

MAKING QUEENSLAND AGE-FRIENDLY

2017 COTA Queensland State Election Priorities



COTA QUEENSLAND

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COTA QUEENSLAND 2017 QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT ELECTION PRIORITIES

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland is the peak body for Queensland seniors. COTA has advanced the rights, needs and futures of older Queenslanders since 1957. In 2017 COTA Queensland celebrated its 60th anniversary. COTA helps guide government legislation and policies to shape more supportive community attitudes towards ageing and older people. COTA helps foster social change by providing leadership and expert advice on ageing issues, working with other stakeholder groups across Queensland.

COTA Queensland strongly encourages all candidates to consider the recommendations detailed below to ensure that older Queenslanders receive more effective support from the incoming Government as part of a more age-friendly Queensland.

1. The incoming Queensland Government must continue to support and encourage the adoption of an age-friendly Queensland. The eight age-friendly domains should be addressed in an integrated approach. All stakeholders, including state government agencies, local government, employers and the broader community need to embrace and enable age-friendly communities.
2. To address ageism and age discrimination, the incoming Queensland Government needs to develop a coordinated set of policies, programs and services that create incentives for healthy and productive engagement of older Queenslanders in the workforce; incentives for greater retirement living investment; and incentives and reward for services that restore and improve the health and wellbeing of older people.
3. The incoming Queensland Government should adopt and implement the recommendations contained in the *Advisory Taskforce on Residential Transition for Ageing Queenslanders Report 2016* to facilitate the provision of appropriate housing for seniors.
4. The incoming Government must continue the initiative to provide advocacy and support through peak groups and resident associations to assist retirement village residents, manufactured home owners and residents of boarding houses to make informed decisions about their future housing choices.
5. In addition, the current Government is making a commitment to the following action and COTA Queensland encourages the incoming Government to maintain the following policy objectives to better support seniors' housing needs:
 - Ensure assistance, communication and services are inclusive and accessible for older people
 - Provide housing and homelessness assistance in a way that encourages personal independence and fosters full participation in society
 - Consider the individual circumstances of older people who may experience additional barriers to accessing safe and secure housing or housing assistance
 - Provide housing and homelessness assistance that contributes towards a safer environment for older people, so they can live their lives free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
 - Ensure older people living in accommodation regulated or funded by the department are appropriately protected and can exercise their rights
 - Involve older people, peak agencies and advocates in the development or improvement of housing and homelessness assistance
 - Adopt timely and appropriate processes to refer people to alternative, or additional services, where identified or requested
 - Raise awareness and build staff capabilities in delivering person-centered services for older people
 - Influence the broader housing system to increase housing solutions that reflect *Livable Housing Design Guidelines and the Better Housing Solutions Guide*.

