

An open letter to Qld Government

In 2004 you funded us to consult with communities at all levels across the state on their vision for 2020. As you would be aware from our report, the underlying theme behind their visions was the need to build stronger inclusive communities.

All communities had answers to their problems. The difficulty lies in getting money from you to implement these solutions.

In each issue we'll remind you of these problems and the proposed solutions.

Take youth, for example.

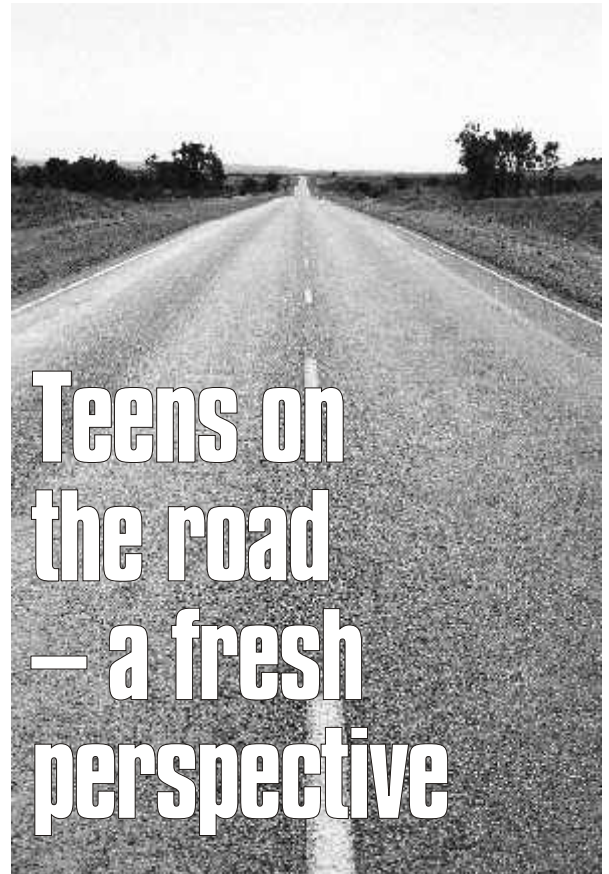
Across the state, in cities or country towns, they ask for a place to hang out, a green space to kick a ball and skate, a building and space to do their own thing: form their own band, hold their own disco, use computers . . . whatever, but a place of their own.

They want it run by their own council, elected by them, not chosen by adults. They would form their own Youth Neighbourhood Watch to police their place and protect younger members and provide a cleaning, building and repair taskforce to maintain their building and grounds.

At the same time they would be learning social responsibility.

In an ageing society many over 55s would be happy to become part of a semi-volunteer force to supervise the project and solve evening transport problems. Expenses paid, and a small honorarium would help them break even.

It is far more effective – and cheaper – to fund community solutions than to apply crisis band-aid policies to an open wound. See the following pages for more bright ideas from the community. ❖



Over the last few years we have discussed road safety with Year 11 and 12 students at a cross-section of schools across the state.

Road safety is a major issue for teenagers in regional areas because of the high accident rate among their peers, particularly on straight roads. Teenagers in the west do not have the chance to learn to drive from registered driving instructors. They learn in the paddocks, either by themselves or from friends and family at an early age. They go onto the roads with no professional training and, realistically, with no experience in driving in traffic.

Town and city students tell us they are concerned at the high incidence of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs by their peers. They also maintain that lack of transport options at night often means taking a lift they would prefer to avoid because their driver is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. >>

An open letter to the Opposition

The role of an Opposition is to oppose. Right?

But HOW are you meant to oppose?

Not by negative nit-picking but by putting up alternative policies to the ones you disagree with. While the media may enjoy reporting verbal personality clashes, the people are more interested in considering you as an alternative government.

In the next few issues we'll spell out what the people say they want when we ask them.

After all, we've been listening to them for the last 13 years. ❖

Teens on the road >>

They maintain that this problem has not been properly addressed by school awareness programs or by police on the road. Year 11 and 12 students urged that pupils in all schools from Year 3 onwards be made aware of the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

They say present drug-awareness programs are not hard hitting enough, and are begun too late. It is not a matter of warning teenagers about the dangers of driving under the influence. By then, it is often too late. Students at any time could be passengers and should be aware of the dangers of drugged drivers when they accept lifts.

Students recommend that driving courses be held after school, in holiday breaks or during school hours to ensure all Queensland teenagers are professionally trained. They suggest that retired people could be trained to provide driving courses at all school levels.

