

Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland

Copyright

© The State of Queensland (Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) *Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland*. Copyright protects this publication. Excerpts may be reproduced with acknowledgment of the State of Queensland (Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships).

Creative Commons

This document, *Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland*, is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



CC BY license summary statement: In essence, you are free to copy, share and adapt *Future Directions for an Age-Friendly Queensland* as long as you attribute the work to the State of Queensland (Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships). To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Acknowledgements

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Queensland Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their ongoing connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





Minister's message

Every year, more people call Queensland home. At March 2022, our state's population growth rate was the fastest in Australia. Our population is also ageing, with the 65 and over age group growing three times faster than the rest of the population over the past decade. By 2050, the Australian Bureau of Statistics projects more than 1 in 5 Queenslanders will be 65 years or older.

While an ageing population presents challenges for government to respond to and meet the needs of older Queenslanders, we also recognise that the strengths and experiences of older people make an immense contribution to our communities.

The Queensland Government is committed to creating an age-friendly Queensland where older people are connected to their communities and the people who matter most to them. We want to make sure seniors are supported according to their needs, and have opportunities to continue to contribute economically and socially, whether through work, volunteering, or in retirement.

Future Directions for an Age-friendly Queensland signals a process for planning what an age-friendly Queensland will look like across the coming years. We will collaborate across governments and sectors and engage with the organisations and service providers that represent and work with older people.

Importantly, we will listen to and amplify the voices of older Queenslanders, to deliver a contemporary strategy that will support seniors to live full and enriching lives and help build a more age-friendly Queensland.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

The Honourable Craig Crawford MP

Minister for Seniors and Disability Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	3
Minister's message	5
Towards an age-friendly Queensland	7
Our seniors	8
What we want to achieve	9
Our vision of age-friendly communities	9
What we have achieved so far	11
What seniors are telling us	14
What seniors are telling us needs to change	16
Our next steps	17
How to get involved	18

Towards an age-friendly Queensland

Queensland's population is ageing. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data indicates 17 per cent of the Queensland population (over 875,600 people) was 65 years old or older. ABS population projections (2022) estimate that by 2050, more than 1 in 5 Queenslanders will be 65 years old or older (22.1 per cent or 1.8 million people). Today, there are around 97,000 Queenslanders aged 85 years old or older (more than 1 in every 10 seniors). By 2050, that number of older old people will grow to be over 362,000 (or around 1 in every 5 seniors).

Queensland Treasury data shows there is significant variation in the proportion of seniors across Queensland regions, meaning populations in some regions are ageing faster than others.

An ageing population, whether at state or regional levels, presents unique opportunities for engaging with seniors and rethinking public policy, programs and services. The Queensland Government's 2016 Seniors Strategic Direction Statement has driven action that has set us on a course for achieving an age-friendly Queensland, through both short and long-term change.

The evidence shows that the pace of population ageing is increasing; accelerated by lower fertility rates and significant advances in healthcare and disease management. Girls born in Queensland in 2020 can expect to live to be over 85 years old (life expectancy at birth for boys is 80.6 years). This compares to life expectancy at birth for girls born in 1971 of 74.7 years (and 67.8 years for boys).

Policy, program and service delivery need to respond to these longer-term demographic trends and it is timely to consider what seniors want now and into the future.

More seniors are working well past the traditional retirement age of 65 years old. They bring valuable life experience and skills to our workplaces. Older Queenslanders are socially and digitally connected. They drive, access the internet and regularly socialise with family and friends, as well as carrying and sharing unique generational insights, knowledge and experiences of events, culture and communities. They take part in, or attend, sporting events, or go to the movies, the theatre or concerts. Older people are more likely to provide care for a person with disability or frailty due to age, than they are to be the person receiving care. Older people account for 17.8 per cent of carers in Queensland, and they play a particularly important role in providing informal care for grandchildren. Older people are more likely than people in any other age group to volunteer in their community.

Older Queenslanders are economically, politically, socially and culturally active. Every day older Queenslanders make a significant contribution in our communities. Older Queenslanders deserve recognition for these strengths and the opportunity that ageing well provides to participate fully in our communities.