6. The incoming Queensland Government must take more concerted action to assist those seniors who for a variety of reasons find themselves displaced from appropriate housing and made homeless.
7. It is vital that future Queensland Government continue to provide existing concessions to seniors and that this availability of assistance is clearly communicated to seniors.
8. Concessions need to maintain their relative value as prices increase and the value of energy concessions should rise at the same rate as energy prices.
9. For senior concession holders, the Queensland Government should prohibit the imposition of additional charges for receipt of paper bills, processing of cheques and over the counter payments.
10. Energy and transport concessions should be extended to resident Commonwealth Health Care Card holders who are currently excluded.
11. The Queensland Government should also make available a rebate like that provided to reticulated natural gas users to those resident pensioners, seniors and veterans who use LPG bottled gas.
12. Holders of the Commonwealth Health Care Card should also be made eligible for public transport concessions throughout Queensland.
13. COTA Queensland believes that the program Switched on Communities should be continued by the incoming Queensland Government to ensure that ongoing support is available to older people to understand and navigate the energy market, and to access supports and advocacy.
14. The arrangement to remove the costs of the solar bonus scheme from network charges until at least 2020, should be made permanent to ensure that prices do not rise again unnecessarily in 3 years' time.
15. The introduction of full retail competition in regional Queensland should be expedited to benefit regional consumers.
16. The Queensland Government facilitates the choice of retailer for embedded network customers in Queensland, and supports extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland's (EWOQ) services to enable EWOQ to provide dispute resolution services to embedded network residents.
17. To enable older consumers to take full advantage of the benefits available under the Affordable Energy Plan for Queensland plan, COTA requests that the incoming Queensland Government also funds free household energy audits and energy efficiency plans for older residents.
18. There is a need for the establishment of an independent, well-resourced energy consumer advocacy capability in Queensland. At present, there are no consumer advocacy bodies in Queensland which focus wholly on utilities or energy. The breadth of issues and the complexity of the energy sector dictate the need for dedicated specialists to:
 - provide informed input to energy policy formulation
 - monitor and report on consumer issues in the energy market on an ongoing basis
 - advise government and others on appropriate consumer engagement strategies.
19. The incoming Queensland Government implement measures to safeguard those seniors who are digitally excluded and may face barriers in utilising all government services, for example: ensure that legacy (non-digital) Government communication channels are maintained and supported at no additional cost to consumers who use those channels.
20. The Government could negotiate with service providers the provision of concessions to assist with communications costs, as cost is one of the barriers preventing many seniors from using the internet.
21. The incoming Queensland Government to expand upon the already successful Tech Savvy Seniors Queensland Partnership to help more seniors bridge the digital divide.
22. The Queensland Government should introduce an affordable annual pass for resident pensioners, seniors and veterans aged 75 years and older for use on public transport in Queensland and enable an annual payment option for resident pensioners, seniors and veterans renewing their Queensland driver license at aged 75 years.
23. The incoming Government should also convene a community and patient travel summit to address gaps and strategies for improved coordination in patient transport services.

24. The Queensland Government should:

- develops in consultation with stakeholders a State-wide Older Person's Health Plan based on the World Health Organisation's 2015 Health and Ageing Report
- maintain funding to Health Consumers Queensland to work with consumers, carers and the community to co-design a health system that meets the needs of service users and families
- fund a public education campaign, co-designed with consumers, for the community around care at the end of life
- work with the Australian Government to increase palliative care funding
- work with other states and territories to harmonise laws around advance care planning and end of life decisions to ensure people's choices are respected
- fund a health literacy campaign that encourages older people to change their lifestyle and address risk factors around alcohol, tobacco, nutrition and exercise
- fund the expansion of telehealth, reducing the requirement for older Queenslanders to travel to receive specialist care.

25. The Queensland Government convenes an employment summit advocating for an older workforce, including proactive measures to increase public sector employment of workers over 50 years

1. MAKING QUEENSLAND AGE-FRIENDLY

COTA Queensland aims to help create a more just, equitable and caring community in which *older people are* actively involved and have access to appropriate support, services and care. These principles are consistent with the World Health Organisation (WHO) age-friendly communities approach. COTA Queensland celebrated our 60th anniversary in 2017 and now represents 718,000 seniors over 65 years of age whose usual place of residence was within Queensland. Seniors in 2016 comprised 15.3 per cent of the total Queensland population. 42 per cent of seniors lived within the Greater Brisbane region and 58 per cent of seniors resided outside of Greater Brisbane.

By 2036, it is projected one in five Queenslanders will be aged 65 and over. COTA Queensland has been advocating for an age-friendly Queensland since the World Health Organisation initiated the concept in 2005. An age-friendly community is where older people are valued, respected and actively engaged in their community. They can stay in touch with people they care about and find the services and support they need. Age-friendly communities are more liveable for everyone, enabling people of all ages to actively participate in community life.

Given the global challenge of ageing, COTA Queensland believes the World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Cities and Communities framework is a valuable guide for Queensland's political leaders, policy makers, and planners. Age-friendly communities grew out of the United Nations' Year of the Older Person in 1999. The UN adopted a proactive role in influencing ageing-related policies at the international level and in 2002 governments adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing at the Second United Nations World Assembly.

Following this, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the Active Ageing policy framework to focus attention on active and healthy ageing. The four pillars of the Active Ageing framework are health, participation, security and life-long learning. To assist communities in putting the Active Ageing framework into practice, the WHO created the Age-friendly Cities Project, designed to serve as a starting point for Age-friendly community development initiatives across the globe.

