



## COTA Queensland Survey Report

### Queensland Government Subsidies and Services

COTA Queensland conducted this survey from October 2013 until January 2014 receiving **378 responses**. Thankyou very much for your participation.

## Concessions

We asked about 7 Queensland State Government concessions. For each concession we asked respondents:

- Have you heard of this concession?
- Do you receive this concession?
- If you don't receive this concession do you think you might be eligible?

**61%** of respondents thought there was a least one concession that they might be eligible for but were not receiving.

### Four concessions were relatively well known and used:

- Electricity and reticulated gas rebates
  - Pensioner Rates Subsidy Scheme
  - Public Transport
  - Motor Vehicle Registration Discount
- 87%** have heard of these concessions (average across the 4 concessions)  
**55% - 67%** are receiving these  
**9%** are not receiving but thought they might be eligible (average across the 4 concessions)

### Lesser known and used concessions were:

- Home Assist
  - Taxi subsidy
  - TAFE subjects
- 66%** awareness **28%** usage **22%** might be eligible  
**65%** awareness **4%** usage **9%** might be eligible  
**36%** awareness **6%** usage **26%** might be eligible

## Electricity bills

**Difficulty paying** - We asked is people have ever had difficulty meeting the cost of electricity bills.

**23%** of people answering this question have **had difficulty with electricity bills**.

**Assistance with electricity bills** - We asked about hardship programs run by retailers and the Government's Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme.

Retailer financial hardship programs

- may have a different name like "Power On" or "Customer Assist Program" **24.4%** awareness **2%** usage **19%** might be eligible

Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme **18%** awareness **2%** usage **13%** might be eligible

## Public Transport

**Many respondents were happy** with their public transport services:

*“reliable and saves the hassle of parking”, “I like the air conditioning. I like that they are clean and safe”, “Most drivers are friendly and helpful” “quick trip to and from the City and it’s a reasonable fare”*

**Many respondents highlighted challenges** including no or limited services into their areas, physically accessing railway stations, buses and trains, service frequency and reliability, coordination between services, driver helpfulness, parking at train and bus stations, costs, bus routes not going where needed such as to the hospital and lack of courtesy from fellow travelers. Areas of challenges included Redlands/SMBI islands, Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg and areas of North Queensland.

## Patient and community transport

Patient and community transport to hospital appointments currently **meets the needs of some community members**:

*“Prevents anxiety around driving”, “Don’t have to worry about cost of parking”, “Reliable”, “Pretty cheap or free”, “Punctual”, “Friendly staff”, “Courteous”, “Convenient when too ill to drive ourselves”.*

**However access to community transport varies from area to area:**

*“Has been cut in our area”, “Very good but very limited”, “Some community transport will not carry passengers to or from medical procedures”.*

**COTA Queensland has requested the Queensland Government:**

- To review the availability of patient and community transport across all the health districts and set benchmarks for the availability of services.

## Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS)

**Recent changes to the PTSS were welcomed** by respondents:

*“This subsidy has recently been increased. This is now a lot better than previous”.*  
*“It makes a difficult situation somewhat more bearable”.*

The **need to simplify the application process and provide better staff training** was apparent:

*“To make a claim: a 5km drive to Dr. to collect form. A 50km round trip to place form and collect form to take to Cairns or Townsville Dr. Approx. 356km round trip. Then return form 50km round trip”.*

*“It was such a nightmare; having to go each time to the doctor, and then get to the hospital to get the paperwork. In Tully, the opening hours are short, and often I couldn’t make it. At the end, I gave up”.*

COTA Queensland is aware of a recently commissioned review of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme.

**COTA Queensland has requested the Queensland Government to:**

- extend the access to the PTSS to other services (such as physiotherapy, dental, breast screening, optometry, hearing tests)
- increase the subsidies to match increases in the Consumer Price Index
- Review access to affordable accommodation across the health districts and consider funding to build accommodation facilities which could be run by the Health districts.

## Health Care services

Respondents are experiencing positive and negative aspects of Queensland's Health System. **Many are happy with their GP** and local practice and have had positive experience dealing with hospitals. **Many are experiencing challenges** including lack of access to specialists, long waiting times and waiting lists at Hospitals.