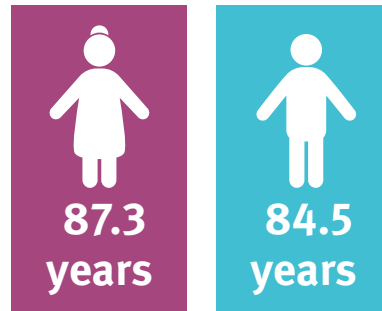
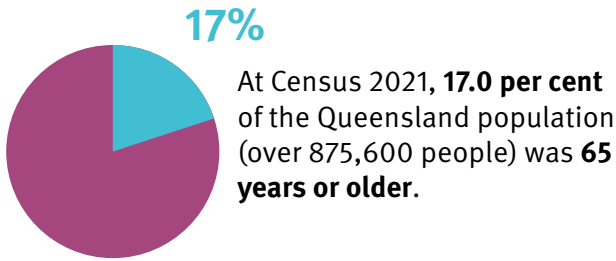
Future Directions for an Age-friendly Queensland affirms the Queensland Government's commitment to creating age-friendly communities where seniors are:

- **connected** to their communities and the important people in their lives
- **cared for** and supported, if care and support are needed
- **contributing** to their local communities in the ways of their choosing.

Identifying future directions for seniors signals a process for planning what an age-friendly Queensland looks like across the coming years to meet the needs of senior Queenslanders.

Our seniors

Profile



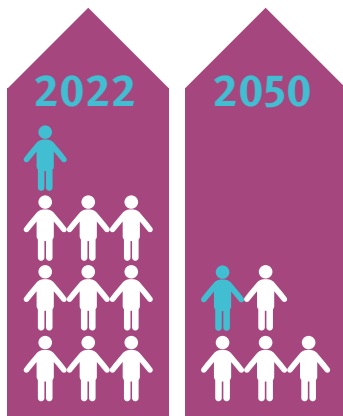
Women live longer than men—life expectancy at 65 years old for **women is 87.3 years**, compared to **84.5 years** for men.



ABS population projections (2022) estimate that by **2050**, more than **1 in 5** Queenslanders will be **65 years or older** (22.1 per cent or 1.8 million people).

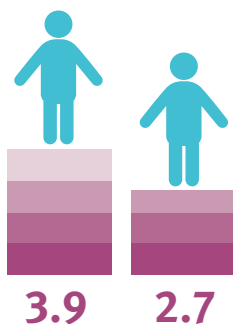


8.6 per cent of older Queenslanders speak a **language other than English** and more than 1 in 4 rated their English language proficiency as not well or not at all.

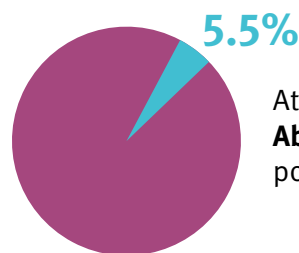


Around 97,000 Queenslanders are aged **85 years** old or older (more than **1 in every 10 seniors**).

By 2050, that number of older seniors will grow to be over 362,000 (or around **1 in every 5 seniors**).



At Census **2021**, there were **3.9 working age Queenslanders** (15- to 64-year-olds) for every person 65 years old or older. By **2050**, that dependency ratio is projected to fall to **2.7**.



At Census 2021, **5.5 per cent** of the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** population was **65 years old** or older.



At Census 2021, **19 per cent** of seniors needed **assistance** with core activities, but **81 per cent** did not.

What we want to achieve

The Queensland Government is committed to creating age-friendly communities, where seniors can lead healthy and productive lives. Our ambition is that our seniors feel as though they are:

- **connected to** their communities and the important people in their lives
- **cared for** and well supported (if they require it)
- **contributing** (in their preferred way) to their communities.

Our commitment is to deliver a contemporary seniors strategy that will provide meaningful, measurable outcomes that contribute to achieving an age-friendly Queensland.