Through the community-based research of the Age-friendly Cities Project, eight key domains of an age-friendly city were identified:

- Community support and health services
- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment, and
- Communication and information.

With the culmination of the project in 2007, the WHO launched the Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide, which led to the establishment of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. Since 2010 there has been a growing network of communities worldwide participating in the program. Communities that sign up to the

network signal their commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment that benefits an ageing population.

The Queensland: an age-friendly community - strategic direction statement launched by the current Queensland Government in 2016 represented a significant first step towards achieving an Age-friendly Queensland.

However, COTA is concerned that the current approach to Age-friendly treats each domain separately rather than recognising that the eight domains must be integrated to establish an age friendly community.

You have a right to: maintain personal independence be treated with dignity and respect live without exploitation, abuse or neglect be and feel safe be provided with information have personal privacy make decisions and have choices confidentiality be consulted involve an advocate to support you or to speak on your behalf have access and control over your own money make a complaint

COTA Queensland recommends that the incoming Queensland Government continues to support and encourage the adoption of an Age-friendly Queensland. The eight age-friendly domains should be addressed in an integrated approach. All stakeholders, including state government agencies, local government, employers and the broader community need to embrace and enable age-friendly communities.

In 2017 United Nations International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) had the theme - *Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society* – and explored effective means of promoting and strengthening the participation of older persons in economic, social, cultural, and civic and political life.

The achievement of these objectives in Queensland are vital if the state become an Age-friendly place to live. Ageism and age discrimination regularly prevent business, organisations and society benefiting from the skills and experience of older people. Outdated stereotypes about ageing being a burden still underpin widespread discrimination in the workplace and in the broader community - reducing economic productivity; diluting development of social capital; shortening lives and adding to our health and aged care costs.

State and local government, business, the health system and the community must work together to take a stand against ageism as a major curse in our society, which will have an even worse impact as Queensland's population ages significantly over the next decade.

COTA Queensland strongly believes that as well the community and government tackling ageism and age discrimination, the incoming Queensland Government needs to develop a coordinated set of policies, programs and services that create incentives for healthy and productive engagement of older Queenslanders in the workforce; incentives for greater retirement living investment; and incentives and reward for services that restore and improve the health and wellbeing of older people.

2. HOW THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT CAN BETTER SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE

2.1 Are Seniors satisfied with Queensland Government services?

The 2017 COTA Queensland Seniors survey invited senior Queenslanders to provide their views on the three areas of Queensland Government activity that were most relevant to their daily lives. Seniors were then asked to express their level of satisfaction with each of the eighteen areas of Queensland government activity

listed. Lastly respondents were asked to choose the three areas of government responsibility that the Queensland government should prioritise for urgent attention.

Affordable and appropriate housing was the area given the highest priority for the Queensland Government to action. At the state level the second priority area was energy and water costs followed by seniors' concessions. A strong correlation existed between those government areas chosen by seniors to have most relevance and the priority areas selected for the Queensland Government to address. Affordable and appropriate housing and energy and water costs are clearly of major concern to seniors and these are closely linked to the level of concessions available to older Queenslanders.

2.2 Housing and older Queenslanders

The strong focus of seniors on housing related issues is understandable. Seniors, unlike younger age groups, cannot easily replace their home if they make a wrong investment decision about where to live. Most seniors who own their own home have only one opportunity in their lifetime to buy and overtime pay for that property. Many seniors buy a property early in married life and remain there at least until retirement. The rate of appreciation in value for that property will depend on its geographic location and local market demand. In many regional areas house values have either stagnated or declined, whereas in growth areas housing values and returns have grown considerably. Many seniors who own their home discover that the value of that home will not cover the capital requirements of their preferred senior living option.

In the 2016 Census, 638,776 seniors provided housing tenure information. 69 per cent owned their house without a mortgage, 13 per cent owned their house with a mortgage, 16 per cent rented and 2.0 per cent had some other form of tenure. 75 per cent of seniors live in a detached house, 10 per cent are in a semi-detached dwelling, 9 per cent are in a flat or apartment and 4 per cent in a caravan.

