctors do the same. There is no real understanding of who is right and where change could be made to reduce costs for patients.

That's why NSA is calling for a Productivity Commission review of private health insurance – a recommendation clearly laid out in their Federal Budget Submission. This review would examine what's driving costs upward, where inefficiencies exist, and how the system can be made fairer and more affordable for older Australians.

A thorough, independent review would shine a light on structural problems and pave the way for reforms that deliver value – not just for insurers and government, but for the Australians who rely on the system most.

There is also a focus on dental, with an ongoing call for a targeted Seniors Dental Benefit Scheme, to provide eligible pensioners with \$500 per year to help meet dental costs. This will make a difference for those with limited savings and income based on past research, which showed cost as a significant barrier to dental. The message to government is simple: Older

Australians should not have to choose between their health and their household budget.

**Beyond health: real solutions to soaring living costs** – health-related bills are only part of the problem. Seniors across the country are battling the rising costs of essentials, from food and rent to transport and utilities. NSA's budget recommendations address these challenges head-on, with targeted reforms across concessions, energy, pensions, and housing.

Key cost-of-living recommendations include:

- Concession extras card: a new targeted pensioner concessions card to deliver higher concessions for essential services to those with limited income and savings.
- Deeming: slowly lift deeming rates in line with indexation to soften the blow since the three-year freeze was lifted.
- Support for renters: an increase to rent assistance to ensure older people meet rising costs.
- Energy credit: a targeted and responsible \$150 energy credit for households that don't have the benefits of solar or batteries.

These measures are practical, targeted, and designed to deliver immediate relief as well as long-term stability. There are also several recommendations to improve our struggling aged care system – not least a call for more home care packages and for greater provider transparency. This is not a fringe conversation. This is a national priority.

**NSA is standing up with you but need your support** – by championing a full review of the private health system, advocating for improved concessions and rebates, and fighting for meaningful cost-of-living relief, NSA is making sure your voice is heard loud and clear in Canberra. Their full submission lays out these recommendations in detail – and they invite you to read it, share it, and join them in advocating for a fairer, more affordable future. (*Source: NSA*)

## WHY CAN YOU REMEMBER EVERY WORD OF AN OLD SONG – BUT NOT WHY YOU WALKED INTO THE ROOM?

While driving, a long-forgotten song might come on the radio. You might find yourself singing along: not only knowing all the lyrics to a song you hadn't heard in 25 years or more, but you also manage to rap along. How is it that you can give this rendition, but often cannot remember what you came into a room for?

It is tempting to treat these moments as evidence of cognitive decline. A quiet, creeping sense that

something is slipping. But the contrast between flawlessly performing a decades-old song and forgetting a just-formed intention is not a sign that memory is failing. It is a demonstration of how memory works. We tend to talk about “memory” as if it were a single thing - it isn't.

Remembering song lyrics relies on long-term memory – networks distributed across the brain that store information consolidated over years. These include language areas in the temporal lobes, auditory cortex, motor regions involved in speech production, and emotional circuits of the brain that help tag experiences as meaningful.

Music is neurologically extravagant: it recruits multiple systems at once – rhythm, language, movement and emotion. This multiplicity strengthens encoding. Each time you repeated those lyrics – in your bedroom, in a car, at a party – you reinforced the synaptic connections involved. Over time, the pathway becomes efficient and stable. Retrieval becomes almost automatic.

By contrast, remembering why you walked into the kitchen relies on working memory – the brain's temporary holding space. Working memory is fragile. It can hold only a small amount of information for a short period, and it is highly sensitive to distraction. A single competing thought is enough to overwrite it. Psychologists have described what is sometimes called the “doorway effect”. When you move from one physical space to another, the brain updates context. It segments experience into discrete episodes.

The intention formed in the previous room – “get my glasses”, “find my charger” – was encoded in that earlier context. Crossing a threshold can weaken the retrieval cue. The task disappears. This isn't inefficiency, it's organisational strategy. Our brains evolved to structure experience into meaningful chunks. That segmentation supports long-term memory formation – even if it occasionally leaves us standing in the hallway, perplexed.

**Why music survives** – Music benefits from structure. Rhyme and rhythm create predictable patterns. Predictability supports recall because the brain is constantly anticipating what comes next. Brain imaging studies show that musical memory activates widespread cortical and subcortical regions. Strikingly, even in neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, musical memory can remain relatively preserved long after other forms of recall deteriorate.

The fact that you can still deliver a flawless rap verse decades later tells us something important: memory strength is less about age and more about depth of

encoding. A lyric repeated hundreds of times in adolescence may be neurologically “stronger” than a single fleeting intention formed five seconds ago.

