



Speech by

**JULIE ATTWOOD**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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Hansard 6 December 2001

#### **SENIORS WEEK**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.02 p.m.): Some weeks ago I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Steve Bredhauer, at the annual Seniors Week concert in the Botanic Gardens. I arrived at the gardens early so that I could watch the colourful spectacle of a large number of senior citizens marching into Botanic Gardens carrying grey and red balloons and wearing silver hats. They call the parade the Gray Mardi Gras, and participants were rewarded at the end of their long march through the city with a variety concert. Yellow Cabs kindly provided all of the people in the street parade with a reflective wrist band, transported a number of seniors to the celebrations without cost and allowed the use of their very impressive vintage cars to lead the street parade.

It is very important that older people plan for future transport options as they age and ensure their own personal safety when walking on or near roads. Both of these issues are particularly relevant with the rapidly growing and ageing population. They are particularly important to me because in my own electorate area, the number of people aged 65 years and over represents over 12 per cent of the total number of my constituents.

Queensland's population will grow by 1.5 million in the period from 1996 to 2021. This is an increase of 45 per cent, while the aged 60-plus group will more than double over the same period. Queensland's population is ageing at more than twice the rate that it is growing. As our population increases in age, more drivers are fitting into the category of older driver. Whilst older drivers have the benefit of experience on their side, because there will gradually be more aged people on our roads, this group is one that is more at risk.

Along with other physical changes due to age, the ability to drive decreases with age. For individual drivers, this may not show up through the occurrence of crashes. It could show up, for instance, in a decreasing level of comfort with driving, as the task becomes more challenging. There is no set age at which this change occurs and it depends on individual capabilities.

Ultimately, though, all drivers will have to give up driving as they age, and this means that they will face a significant change in their level of access to transport. Loss of a licence means transition from private transport to public transport. A lot of people who are getting close to retirement think about moving to a dwelling which meets their future needs. It might be a smaller dwelling than the former family home or located somewhere that is quiet and attractive or close to family and friends. But we also need to look at how our future transport needs will be met. For example, retirement to a rural property could become very isolating without a driver's licence.

The ageing population needs to think about how they would get to the shops or to social activities and medical care, if they do not have access to a car. They will need to know where the bus routes go, how to reach the bus stop, how frequent the services are and so on. It will be important to think about whether or not they want to walk up and down a steep driveway or street—

Time expired.

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