The cost of maintaining a house in retirement represents a substantial component of largely modest incomes. Most retirees with superannuation only have at most \$200,000 at retirement. On retirement it is estimated that up to 85% of lump sum super withdrawals go towards the mortgage. The proportion of seniors between 2001 and 2011 who fully owned their own home fell from 78% to 59%. In 2011 74.3% of aged pension recipients were classified as homeowners.

COTA Queensland strongly believes that the incoming Queensland Government should adopt the recommendations contained in the *Advisory Taskforce on Residential Transition for Ageing Queenslanders Report 2016*. This report was prepared by a group of stakeholders who represented all sectors involved in aged housing, including residents and developers. The report provides both an analysis of the issues that impact on seniors housing as well as a comprehensive set of recommendations that provide a pathway forward. The Taskforce report stressed the importance of ensuring that seniors had access to reliable information about the various housing options available to help support seniors to make the best decisions to meet their future housing requirements. In response to the Taskforce recommendation the current Queensland Government has made a commitment of \$1million to fund support services to assist seniors in making informed decisions about housing options as part of the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027.

COTA Queensland believes that the incoming Government must continue this program and consider increasing the funding to cope with the increasing proportion of seniors over 65 years.

In addition, the current Government is making a commitment to the following action and COTA Queensland encourages the incoming Government to maintain the following policy objectives to better support seniors' housing needs:

- Ensure assistance, communication and services are inclusive and accessible for older people
- Provide housing and homelessness assistance in a way that encourages personal independence and fosters full participation in society
- Consider the individual circumstances of older people who may experience additional barriers to accessing safe and secure housing or housing assistance
- Provide housing and homelessness assistance that contributes towards a safer environment for older people so they can live their lives free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Ensure older people living in accommodation regulated or funded by the department are appropriately protected and can exercise their rights
- Involve older people, peak agencies and advocates in the development or improvement of housing and homelessness assistance
- Adopt timely and appropriate processes to refer people to alternative, or additional services, where identified or requested
- Raise awareness and build staff capabilities in delivering person-centered services for older people
- Influence the broader housing system to increase housing solutions that reflect *Livable Housing Design Guidelines and the Better Housing Solutions Guide*.

Homelessness is another issue that is starting to have a growing impact on seniors and in particular, older women. The data below details how large an issue it has become and the reasons why older women are most vulnerable. While the data may be national local support groups advise that the problem is probably larger in Queensland on a per capita basis.

The 65 and over age group experienced the greatest rate increase. The proportion of clients aged 65 and over increased from 2% (or nearly 5,000) in 2011–12, to 3% (or nearly 7,500) in 2015–16. For Indigenous clients aged over 65, the average annual rate of growth is higher than the non-Indigenous rate (18% each year compared with 14%, respectively). (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Specialist homelessness services 2015–16)

Recent research suggests that there are a growing number of older single women who are experiencing homelessness for the first time later in life. For many of this group, a lack of financial resources and assets has meant that they are unable to sustain their housing. Reasons identified from the research included: being forced out of the workforce early, having insufficient superannuation/savings to fund the costs of living, discrimination in the housing market, the death of an income earning spouse, poor health or serious illness often resulting directly or indirectly from abuse, and separation/divorce. (Homelessness Australia, Homelessness and Older People, January 2016)

COTA Queensland believes that the incoming Queensland Government must take more concerted action to assist those seniors who for a variety of reasons find themselves displaced from appropriate housing and made homeless.

2.3 Concessions and the Cost of Living

The rising cost of living is a continuing challenge faced by a large proportion of seniors daily, the availability of concessions on government services helps reduce that cost burden.