Older Queenslanders need to have a voice in what an age-friendly Queensland looks like. We will listen to and amplify their voices, as well as engage with the organisations that represent them and the service providers that work with older people.

To develop the next seniors strategy, we will collaborate across governments and sectors.

Rationale

Communities that foster healthy ageing and the abilities of citizens throughout their entire life are better places to grow, live, work, play and age. Our environments—physical, social and economic—underpin the determinants of healthy ageing and are powerful influences on the experiences and opportunities that ageing offers.

An age-friendly community ensures older people are free from age-related barriers that prevent community participation. Age-friendly communities value the contribution of seniors and help ensure their access to all aspects of life.

Our vision of age-friendly communities

Age-friendly communities promote health and the development and maintenance of physical and mental capacity throughout the life course, while enabling people to continue to do the things they value.

Age-friendly is not a stand-alone concept. It is a dynamic platform for social participation and economic growth. Age-friendly practices help build older peoples' abilities to meet their basic needs to learn, grow and make decisions, be mobile, and build and maintain relationships.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) developed the age-friendly approach, which identifies eight areas that directly influence the quality of life and wellbeing of older people. These domains overlap and interact with each other.

Queensland's goals for age-friendly communities

Outdoor spaces and buildings	Seniors live in an environment that includes open spaces, buildings, shaded areas and walkways that are safe and easy to navigate.
Transport	Seniors can get out and about, using a range of affordable, user-friendly transport services.
Housing	Seniors' housing options are affordable, accessible and close to transport and community services.
Social participation	Seniors are supported to be active in their community, doing the things they enjoy.
Respect and social inclusion	Seniors from all backgrounds are valued and appreciated, and no one is excluded based on race, geography, culture, language, gender, sexuality, ability or socioeconomic status.
Civic participation and employment	Seniors participate in employment, training, lifelong learning and volunteering opportunities and inform government policies.
Communication and information	Seniors access information they need in a variety of formats to stay informed and connected with their communities, families and friends.
Community support and health services	Seniors are helped to stay healthy, active and independent through community support, including services responding to elder abuse, fraud or exploitation, and health services.

Decade of Healthy Ageing

Health is a major determinant of how well we age, and the United Nations has declared 2021–2030 the Decade of Healthy Ageing. The WHO is leading international action to improve the lives of older people, their families and communities, and is seeking to:

- combat ageism, by changing how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing
- develop age-friendly communities that foster the abilities of older people
- deliver person-centred, integrated care and health services that are responsive to the needs of older people
- provide older people access to long-term care when they need it.

Actions developed and delivered in the decade will be led by the voice, engagement and full participation of older people.

Queensland's age-friendly approach also aligns with these principles.

What we have achieved so far

Our commitment to an age-friendly Queensland builds on the work done to date under the leadership of the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (the department), and in collaboration with stakeholders such as Council on the Ageing Queensland.

2016 age-friendly strategy and action plan

The *Queensland: an age-friendly community—strategic direction statement* was launched on 20 April 2016. The 2016 strategic direction statement provided a framework that built on the existing work and investment by the Queensland Government. The *Queensland: an age-friendly community—action plan* was launched in 2016 to provide a clear way forward to direct the implementation and delivery of age-friendly communities in Queensland. In 2020, the action plan was updated to reflect further actions to be progressed by the government.

Review of the 2016 strategy and action plans

Since May 2021, the department has engaged with Queensland Government agencies to review and report actions against deliverables within the implementation schedule for 2019–20 and 2020–21. As at 30 June 2021:

- 26 Queensland Government agencies committed to 114 actions
- 111 actions were completed (97 per cent completion rate)
- 79 actions were adopted as business-as-usual
- 72 actions were expanded beyond their initial scope and continued.