### Access to health services in rural and remote towns

Respondents feedback echoes the common concern about the lack of access to services for those living outside metropolitan areas:

*"We need local services for mental health, & drug & alcohol".*

*"We lost our community nurse and she is not being replaced. A great loss".*

*"Would like to have X-ray services, etc. in area. Probably too small population".*

### Dental concessions and access

Respondents identified access to dental services as of key concern.

*"Dental Health a farce. Waited 10 years to get an appointment. Only saw a Dentist earlier this year".*

*"Dental clinics are apparently available, according to my neighbour, but these are not widely know about".*

### COTA Queensland has requested the Queensland Government to:

- review existing dental services in Queensland, including mapping services, and reviewing consumer awareness and accessing of services.

## Making complaints about health services

**11%** of respondents **had made a complaint** in regards to health treatment or access to services. However **33% did not feel comfortable** making a complaint:

*"Felt like it many times but I haven't actually followed up formally".*

*"We need to feel comfortable when a complaint has to be made. Not embarrassed or pressured".*

*"Fortunately I do not feel intimidated by people in "authority" and always go directly to the person who manages any service I receive and receive as much help as is possible. I do know that is not the case with a majority of people I have been in contact with. The much older generation usually defers to advice from people they have been brought up to respect and not question. I believe less well educated people feel intimidated because they do not express themselves in the same language as the people they are complaining to and so suffer in silence".*

**33% felt that the service provider didn't respond to their complaint promptly** -only

**17% did:**

*"My complaint was with a medical specialist at a large public hospital. I took my complaint directly to him. He didn't like being corrected, and became petty and punitive. I chose to move to another specialist".*

*"My complaint was made to the then State Minister for Health, who responded immediately and therefore I was treated as a Public patient only 150 km from home instead of 1200 km in Brisbane".*

**37% didn't feel that the service provider helped to find an appropriate solution to the issue - 11% did.**

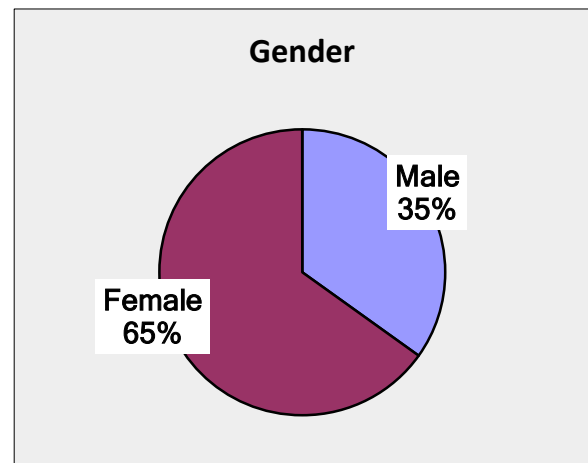
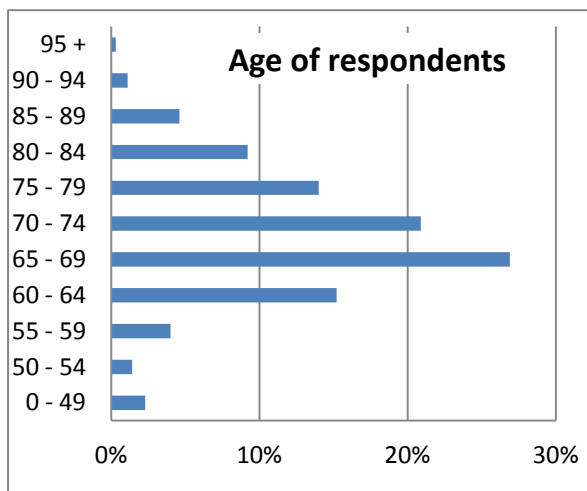
One issue of complaint raised was around hygiene:

*"The cleanliness of the surgery is appalling and I wouldn't accept it in my own home. Hands not being washed between the changing of dressings and injections. Often two people in the surgery undergoing treatment at the same time some bloodied and some stripped to the waist. We lump it but don't like it".*

**COTA Queensland has requested the Queensland Government to**

- resource the Health Ombudsman to work closely with consumer and community organisations to empower consumers to feel comfortable to give their feedback, in order to improve the safety of the health system.

## About the respondents



Respondents were from 149 different postcodes across Queensland. These locations ranged from Currumbin Valley at the most southern point to Cooktown in the North to Cunnamulla in the South West and Barcaldine in Central Queensland.