The 2017 QCOSS Cost of Living Report – Special Edition: The cost of living and age pensioner households, Issue 5 shows that ... *rent, rates, utility costs and motor vehicle expenses continue to have a significant impact on the capacity of age pensioners to afford a basic standard of living. The data shows:*

- *Rising housing costs and the battle to meet those costs is the single biggest financial burden for pensioners, especially for those who rent in the private market.*
- *Single and couple households renting privately are most likely to be in housing stress (with almost 50 per cent of their gross income being spent on housing costs).*
- *Our model couple age pensioners who rent in the private market are not able to meet the costs associated with a basic standard living, and our model single renter is just able to meet their basic costs with only a few dollars to spare each week.*
- *Without further support, renters who rely on the age pension must make compromises about their expenditure to survive, thus undermining their quality of life.*
- *Concessions are critical in supporting age pensioners to manage cost-of-living expenses.*

COTA Queensland is therefore strongly concerned about the future of state government concessions available to pensioners, seniors and veterans. Older Queenslanders on fixed low incomes increasingly rely on assistance from the Queensland Government to meet the rising costs of energy, rates, water, and transport.

The Commonwealth Government's decision to terminate in 2014 the *National Partnership Agreement on Certain Concessions for Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card Holders*. In response the then Queensland Government announced that due to the resultant \$54.2 million reduction in funding received by Queensland, pensioner concessions would need to be reduced. While this decision was later reversed with concessions being maintained, the possibility of losing concessions sent a shock wave of unease through those seniors who may have been impacted. **It is vital that future Queensland Government continue to provide these concessions to seniors and that this is clearly communicated to seniors.**

While energy concessions have been indexed in recent years, the increases have not kept up with price increases, particularly for energy. **COTA Queensland believes that concessions need to maintain their relative value as prices increase so consider that the value of energy concessions should rise at the same rate as energy prices.**

For concession holders, the Queensland Government should prohibit the imposition of additional charges for receipt of paper bills, processing of cheques and over the counter payments. This approach was recently adopted by the New South Wales Government.

It should be noted that residents who hold a Commonwealth Health Care Card cannot access pensioner concessions on reticulated natural gas and transport (unlike in most other states). This includes Queenslanders in the 50-59 age bracket who are unable to find sufficient employment due to age discrimination or social isolation.

COTA Queensland advocates for an extension of energy and transport concessions to resident Commonwealth Health Care Card holders who are currently excluded. The Queensland Government should also make available a rebate like that provided to reticulated natural gas users to those resident pensioners, seniors and veterans who use LPG bottled gas. In addition, holders of the Commonwealth Health Care Card should also be made eligible for public transport concessions throughout Queensland.

2.3 Energy and Communication

Energy

COTA Queensland has long been concerned that vulnerable seniors will continue to experience 'fuel poverty' as energy prices rise faster than the rate of inflation. Many older Queenslanders do not understand the energy marketplace. They have concerns that switching retailers will leave them in a worse position. Much of the information promoting retail choice is internet based and therefore not visible to a large cohort of older consumers. In view of these concerns, COTA Queensland welcomed the current Government's decision to support the Switched-on Communities program, which provided education, support, and hardship services to Queenslanders, and not only older people. This program has had great success in helping seniors better understand the energy market and how to make decisions regarding their own energy needs.

COTA Queensland believes that this program should be continued by future Queensland Governments to ensure that ongoing support is available to older people to understand and navigate the energy market, and to access supports and advocacy.

COTA welcomes the Queensland Government's recent direction to Energy Queensland to remove the costs of the solar bonus scheme from network charges until at least 2020, saving residential consumers an estimated \$51 per year. **COTA Queensland recommends that this arrangement should be made permanent to ensure that prices do not rise again unnecessarily in 3 years time.**

While residential electricity consumers can now take advantage of a competitive electricity market in south east Queensland, regional Queenslanders do not have the same opportunities to seek better value and lower prices from their electricity supplier. We welcome the Queensland Government's recent announcement regarding reversal of the 'non-reversion' policy, however this is only the initial step along the path to full retail competition. **COTA advocates that the introduction of full retail competition in regional Queensland be expedited to benefit regional consumers.**

COTA is also concerned that a large number of older energy consumers in Queensland reside in retirement villages, caravan parks, manufactured home estates and unit complexes which provide energy to residents through embedded network arrangements. It is vital that the Government ensures that choices, rights and protections for residential consumers in embedded networks mirror those for customers of authorised retailers in the national energy market to the greatest extent possible. **COTA Queensland requests that the Queensland Government facilitates choice of retailer for embedded network customers in Queensland, and supports extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland's (EWOQ) services to enable EWOQ to provide dispute resolution services to embedded network residents.**