Processing speed does tend to slow modestly with age. Working memory becomes more vulnerable to interference. Multitasking grows harder. But long-term knowledge – vocabulary, expertise, well-rehearsed information – is often maintained or even enhanced. What feels like memory loss is frequently attentional overload. Modern environments are saturated with interruptions: notifications, internal thoughts, competing demands. Working memory was never designed to withstand this level of interference.

**How to reduce ‘Roomnesia’** The issue is not that your brain can no longer store information, it’s that it is selective about what it stabilises. Small adjustments can reduce those frustrating “roomnesia” moments. One of the simplest is to say the task out loud before you move. Verbalising an intention “I’m going upstairs to get my charger” – strengthens its encoding by engaging additional language networks.

Another approach is brief visualisation. Taking a second to picture the object you are about to retrieve creates a richer mental trace than a vague intention alone. Even carrying a physical cue can help: picking up an empty mug before heading to the kitchen anchors the purpose of the journey into something tangible. These strategies work because they reinforce the intention before a change in context disrupts it, making the memory less vulnerable to interference.

If you can still perform a 1990s rap in full but occasionally forget why you walked upstairs, your brain is not betraying you. It is prioritising deeply rehearsed, emotionally tagged information over transient intentions. In other words, it is doing exactly what it was built to do.

Author - Michelle Spear, Professor of Anatomy, University of Bristol (Source: *Hellocare, The Conversation*)

## **AGED CARE PRICE HIKES UNDERMINE FAITH IN SYSTEM**

Data suggests aged care providers are charging up to 40% more for services such as cleaning, gardening, personal care, and nursing. Price spikes are prompting a wave of distress calls from older people and their families, with the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) reporting a 96% jump in complaints since the new *Aged Care Act* commenced.

Under the reforms, older people contribute more toward their services, with providers free to set their own prices, however reforms have also resulted in an increase in the hourly rate for care and support

services. It is claimed that this has led some to cut back on the services they receive.

Much of the hourly rate price hike can be blamed on the introduction of a 10% cap on care-management fees. This cap was introduced by the Federal Government to improve transparency and reduce excessive back-office charges. However, it has largely backfired because providers have simply shifted this into the hourly rate for aged care services to remain viable. Does this mean that the price hike claims are a storm in a teacup or are rising fees the canary in the coalmine for a looming disaster – one that must be averted?

### **What are older Australians now being charged?**

There are claims the hourly rate for everyday aged care services have increased dramatically. It has been reported (by a private company involved in matching clients with providers) that in some instances, consumers are being charged upwards of \$180 an hour for a shower, \$290 an hour for gardening, \$170 an hour for cleaning and \$320 an hour for a registered nurse. But these claims of excessive price gouging raise bigger questions.

What is the true cost of providing care in Australia and are providers (and the rules that govern providers) operating in a way that maximises efficiency and productivity in what is a highly labour-intensive sector (latest data show that 58.8% of provider income was spent on wages).

The simple answer is that we have no idea. But we should. Yes, there is quarterly data on provider finances but it’s tricky to interpret. For example, on average providers had income of \$89.82 per person per day and operating expenses of \$83.01, meaning a net margin of \$6.81 per person per day (in the first quarter of 2025-26). However, only 75% of providers were profitable.

While the proportion of profitable providers has risen, the degree of profits has fallen, down from a median Net Profit Before Tax margin of 8.8% in the first quarter of 2023-24 to 6.7% in the first quarter of 2025-26. This data is readily accessible but it’s unlikely that the average person will be interested in trawling through it. What we need instead, are ways to translate data like this into something simple and meaningful for older people (something NSA is looking to do).

### **Older people cutting services because of the cost**

Older people and their families have raised a number of complaints to OPAN. The most common complaints include:

- Sudden fee increases
- Long waits for assessments

- Algorithm-based assessment decisions that don't reflect people's real needs
- Difficulty finding a provider even after approval
- Residential aged care charging for services that were previously included

Rising fees, if true, risk forcing older Australians to reduce or cancel essential supports – leaving them at greater risk. OPAN says many older people are telling them that they feel worse off under the new Act – the opposite of what the reforms promised.

**Transparency and efficiency must come first** NSA has long argued that aged care pricing must be transparent. Why, because you told them this is important! At a time when providers are charging higher rates, Australians deserve confidence that:

- Fees reflect real workforce and service delivery costs
- Providers are operating efficiently
- Money is being spent on care, not administrative bloat or profit padding

Right now, older people cannot see behind the pricing curtain – and that is unacceptable. If providers cannot demonstrate genuine efficiency and financial transparency, then the government must step in.

**Price caps are in the pipeline** – From 1 July 2026, the Australian Government will introduce mandated price caps for all services under the new Support At Home program to ensure fair pricing, with providers unable to charge above these limits. But price caps alone may not be effective. If set too high, some providers will simply charge to the limit, pocketing any profit. Should they also be thinking about capping provider profits so older Australians are not left to absorb limitless fee hikes for essential care?

