

02 Seniors Services

SNAPSHOT OF ACHIEVEMENTS

89%

ELIGIBLE SENIORS WITH A SENIORS CARD

7,163

SENIORS ACCESSING THE SENIORS ENQUIRING LINE

3,841 CALLS

INCLUDING 2,338 ABUSE NOTIFICATIONS

MADE TO ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION UNIT HELPLINE

1,726

SENIORS ASSISTED BY SENIORS LEGAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

1,045,044

SENIORS AND CARERS CARDHOLDERS

(SENIORS CARDS, SENIORS CARD +GO, SENIORS BUSINESS DISCOUNT CARD, CARER BUSINESS DISCOUNT CARD AND COMPANION CARD SCHEMES)

DELIVERED DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR SENIORS BY:

- **PROMOTING** INCLUSION AND ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
- **INCREASING** ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CO-DESIGN
- **FOSTERING** SAFE AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Strategic Overview

The department supports seniors and carers to lead healthy, productive and socially connected lives, and ensure government policies and programs are age-friendly and inclusive of the needs of seniors and carers by:

- improving seniors and carers' social and economic outcomes
- advocating for inclusive programs and services
- recognising and promoting the contribution of seniors and carers to our communities.

Queensland: An Age-friendly Community

Queensland's first Seniors Strategic Direction Statement: Queensland: An age-friendly community, was launched in April 2016. The 2016 statement and the subsequent action plans in 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 captured the government's investment and initiatives that worked towards creating age-friendly communities. The department's 2021 review of actions committed to under the 2016 strategy showed:

- 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.

A key achievement was Queensland's confirmation as an Affiliate Member of the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. The Global Network connects cities, communities and organisations worldwide with the common vision of making communities great places to grow old in, based on a platform for action in eight domains: (1) Outdoor spaces and buildings; (2) Transport; (3) Housing; (4) Social participation; (5) Respect and social inclusion; (6) Civic participation and employment; (7) Communication and information; (8) Community support and health services. Affiliate Membership puts Queensland in an enviable position to lead and learn about strategies that work to meet the needs of an age-friendly community.

In 2022, an estimated 16.9 per cent of the Queensland population (880,000 people), were 65 years or older. ABS population projections 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).

We recognise the impacts of an ageing population and affirm the government's ongoing commitment to creating age-friendly cities and communities. We are reviewing the Age-friendly Strategy and working in partnership to co-design a new Queensland Seniors Strategy, which will ensure older people in Queensland can lead healthy productive lives, where they are: connected to their communities and the important people in their lives; cared for and supported, if care and support are needed; and contributing to their local communities in the ways of their choosing.

Key achievements

During the reporting period, the department:

- reviewed the actions committed to under the *Queensland: Age-friendly Community* action plans for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 and noted that 26 Queensland Government agencies committed to 114 actions, of which 111 were completed (97 per cent completion rate)
- commenced the process to inform a refreshed, contemporary Queensland Seniors Strategy. To date, more than 650 seniors in Queensland have completed surveys showing what matters to them, and what they think about their communities
- supported the first Seniors Month in October 2021.

Seniors events

Queensland Seniors Month

Queensland Seniors Month provides opportunities to align with the Queensland Government's vision of building age-friendly communities by:

- promoting positive community attitudes towards older people and ageing
- facilitating community participation
- enhancing community connections.

In 2021, Queensland Seniors Month was held in October. The month, celebrating the theme 'social connections' commenced with the United Nations International Day of the Older Person (1 October) and concluded on Grandparents Day (31 October), a day that recognises the significant contribution grandparents make to their families and communities.

Seniors Month aligns with the Queensland Government's age-friendly approach to support older Queenslanders to be engaged and active in their communities. The department provided \$221,000 to the Council on the Ageing Queensland to support Seniors Month 2021. This included \$100,000 for grants of up to \$1,000 to support 114 Seniors Month events across Queensland, celebrating seniors and promoting social connection.

The department also directly funded two significant events during Seniors Month:

- The B.OLD short film festival was launched on 1 October 2021 to mark the beginning of Seniors Month and the International Day of the Older Person. The festival aimed to challenge negative stereotypes that create barriers to seniors' participation, by presenting older Queenslanders in diverse and active roles in workplaces, communities, and family life.

- Ballet for Seniors workshops were held virtually to ensure safety and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. These workshops were filmed with Queensland Ballet and provided online so people from across the state could participate.

Seniors Expos

A vital part of ageing well is to be active and connected. We are committed to ensuring older Queenslanders are connected to people, services, information and activities in their communities. To better understand how we can support seniors to maintain these connections, we commenced a series of Seniors Expos in communities across Queensland during 2020 and these have continued through 2021 and into 2022.

In 2021–2022, despite program disruption due to COVID-19 restrictions, six Seniors Expos were held across the state, and they were attended by more than 600 seniors. This included an expo for LGBTIAQ+ seniors held in Cairns.

These expos have provided seniors with the opportunity to meet face-to-face with government representatives and local organisations and discuss services and supports available in their community.

The expos brought together experts from Queensland Health, the Queensland Police Service, and our funded legal and financial service representatives to ensure seniors could get advice on:

- the COVID-19 vaccination rollout
- tips to protect themselves at home, in the community and financially
- local services supports and organisations they might want to join.

Experts on Seniors Cards and related concessions and rebates were also on hand to ensure seniors were accessing all the services and discounts for which they were eligible.

Our expo events also provided an opportunity to talk to a diverse range of older people, about what we can do to make Queensland a more accessible and age-friendly place for everyone. This consultation is informing our work and enabling older people to have a voice in how Queensland communities can best meet the needs of everyone, including seniors living in rural and regional communities.