The recent announcement of the Government's Affordable Energy Plan for Queensland was welcomed, particularly for residential consumers. **To enable older consumers to take full advantage of the benefits available under the plan, COTA requests that the incoming Queensland Government also funds free household energy audits and energy efficiency plans for older residents.**

COTA Queensland believes strongly that there is a need for the establishment of an independent, well-resourced energy consumer advocacy capability in Queensland. At present, there are no consumer advocacy bodies in Queensland which focus wholly on utilities or energy. The breadth of issues and the complexity of the energy sector dictate the need for dedicated specialists to:

- provide informed input to energy policy formulation

- monitor and report on consumer issues in the energy market on an ongoing basis
- advise government and others on appropriate consumer engagement strategies.

COTA Queensland requests that the incoming Queensland Government strengthens the energy consumer advocacy capability available to Queenslanders and ensures adequate resourcing for the benefit of all Queensland consumers.

2.4 Communication

The digital divide describes the situation where not all Australians are able to access and utilise various digital technologies to the same level of competence. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index provides data at the national and state level which details the extent of digital inclusion by age, sex and other variables. The Index as shown below indicates that those over 65 and particularly older women are most digitally excluded.

Digital inclusion is about bridging this 'digital divide'. It's based on the premise that all Australians should be able to make full use of digital technologies – to manage their health and wellbeing, access education and services, organise their finances, and connect with friends, family, and the world beyond. (Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2017)

The Index shows that ...*Those aged 65+ are the least digitally included age group in Australia, with a score of 42.9 (13.6 points below the national average), and the gap between this group and younger Australians is widening. A closer look at the 65+ category reveals a pattern of declining digital inclusion with increasing age... One issue faced by those 65+, as with other groups on relatively low incomes, is the rising proportion of income spent on network access. Gender also impacts inclusion for this group. Older Australian women have lower levels of overall digital inclusion than their male counterparts, and record lower scores on all three sub-indices. The digital inclusion gap between older women and men is widest for the group aged 70–74.*

COTA Queensland advocates that the incoming Queensland Government implement measures to safeguard those seniors who are digitally excluded and may face barriers in utilising all government services, for example: ensure that legacy (non-digital) Government communication channels are maintained and supported at no additional cost to consumers who use those channels.

In addition, the Government could negotiate with service providers the provision of concessions to assist with communications costs, as cost is one of the barriers preventing many seniors from using the internet.

COTA also encourages the incoming Queensland Government to expand upon the already successful Tech Savvy Seniors Queensland Partnership to help more seniors bridge the digital divide.

2.5 Transport

Affordable and accessible transport is essential for seniors to access health and community services, social events and shopping. Public transport and taxis continue to be difficult for some older people to use - for example, because of difficulties in using ticketing or card technologies, inaccessible vehicles and infrastructure, the cost of fares, or the speed and volume of pedestrian traffic at busy railway and busway stations.

COTA is an active member of the Queensland Government's Public Transport Advisory Group, as well as, the Queensland Rail Accessibility Reference Group.

Transport is a significant barrier affecting older people's access to health services particularly after hours when public transport reduces significantly, and safety concerns increase—both on public transport and getting to transport hubs. Taxis and private transport have cost implications that older people on fixed and low incomes may not be able to meet and these costs are significantly higher for people in rural and regional areas.

Seniors would like access to transport both after normal business hours and on weekends as well as during normal business hours. Existing community transport does not provide services to cater for those seniors living in outer suburbs as well as more outlying rural areas and communities.

Many seniors have to travel to regional centres from rural and remote Queensland to undergo medical treatment and it is often difficult to organise community transport from the airport to hospital or other accommodation while in those centres.

COTA Queensland recommends the Queensland Government:

- **introduces an affordable annual pass for resident pensioners, seniors and veterans aged 75 years and older for use on public transport in Queensland**
- **introduces an annual payment option for resident pensioners, seniors and veterans renewing their Queensland driver license at aged 75 years.**
- **convenes a community and patient travel summit to address gaps and strategies for improved coordination.**

2.6 Health

Access to affordable and quality health care is consistently identified as a priority issue for older Queenslanders. This includes access to primary health care, hospital based services, medications, information, and activities that help people age well.