Under the 2016 strategy and action plans, we:

- released a series of B.OLD films that challenge stereotypes about getting older and contribute to overcoming ageism
- continued to provide cost-of-living support through concessions and rebates on energy and utilities bills, motor vehicle registration, public transport and a range of health-related concessions
- included the free phone-shopping service Senior Shopper as part of the Seniors Card, Seniors Card +go and Seniors Business Discount Card schemes to enable cardholders to get the best price on a range of goods and services
- expanded services to prevent and respond to elder abuse in our communities with six additional elder abuse support services, seniors' financial protections services and a scams and fraud awareness line
- developed and delivered *Healthy Ageing: A strategy for older Queenslanders* that aims to improve health services for older Queenslanders and keep them well for longer
- increased fairness and improved consumer protections for residents of retirement villages and residential (manufactured homes) parks through amendments to the *Retirement Villages Act 1999* and the *Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003*. In addition, funding to support advocacy and information services was provided to the Association of Residents of Queensland Retirement Villages and Associated Residential Parks Queensland under the *Right Where You Live* program
- developed key messaging for seniors to raise awareness and improve disaster preparedness of seniors through the Get Ready Queensland Program.

Affiliation with the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities

In late 2019, Queensland became an Affiliate Member of the WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. The global network connects more than 1300 cities and communities in 44 countries with the common vision to make their community a great place to grow old in. It focuses on action at the local level that fosters the full participation of older people in community life and promotes healthy and active ageing.

The global network seeks to stimulate ideas and initiatives that will inspire change by showing communities what can be done and how it can be done. By connecting cities and communities worldwide, the global network facilitates the exchange of information, knowledge and experience, and supports cities and communities to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions.

Queensland's membership reflects our commitment to listen to the needs of our ageing population, assess and monitor the age-friendliness of our communities and to work collaboratively with older people directly and across sectors to create age-friendly physical and social environments. Membership is also a commitment to share experience, achievements and lessons learned with other cities and communities. Queensland's role as an affiliate member puts us in an enviable position to lead and learn about strategies that work to promote healthy ageing and meet the needs of an age-friendly community.

Linking age-friendly communities with other strategies and actions in Queensland

The Queensland Government has committed to delivering important initiatives that will influence future directions for older Queenslanders. By linking with these strategies, we can maximise benefits for older Queenslanders.

Recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness

In 2021, the Queensland Parliamentary Committee into Community Support and Services inquired into the nature and extent of the impact of social isolation and loneliness experienced in Queensland, to identify the causes and drivers, and the protective factors available in society that might mitigate the problem. After an extensive process involving 196 submissions, written advice from Queensland Government agencies and further public briefings, the committee delivered its report in December 2021.

The report made 14 recommendations relating to preventing and addressing social isolation and loneliness to be implemented by several Queensland Government portfolios. Tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 6 June 2022, the final Queensland Government response supported, or supported in principle, all of the recommendations.

Aged care reform and other health initiatives

The Queensland Government is also working on a suite of reforms and business improvement strategies for public aged care. This work also responds to Commonwealth reforms driven by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and includes initiatives to improve residential aged care, in home care and transition care, as well as the intersection between aged care and the health and hospital system.

Palliative care reform

The Queensland Government has committed additional funding of \$171 million from 2021–22 to 2025–26 to lead reforms to palliative care. This significant additional investment will fund critical initiatives to expand and strengthen palliative care services for Queenslanders to ensure they remain high-quality, are accessible and enable people to exercise genuine choice and dignity at end of life. At the centre of the Palliative Care Reform Program is an undertaking to develop and implement a new Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy.

National Plan to respond to the abuse of older persons

Queensland is contributing to actions and initiatives under the *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023* and its five target areas:

- Build our understanding of abuse of older people, so we can better target our responses.
- Build community awareness to create the momentum for change.
- Continue to strengthen our service responses.
- Help people better plan for their future.
- Strengthen safeguards for vulnerable older people.

The Queensland Government is committed to preventing and responding to elder abuse and raising awareness of this issue in our communities. The Budget 2022–23 announced a \$2.845 million annual increase in funding for the Seniors Legal and Support Service as part of significant ongoing investment of \$7.7 million (in 2022–23) for elder abuse awareness, prevention and intervention.