Retired people could be trained to accompany young drivers to ensure they have 120 hours' driving experience before going for their licences.

Because many young pupils are driven to school and have little traffic sense, these older students suggest schools have the 'walking bus' scheme that allows for children to be dropped at set points and walked to school in a supervised group.

Trained retired people

Advanced or defensive driving courses under all [simulated] conditions and 120 hours of supervised driving could be required for students to be eligible for a licence test. Trained retired people could also have an active role in this scheme.

Students also agreed the penalties for drink and drug driving should be high. They believe money fines hurt parents rather than teenagers, and the loss of a licence would be more appropriate.

All agreed that travel at night was a big issue. They questioned the morality of providing booze buses for adults drinking at clubs and hotels while teenagers in general have to rely on family – often unavailable or not interested – or their inexperienced friends for lifts home, often in over-crowded cars.

Students also believed car insurance should be cheaper for the young until they have either an accident or commit a driving offence – not only because this is just, but because it provides an incentive to be careful.

Years 11 and 12 students would also like to see reciprocal public transport student fees between states. The high cost of public transport interstate can mean students have to take an offered lift or walk in circumstances that they know are undesirable. ❖

Action research for grass roots views – and solutions

‘Community View of Needs and Solutions

2000-2005’ offers an analysis of community needs presented to us by people in all corners of the state. And it looks at what the community recommends to meet these needs.

This action research, to be released soon, has brought us together with members of the community from all walks of life, from Year 11 and 12 students, property owners and townspeople in the far west and north, to people of the towns and cities on the coast. These people have solutions to the problems they face.

We spoke with school teachers, parents and police who, like their children, are frustrated in their attempts to improve their social and sporting lives; frustrated by public liability insurance and by red tape that prevents them using innovative transport solutions. We heard westerners say they were fed up with the fly-in, fly-out mentality of government representatives over the years, representatives who do not stop long enough to understand the differences between the issues of the east and the west.

We spoke with women in the west who have to travel to the bigger towns and stay there away from their family for weeks because they can no longer have their babies in local hospitals.

Primary school children in cities told us about their blue light discos being under threat of closing because of lack of safe transport at night.

Convenient public transport

People everywhere said they were fed up with poor public transport and the one-eyed focus of our city fathers on tunnels for more traffic instead of recognising that this move will not solve our transport problems unless it goes hand-in-hand with quick, convenient public transport.

People across the state condemned the delay in solving our water crisis, not just in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, but also in the regional towns, some of which have lost big contracts because of the neglect of this all-important resource.

People everywhere are sick of the Government's fixation on building more prisons which become universities of crime. If we sent our children to a school with a failure rate of 80 percent or so, they said, we'd think there was something wrong with the system. There are cheaper and more effective ways of dealing with a large proportion of offenders.

People said they believed we need to re-build communities if we are to repair so many dysfunctional families.

People have answers to improve our mental and physical health systems, to solve mature-age unemployment, and other rural problems and city ones. So read what the people say in the OPSO 2000-2005 report. ❖

Traffic headache: There *is* an answer

Imagine an above-ground rail system in Brisbane that takes people where they want to go speedily and safely, and doesn't leave them sitting for ages in stuffy cars waiting for the traffic to start again before they run out of petrol.

The case of Granard Road on Friday afternoons is a different one. In spite of the nearby relatively hassle-free Logan Motorway, many truck drivers still use that road, tolerating needlessly the miasma of diesel fumes, the continual stopping and starting at traffic lights, to say nothing of the area's residents being subjected to the sticky black dust that settles on everything that stays still long enough.

A traffic-choked Brisbane requires re-thinking and a re-presentation of the options.

As it's not feasible to start again, existing road and rail networks will have to stay. The only solution to the peak-hour gridlock has been staring town planners in the face for ages – take some traffic off the roads and provide an innovative public transport system.

As buses are part of the traffic, and busways are an expensive and



partial token solution to the problem, we have to think outside the two-dimensional model that is the root cause of the overuse of fuel, road surfaces and people's patience.

One solution that has been on the fringes of our collective consciousness for many years is a light rail system. The first thing in its favour is the fact that very little land would be required to build stanchions to support a system like the one that takes in the Brisbane Airport and the Gold Coast.

Fast and efficient

Secondly, a fast and efficient above-ground service like this one, taking on and letting off passengers on the second floors of shopping centres at, for example, Jindalee, Archerfield, Wynnum, Boondall, Ferny Grove, Enoggera and Brookfield could be serviced by natural gas-fueled feeder buses or multi-fare cabs. Existing train

services like Citytrain would still bring people directly into the city centre.