COTA Queensland's vision is for a statewide healthcare system which is linked up, responsive, safe, efficient, innovative and most importantly has the needs of patients at the centre – receiving the right care, at the right time and in the right place. For this to happen, consumers must be engaged at a local and systems level to co-design the healthcare system.

To achieve this COTA Queensland is advocating for the development of a State-wide Older Person's Health Plan based on the World Health Organisation's 2015 Health and Ageing Report which calls for a fundamental shift in the way we think about ageing. The World report on ageing and health outlines a framework for action to foster Healthy Ageing built around the new concept of functional ability. Making these investments will have valuable social and economic returns, both in terms of health and well-being of older people and in enabling their on-going participation in society.

Through our members and through COTA Queensland's links to the Queensland Clinical Senate, we are aware of the high priority for community access to information and support around advance care planning and advance care directives. COTA Queensland supports the increased, coordinated use of telehealth and hospital in the home services to provide services to people where they were previously unavailable.

Many older people are concerned about the care they will receive at the end of their life and if they will be treated with dignity and have their wishes respected. Improving palliative care and making it available where and when it is needed is critical if people are to have a better death. Queenslanders should be able to choose where to die, be that home, hospice, residential aged care or hospital.

People want to make decisions about the type of care they receive at the end of their lives. Currently there are a wide range of statutory provisions, different across each state and territory, to help people put in place end of life care plans. People want to be sure that their plans are respected regardless of whether they've moved from one jurisdiction to another and in which setting they die.

Health promotion activities and prevention strategies can help people make better lifestyle choices and so reduce their risk factors for many non-infectious diseases. There is also a growing body of evidence that lifestyle changes can also help reduce the risk of dementia. Recent activities in health promotion and preventative measures have tended to ignore older people's specific needs. This is despite there being quite strong evidence on the health benefits for individuals of all ages in making better choices and long-term savings to the health system in this area.

COTA Queensland recommends the Queensland Government:

- develops in consultation with stakeholders a State-wide Older Person's Health Plan based on the World Health Organisation's 2015 Health and Ageing Report
- maintains funding to Health Consumers Queensland to work with consumers, carers and the community to co-design a health system that meets the needs of service users and families
- funds a public education campaign for consumers and the community around care at the end of life
- works with the Australian Government to increase palliative care funding
- works with other states and territories to harmonise laws around advance care planning and end of life decisions to ensure people's choices are respected
- funds a health literacy campaign that encourages older people to change their lifestyle and address risk factors around alcohol, nutrition, tobacco and exercise
- funds the expansion of telehealth, reducing the requirement for older Queenslanders to travel to receive specialist care.

2.7 Employment

Workplace age discrimination is common in Australia, with people over 55 likely to be unemployed more than twice as long as people aged 25-34. Many capable older Queenslanders are forced into retirement before they wish and before they're financially prepared. We need to ensure people work for as long as they need and want to. Queensland needs political and business champions to understand this and to model best practice. COTA Queensland agrees with the Financial Services Council that there is 'a role for Government in showcasing best-practice outcomes in employing, retaining and retraining older workers'.

COTA Queensland recommends that the Queensland Government convenes an employment summit advocating for an older workforce, including proactive measures to increase public sector employment of workers over 50 years

2.8 Peak Organisations and Government

COTA Queensland in partnership with other Peak Community Service organisations in Queensland asks the incoming Queensland Government to work with our organisations to help Queenslanders.

We believe the only way to achieve the change that is necessary is to work together. We believe that to make the change necessary it is essential that the incoming Queensland Government is:

a government that leads with vision

...a shared, long-term vision not just for our state but for our people

a government that listens

... to a wide range of views from experts to people who experience disadvantage that is representative of our community

a government that acts together

...understanding that supporting our community cannot happen in silos but it can when viewed holistically and with sound relationships

It is only by using these three approaches that an incoming government will be able to effectively address the systemic issues that are letting Queenslanders fall through the gaps.