Seniors Legal and Support Services will be extended to Logan, Beaudesert, Ipswich and Moreton Bay–North areas. Outreach services will target Outback Queensland and the Torres and Cape region. Increased funding will ensure that older Queenslanders have equitable access.

The commitment to prevent and respond to elder abuse includes \$606,000 for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and helpline and \$406,000 for specialist financial information and support.

The Queensland Government is also reviewing options to enact nationally consistent legislative safeguards and protections for older people.

Housing strategy including actions for older women

The *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–2027* sets out the Queensland Government’s commitment to work with communities, industry and the housing sector to deliver a better housing future for all Queenslanders. Its objective is that every Queenslanders has access to a safe, secure and affordable home that meets their needs and enables participation in the social and economic life of our prosperous state. An advisory group has been created to guide the development and implementation of these and other support services to improve housing outcomes.

Many older women will face greater financial insecurity from the high cost of housing, home ownership and reduced incomes. This can result in homelessness, particularly if they need to rely on income support as a single person.

The Queensland Government’s *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–2025* will deliver a new initiative to tackle homelessness among older women, who are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.

Under the action plan, a new housing and support hub model based in Brisbane will be developed to assist older women by providing a ‘single entry point’ to connect with local and placed-based services and taking an early intervention and prevention approach.

What seniors are telling us

The voices of older people will inform how we move towards an age-friendly community. We will listen to and amplify their voices in developing the next seniors strategy.

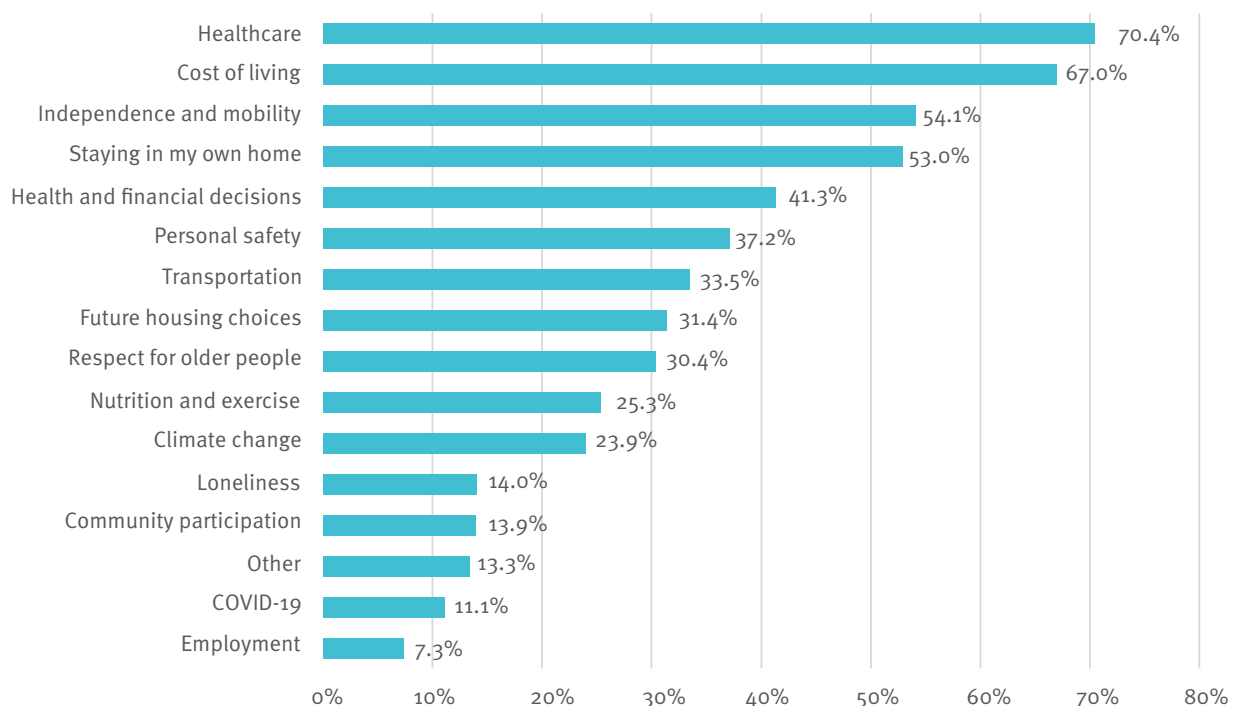
Since 2021, the Queensland Government has been delivering seniors expos across the state.