Multi-fare cabs could be summoned by pressing a button on the phone connected to a central computer which could dispatch cabs to pick up several people from the one area. The saving on cab fares would be only one hook on which to hang a publicity campaign, promoting the use of public transport as a cheap and speedy way to move around the city.

This light rail system could also alleviate the problems of people in suburbs like Carole Park which has little or no useful transport.

This lack of an affordable, convenient system isolates car-less people, like people without jobs and mothers with small children, from not only workplaces and medical services; but also from a sense of community.

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A NEW LOOK AT ROAD SAFETY

As well as providing the RACQ Years Ahead one-hour plus road safety presentation for seniors, OPSO has put together a new 20-minute plus road safety presentation which can be adapted to meet the needs of people of all ages.

It is an ideal presentation for after-dinner speakers, and we can adapt it to suit both school students and inter-generational audiences.

We intend to combine it with a Speak Out to bring generations together to solve some of local road safety

problems, and will hold the first inter-generational presentation and Speak Out later this month.

Many groups have asked for a short guest speaker presentation. Others have asked for a combination presentation and Speak Out to provide the opportunity for people from older and younger generations to cooperatively work on solutions. This format will meet both those requirements. Anyone interested in having a guest speaker with this interactive presentation can phone OPSO on 3219 2572. ♦

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Thirdly, light rail fitted with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and integrated with the most viable of our existing rail, road and air systems could totally rid the Government/City Council of the budget-breaking burden of multiple tunnels, bridges and freeways; to say nothing of the savings on road maintenance.

Fourthly, even more money could be saved by having less traffic and therefore fewer people taking up health resources while being treated for road accident emergencies and diseases caused by air pollution.

We could solve current problems of shortages of hospitals beds, expensive equipment and highly trained nurses, freeing these up to cut hospital waiting lists. Some of the resultant savings could be spent on providing medical, dental and gynaecological services, now few and far between, for regional and rural centres.

Fifthly, funds from these savings could provide healthy living programs as part of the school curricula and for innovative publicity campaigns, to persuade people that owning a car is like pouring money down the gurgler.

With less pollution on the roads, and more room for bikeways, bike use will provide a safer, cheaper, healthier and more enjoyable means of transport

This system will be so cost-effective for the Government and city councils, and so user-friendly, that people of all ages, occupations and persuasions will want to use it for moving around and getting to know their city.

By heading in the present direction of providing extremely expensive tunnels for more and more vehicles, we are not only using precious resources wantonly on ad hoc solutions, we are depriving people of much needed funding for upgrades of our health and education systems.

So let's lift our eyes above the smog and envisage a safe, convenient and inexpensive panacea for that traffic headache. ♦

Seniors Portal a 'must' for positive ageing

“I'm gobsmacked”, was the way OPSO vice-president Ilma Ferguson reacted to the news of the Seniors Portal website. “It shows real understanding of the needs of the 50-plus generations.”

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing's new interactive Seniors Portal was launched in Sydney on March 31 at the Contemporary Art Gallery, to the great delight of the members of the 50-plus generation.

The Seniors Portal is a great breakthrough in focussing on positive ageing, with its interactive Meeting Place, Seniors Forum, and Living History sections, as well as an Events Calendar that will help users find what is going on locally.

OPSO president Val French, who was asked to speak at the launch, said she was pleased to see that the first topic for the Q&A forum was 'grandparents raising grandchildren', an award-winning issue for some of the journalists at the 2004 OPSO Media Awards and one that OPSO has researched and lobbied governments on since 1999.

“This is a real illustration of how closely in touch with its market the designers of this project are,” she said. “It is one of the most important steps the Commonwealth Government has taken in recognising the needs of the new ageing and the importance of helping us grow old positively by keeping us connected to and participating in the world around us.

“The Q&A forum directly opens the lines of communication between Seniors Portal members and professionals, the Government and other members of the community.

“The Living History section offers seniors the opportunity to look back and reflect on their personal experiences of our recent history and how we lived then. We can submit our recollections based on a bi-monthly chosen event that helped shape our nation.

“The Events Calendar will help us access what's on locally posted by community groups holding events.

“Meeting Place is a new discussion board for portal members on hobbies and leisure pursuits, like travelling, exercise, genealogy, stamp collecting, wine, theatre.”

Visit the Seniors Portal on www.seniors.gov.au ♦

Earlybird media award nominations

We are already receiving inquiries about early OPSO media award nominations

The awards will be in October this year and, as usual, nomination forms will be sent out in late May and June.