Aged care is an essential service and should be accessible, accountable and fair. It requires strong safeguards, not a system that leaves older people footing an ever-growing bill. (Source: NSA)

## **NATIONAL ADVANCE CARE PLANNING WEEK – 16-22 MARCH**

National Seniors Australia (NSA) is encouraging members to reflect on their future health care and share their stories as part of *National Advance Care Planning Week*, from 16-22 March 2026. This annual event, led by Advance Care Planning Australia, encourages people of all ages and health backgrounds to think and talk about what matters most to them and plan for the care they would want if they became unable to communicate later in life.

This year's theme, "Your Story, Your Choice", highlights the importance of individuality in health care

decision-making. Advance Care Planning urges individuals to explore what matters most to them and to discuss these wishes with loved ones, nominating a substitute decision-maker, and documenting their preferences. Personal stories, which are shared nationally through the campaign, help demystify the process and show the real impacts of planning ahead.

Advance care planning is a practical step that ensures your voice is heard even when you cannot speak for yourself.

While these conversations can sometimes feel difficult to start, they are an important way to ensure your voice is heard. Research shows more than half of Australians will be unable to make their own medical decisions at the end of life, yet only around 15% currently have a formal advance care directive in place, making awareness events like this especially important. National Advance Care Planning Week aims to change this by encouraging open conversations and helping people take practical steps to plan ahead.

Start your advance care plan in three steps:

1. Think about what matters most to you. Reflect on your values, beliefs, and preferences for future medical care. Consider what quality of life means to you, the types of treatments you would or would not want, and any cultural, spiritual, or personal wishes that should guide decisions about your care.
2. Talk with the people who matter. Have a conversation with your family, loved ones, and the person you trust to make decisions on your behalf if you cannot. You may also wish to speak with your GP or health professional so they understand your wishes and can help explain your options.
3. Write it down and share it. Document your preferences in an Advance Care Directive and formally appoint a substitute decision-maker if required in your state or territory. Make sure copies are shared with your family, your doctor, and anyone involved in your care so your wishes can be followed when it matters most.

National Advance Care Planning Week serves as a powerful reminder that planning ahead is an act of care for yourself and those close to you. By making your choices known, you help ensure your healthcare preferences are respected when it matters most. NSA encourages members to reflect on their future health care and share their stories. (Source: NSA; Advance Care Planning Australia)

## BRANCH CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries please contact our Secretary, Graham Tienan, on mobile 0407 736 453 or email nsacoorparoosec@gmail.com. Do remember to update any changes to your details. Emergency contacts need to be current.

## SMILE

Q: How many eggs can you put in an empty basket?

A: *Only one – after that, it's not empty anymore!*

Q: Why do you need an Easter egg hunting license?

A: *Because no poaching is allowed.*

Q: What do you call an Easter Bunny that can't remember anything?

A: *A hare-brain.*

Q: Where does the Easter Bunny go if he loses his tail?

A: *The re-tail store.*

Q: How can the Easter Bunny afford to deliver so many baskets?

A: *He's a million-hare!*

Q: What's stranger than an egg-delivering rabbit?

A: *A spelling bee!*

Q: What do bunnies say when they come home from work?

A: *Anybunny home?*

Q: Why can't a rabbit's nose be 12 inches long?

A: *Because then it would be a foot.*

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A man was driving along the highway when he saw the Easter Bunny hopping across the middle of the road. He swerved to avoid hitting the rabbit, but unfortunately the Easter Bunny jumped in front of the car and was struck. The basket of eggs and candy that the rabbit was carrying went flying all over the place.

The driver, being a sensitive man as well as an animal lover, pulled over to the side of the road and got out to see what had become of the rabbit carrying the basket. Much to his dismay, the colourful rabbit was dead. The driver felt so awful, he began to cry.

A woman driving down the highway saw the man crying on the side of the road and pulled over. She stepped out of her car and asked the man what was wrong.

"I feel terrible", he explained. "I accidentally hit the Easter Bunny and killed it. Children will be so disappointed. What should I do?"

The woman told the man not to worry. She knew what to do. She went to her car boot and pulled out a spray can. She walked over to the dead, limp rabbit, and sprayed the contents of the can onto the furry animal.

Miraculously the Easter Bunny came to life, jumped up, picked up the spilled eggs and candy, waved its

paw at the two humans and hopped down the road. 50 metres away the Easter Bunny stopped, turned around, waved and hopped down the road. 50 metres further on, he turned again, waved and hopped another 50 metres, again he waved.

The man was astonished. He couldn't figure out what substance could be in the woman's spray can. He ran over to the woman and asked, "What is in your spray can? What did you spray on the Easter Bunny?"

The woman turned the can around so that the man could read the label. It said: "Hair spray. Restores life to dead hair. Adds permanent wave."