The expos have provided a way for government to connect with older Queenslanders and provide them with links to services in their area and information on their key interests, such as: staying safe at home and in the community, scams and fraud awareness, substituted decision making through enduring powers of attorney and government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccination rollouts and public health preparedness.

The expos and other events held during Seniors Month (October) 2021 gave the department the opportunity to hear what matters from seniors through the collection of over 3000 survey responses. The survey information is the beginning of engagement on the needs of seniors. It is a 'pulse check' that provides the base from which to build a picture that is fully representative of all older people in Queensland.

Seniors were asked to identify what issues most concerned them. Nearly three-quarters of seniors indicated that healthcare was a main issue or concern for them (70.4 per cent). Other top-rating concerns were the cost of living (67.0 per cent), maintaining their independence and mobility (54.1 per cent) and staying in their own home (53.0 per cent) (Figure 1). Of least concern were employment (7.3 per cent) and COVID-19 (11.1 per cent).

Figure 1: Main issues or concerns reported by older persons



Source: Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Seniors Survey (results at 30 August 2022)

Seniors were also asked to agree or disagree with a set of statements about their experiences in their local community (Figure 2). Of those surveyed, more than one-fifth (22.5 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'housing options for me as I age are affordable, accessible and close to transport and community services'. More than one-in-ten seniors disagreed or strongly disagreed that the community valued and respected older people (11.5 per cent).

Seniors who responded to the survey were most likely to agree or strongly agree that they could get out and about easily using their own vehicle or affordable, user-friendly transport (81.1 per cent). Nearly three out of every four seniors (72.5 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that the environment in their community includes open spaces, shaded areas, walkways and public buildings that are safe and easy to move around in.

More than two-thirds of seniors (67.2 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to access information needed to stay informed and connected with their community, family and friends in a way that suits them.

Figure 2: Older persons' reported experiences in their community



Source: Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Seniors Survey (results at 30 August 2022)

What seniors are telling us needs to change

Policy, programs and services need to respond to long-term demographic trends in how we age.

We are living longer, are in better health and have greater expectations from our older age than ever before. Older people want to stay in their own home, to stay connected to their community and they want to be able to access services in their local area easily. Older people have a valuable contribution to make to workplaces and our communities.

However, ageing can also present vulnerabilities. Older people should feel safe in their homes and their communities, connected to the services that can help them and be economically and financially secure.

Seniors have shared their ideas for what they want their future to look like. This future directions statement provides the (age-friendly) framework to continue the conversation with seniors and other stakeholders to find innovative ways of tackling emerging issues.

Staying in my own home with access to healthcare

Overwhelmingly, seniors have told us that they want to stay in their own home for as long as they can. For many, however, living independently also depends on having access to some in-home support, healthcare and affordable local transport to get around.

Living alone but being connected to community

Many seniors told us that being connected to their community through social events, exercise or other activities keeps them engaged with their peers and with the world around them. Being connected also means more information about what is going on in their local community and many seniors appreciate face-to-face contact with service delivery, and an acknowledgement that not all seniors are tech savvy.

Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lockdowns that were designed to keep older people safe, feelings of being isolated are not surprising.

Around one-quarter of Queensland seniors live on their own, which can significantly increase their risk of experiencing social isolation and loneliness. Social isolation and loneliness are complex issues that are becoming increasingly more pronounced and problematic. In older people, social isolation and loneliness may also increase the risk of experiencing serious mental and physical health conditions.