But journalists, media producers and photographers who want to get in early can fill in the nomination form accompanying this newsletter. Should there be any categories in addition to those in last year's awards, we shall add your entries where appropriate. ♦

OPSO (Older People Speak Out) Organisation Incorporated
ABN 40-936-702-414
PO Box 1037 Mount Gravatt 4122
Telephone: 07 3219 2572
Email: opso@zipworld.com.au Web: www.opso.com.au



2005 Media Awards

Choose your category: (You may enter more than one category and send as many entries as you wish.)

Queensland Awards

Print, news and features:

- Daily newspapers.
- Regional and bi-weekly newspapers.
- Radio, news interviews and current affairs.
- Television news and current affairs.**

Print media photography:

- Senior-specific newsletters.
- Advertising.
- Inter-generational journalism – print, electronic or photo.

Entry conditions:

Please read the terms and conditions of entry, as listed below. Ensure you have completed the details on the left and signed the form, accepting conditions of entry. The 12th OPSO Media Awards recognise excellence in the reporting of over 50s and their issues, helping to break down the stereotypes and the consequent social problems.

Each nomination must have been published or broadcast between October 22, 2004, and August 31, 2005.

Entry formats: Print: Original tearsheet or high-quality copy.

Photographs: Colour print no smaller than A5 and up to A4.

Audio: Standard audio cassette/CD.

Video: DVD or standard VHS tape (please disable copy protection).

It is a condition of entry that the entrant agrees to the use of their work for the non-commercial promotion of OPSO and the Media Awards.

Please note that the decision of the judging panel is final.

All items entered must have the entrant's name, phone number and title of work clearly displayed.

National Awards

Print, news and features:

- Metropolitan daily and Sunday newspapers
- Sunday newspaper magazines.
- Regional and suburban newspapers – weekly, bi-weekly and daily.

Television:

- News, current affairs and interviews under 5 minutes.
- Current affairs, documentaries and interviews over 5 minutes.

Print media photography:

- Photography.

Radio:

- City and regional news, current affairs and interviews.

Magazines.

Advertising.

Senior-specific print media.

Inter-generational journalism – print.

Inter-generational journalism – electronic.

Inter-generational journalism – photography.

Send entries to:

post: OPSO Media Awards
PO Box 1037, Mt Gravatt QLD 4122
courier: OPSO Media Awards
47 Jasmine Cres, Shailer Park, QLD 4128

Inquiries:

phone: 07 3219 2572
email: opso@zipworld.com.au
web site: www.opso.com.au

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Add your details:

Title of work:

Date of publication/broadcast:

Name: Mr Mrs Ms

Address:

Email:

Telephone: Home: Work:

Company/media organisation:

I agree to the entry conditions on this form. Signed:

Send entries to:

post:
OPSO Media Awards
PO Box 1037,
Mt Gravatt QLD 4122
courier:
OPSO Media Awards
47 Jasmine Cres,
Shailer Park, QLD 4128



Older People Speak Out

PO Box 1037
Mount Gravatt 4122
Telephone: 07 3219 2572
Email: opso@zipworld.com.au
Web Site: <http://www.opso.com.au>

Friends of OPSO

Who we are...

We are a non-profit organisation of free-spirited communicators with the knowledge and qualifications to speak out on older people's issues without fear or favour. We share our professionalism with others to help them acquire the skills that will empower them to age positively. We promote the unrecognised contribution of older people through our Consultative Forums.

Our members are carefully selected from across the ageing sector, to ensure the broadest field of knowledge on older people and their issues. We have a statewide network and close contact with appropriate government departments through advisory committees. We travel the state holding focus groups and interviews to ensure we have grass roots opinion on needs and solutions.

How can we help you, and how can you help us? By becoming a **CORPORATE FRIEND** or an **Individual Friend**.

As an Individual Friend you have the opportunity to express your views on matters of concern to you.

As a CORPORATE FRIEND you have access to our Consultative Forums where we are happy to ask questions pertaining to your business, on your behalf.

We offer you the opportunity to sponsor our special programs, such as our national and state Media Awards, road safety programs, seminars, speak outs, debates and training courses.

We also offer you the opportunity to use the Friends of OPSO endorsement in all your promotional material, subject to appropriate assessment.

Cost: Individual Friend of OPSO: \$25 a year. Corporate Friend of OPSO: \$250 a year.

I would like to become a Friend of OPSO:

Name:

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Address:

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Telephone:

I enclose a cheque for (please tick one):

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