Seniors Expos were complemented by Seniors Saver Pop-up events in four locations across Queensland. These provided the opportunity for seniors to meet with a Queensland Government representative to discuss eligibility for cards, rebates and concessions to help address cost-of-living pressures.

Key achievements

During the reporting period:

- \$100,000 funded 114 community events held during Seniors Month 2021
- 57 people attended screenings of the films at B.OLD Event Cinemas across the state. It is likely that attendance was impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks and associated restrictions in the lead up to Seniors Month
- 72 individuals registered on behalf of organisations to host a screening of the B.OLD short films in the lead up to their release, with many more organisations hosting screenings without registering once the films were available to download
- the online Ballet for Seniors workshop was shared on 1 October 2021 after public health restrictions forced the cancellation of in-person workshops planned for Sunday 3 October 2021. Social media posts promoting the online ballet workshops reached more than 51,000 Queenslanders, with more than 1,500 link clicks and 71,000 appearances in Facebook feeds
- six Seniors Expos were held, and more than 600 seniors attended these events. Four seniors savers pop-up events were held.

Elder abuse awareness, prevention and response services

The Queensland Government invested \$4.9 million in 2021–2022 for services to prevent and respond to elder abuse. These included:

- Seniors Legal and Support Services, and Seniors Financial Protection Services, which provide free legal and social support for older Queenslanders experiencing elder abuse, mistreatment, neglect or financial exploitation, in 11 locations across Queensland
- the statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and Helpline, which promotes the rights of older people to live free from abuse and provides free advice and assistance to anyone who experiences, witnesses or suspects the abuse of an older person
- providing access to information on scams and fraud awareness through the Seniors Enquiry Line, including a consumer protection and scams advice service
- promoting inclusion and recognition for seniors in the community through awareness raising activities.

In June 2022, the department launched the annual elder abuse awareness campaign, to coincide with International World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The campaign theme was 'Together we can stop elder abuse' and its focus was to raise awareness of elder abuse and the need for individual and community action to prevent elder abuse.

The department also provided sponsorship of \$2,750 to community partner Caxton Legal Centre to support a community awareness raising event 'It's all about Respect' that was held in the Queens Street Mall on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June 2022.

The department also works with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories in implementing the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians.

Key achievements

During the reporting period:

- more than 6,258 seniors were assisted by Seniors Legal and Support Services (as at 31 March 2022)
- the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit received 3,841 phone calls to the Helpline, including 2,338 abuse notifications
- the most reported concerns were psychological abuse, which were raised in 62.1 per cent of notifications, and financial abuse, which were raised in 76.6 per cent of calls.

Cost-of-living support through cards, concessions and rebates

In 2021-2022, the department continued to administer a range of Queensland Government concessions, such as electricity, rates, water and gas with expenditure of \$390.65 million. Holders of the Queensland Seniors Card or Seniors Card +go, and other Queenslanders on low or fixed incomes, can access cost-of-living assistance including concessions for electricity, reticulated natural gas, public transport, long distance rail, vehicle and boat registration, spectacles, dental, medical aids, life support, fishing permits and entry fees to Queensland Government museums and art galleries.

Further support is available for eligible Queenslanders to manage the cost of living by using their Seniors Card, Seniors Business Discount Card and Carers Business Discount Card. These cards can be used to access discounts at more than 7,000 business outlets across Queensland.

Key achievements

During the reporting period:

- 89 per cent of eligible seniors in Queensland held a seniors card
- Queensland Government card schemes provided access to benefits to over 1,045,000 card holders across Queensland

- the department continued to assist eligible Queenslanders to receive cost-of-living support through the delivery of concession and rebate schemes, including administration of the Electricity Asset Ownership Dividend—\$50 was credited to all Queensland residential accounts.

Supporting seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2021–2022 the department:

- used Seniors Expos to deliver messages about COVID-19 vaccination rollouts and public health responses
- actively promoted information about COVID-19 to more than 350,000 seniors card holders who have opted into receive messaging
- worked with the Council on the Ageing Queensland to identify any extra supports required for senior Queenslanders
- worked with funded service providers to pivot their service delivery to modes other than face-to-face during lockdowns.

Our Performance—Seniors services

Service standards	Notes	2021–2022	2021–2022
		Target/Est.	Actual
<i>Effectiveness measure</i>			
Percentage of eligible seniors with a Seniors Card		88%	89%

- Strategic Plan Performance measure: percentage of funded services that meets the needs of seniors. Following a review of the Seniors Program, this measure has been discontinued.
- Strategic Plan Performance measure: percentage of eligible people accessing concessions and support services. Following a review of the Seniors Services Program, this measure has been discontinued. The data for this measure is not able to be calculated as there is no defined cohort and some concessions/discounts are assessed differently from businesses, resulting in lack of available data.

Future directions

Promote inclusion and access to programs and services by:

- developing and implementing a contemporary Queensland Seniors Strategy, underpinned by the World Health Organisation age-friendly approach, to support older Queenslanders to lead healthy, productive and socially connected lives, and ensure government policies and programs are age-friendly and inclusive
- reducing the cost-of-living pressures for seniors and other vulnerable Queenslanders by administering a range of rebates and concessions
- working with strategic partners, including disability and seniors service providers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to prepare for, respond to, and recover from pandemic and other disaster events
- undertaking a review of relevant Queensland legislation to identify gaps in safeguarding provisions, in line with recommendation 5.1 of the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023.

Increase engagement through co-design by:

- demonstrating commitment to the co-design of new departmental policies and programs with seniors, people with disability, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Foster safe and connected communities by:

- funding programs and services through competitive processes that generate best value and outcomes in safeguarding the wellbeing of older Queenslanders, including preventing and responding to elder abuse.