The Queensland Government provides around \$3.8 million annually to fund seniors social isolation services across Queensland, from the south-east to the Torres Strait. These are locally designed and locally delivered services where activities are tailored to meet the demands of older people. Services offer a wide variety of activities: from low-impact exercise classes, walking groups or table tennis, craft and board games, dancing, or workshops to assist with falls prevention, learning and using new technology or conversation groups.

In 2021, the Queensland Parliament inquired into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland. The outcomes will help us shape the future investment in social isolation services, building on what works now to meet local community need, to maximise benefits for all Queenslanders.

Living in a community that provides amenity

The local environment is important to seniors. Well-built footpaths, shaded walkways and places to sit and meet with friends help them stay active and socially connected, which improves their physical and mental health.

Overcoming ageism

Seniors told us that they do not always feel respected or valued in their communities.

Despite the many contributions of older people to society and their wide diversity, negative attitudes about older people are rarely challenged. Ageism affects how we think, feel and act towards others and ourselves based on age. Age discrimination imposes powerful barriers to the development of good policies and programs for older and younger people and has negative consequences on older adults' health and wellbeing.

Elder abuse

Some seniors also indicate that they do not always feel safe in their own homes or in the community.

The *Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Year in Review* reported 2022 notifications of elder abuse in the year to 30 June 2021, which was an increase on the 1534 notifications recorded in the previous 12 months.

Cost-of-living pressures

Many seniors told us of the increasing cost of life's essentials—food, electricity, transport and medical costs.

Seniors and other Queenslanders on low or fixed incomes can be challenged by cost-of-living increases. The Queensland Government provides ongoing support through a significant suite of concessions and rebates to offset a wide range of costs—including electricity, gas, rates, water, vehicle registration and public transport.

In 2022–23, \$725 million was committed for these concessions and rebates, including a one-off Cost-of-Living Rebate of \$175 credited to household electricity accounts. Ongoing cost-of-living support needs to remain at fair levels, be well-targeted and delivered efficiently to maximise its impact.

Our next steps

Hearing, capturing and amplifying the voices of seniors

Policy, programs and services need to be informed by what older people need—as identified by them.

The first step in developing the new seniors strategy will be to continue our program of engaging directly with seniors through expos and smaller localised seniors pop-up events. The seniors online engagement hub will also capture the views of seniors wherever they live in the state. We will also start work on a statewide survey of seniors that explores their issues and concerns. We intend that the survey will become the baseline for measuring our progress to becoming an age-friendly community.

Queensland's seniors are diverse and have wide-ranging interests, issues and concerns. We will undertake targeted engagement to listen to First Nations seniors, seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, seniors with a disability and LGBTIQ+ seniors. We will engage directly with seniors from these cohorts to ensure that they have the opportunity to speak directly to the government.

A focus of our engagement will be through Seniors Month, a celebration of seniors that recognises their valuable contribution to our community.

Building new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships

The government's ambition to create age-friendly communities, where seniors can lead healthy and productive lives and feel connected, supported and well cared for, recognised and valued will not be achieved by the government acting alone. The new seniors strategy will be developed with the voice of seniors and it will be delivered in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders that will include:

- Queensland Government agencies
- Council on the Ageing Queensland
- Commonwealth Government
- Local Government
- service providers.

Everyone has a role to play in working towards an age-friendly Queensland and seniors have told us that better linkages between government services will make a significant difference to how well they are able to access supports.

Reaching our goal of an age-friendly Queensland will require a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society response. When we connect and collaborate with key stakeholders, by strengthening existing relationships and building new partnerships, we leverage our collective resources and grow through the exchange of learnings and new ideas. We can build capacity and leadership, and ensure that different frameworks, policies and programs align to deliver better outcomes for older people.

How to get involved

Share your views on building an age-friendly Queensland:

- Visit the Queensland Seniors engagement hub—<https://qchub.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au>
- Complete the seniors survey—<https://qchub.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/seniors-strategy>
- Attend a seniors expo or seniors saver pop-up stall—
<https://www.qld.gov.au/seniors/legal-finance-concessions/seniors-expos>
- Email the department's Seniors team—seniors@dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au

