

OPSO Report to Government on Q2

Compiled from consultation with seniors and seniors organisations November 2008

We appreciate the fact that government is prepared to listen to the proposed budget policies from the Seniors Roundtable which represents us all. However, we protest against the failure of the government to consult us on the future as promoted in the Q2 document. We deeply regret their failure to implement the community-based transport policies that the senior community had such a large part in developing and to their continued failure to increase funding in line with increasing costs to existing essential programs like elder abuse, social isolation, positive ageing, and to grandparents bringing up grandchildren.

We protest against the demotion of the Office for Seniors into what has almost become a mere maintenance centre.

We believe in view of the following there is an urgent need to establish a Department for Seniors under its own Minister.

Q2 only mentions ageing in the context of the over-65s – the pension age. Eligibility for the Queensland Seniors Card starts at 60. National Seniors membership cut-off is 50. We accept 50, as preparation for later years begins at that age and consequently these three generations of older people have a huge stake in the planning of and for the future.

One of the major assets in Queensland is the older population, and according to recent research, the community that fails to draw upon the wisdom of its older people...including the wisdom of its older seniors...ignores an essential resource.

- Q2 ignores older people except for a few negative sentences. There is no inclusion of older people in the vision. There is no recognition of the ongoing contribution they make to the community.
- Q2 focuses strongly on youth – but they too will age.
- Governments should be inclusive – strategies should be developed for and from all age groups.
- Ignoring older people sends a bad message to the young.
- Ignoring the contribution of older people is out of step with community attitudes as evidenced by the attendance at Remembrance Day, Anzac Day celebrations, the findings of the Summit on building integrated communities.
- Government neglect is a form of systemic elder abuse – and should be promoted in the media as such – ‘government elder abuse’.
- There is an urgent need for a Department of Seniors with its own Minister and policy-development unit. This section of the community covers large numbers from diverse backgrounds, all of whom are capable of contributing to the community – if given the opportunity.
- The over-50s represent three generations, all of whom are voters. Seniors constitute some 35% of the population of Queensland. As those under 18 do not vote, this gives us a strong voting base.

- Government has recently dismantled most of the gains we made in the last decade in terms of the provision of advice and government acting on that advice.
- A major example of the Government's recent failure to listen to our advice is the community-based transport policy developed after prolonged broad overseas research and with the community under the former Premier. The present local transport situation across the State is unacceptable.
- We ask for the re-establishment of the policies and planned practice to make the Department of Transport the lead agency for community-based transport and this should be re-instituted as a matter of top priority.
- There is a strong parallel between the demise of the Howard government and the policies in Q2 which ignore the senior sections of the community.
- As well as the media, seniors have strong links to the business community, and we are no longer prepared to be ignored in future planning.
- Proper involvement in policy and future planning promotes Positive Ageing, it promotes healthier people, capable of contributing longer to the community and lessening the demand on the health system.
- Older people have a great deal to offer in community building and inter-generational projects focused on a more inclusive Queensland community.
- A healthier, ageing population is capable of longer participation in the workforce given the right conditions. Government needs to encourage flexible work-force planning, with job sharing and flexible hours to allow for the retaining and return to the workforce of nurses, tradesmen, teachers etc.
- We need recognition of our role in volunteering – both formal and informal – and a re-examination of the over-reaction of government departmental control and regulation in this area.
- Older people are a part of the Queensland community and, as such, we must work with government by consultation and through the media, to ensure our participation in ALL aspects of community life.