




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 13 May 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Seniors

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.03 am): In Queensland our seniors currently represent more than 15 per cent of our state's population, and this is expected to double to 1.7 million—or one in five people—by the year 2049. The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting our most vulnerable in every way we can. The Premier regularly acknowledges the strong response from our seniors during the COVID lockdowns and their contribution to keeping all Queenslanders safe. That is why it was good to see the \$17.7 billion committed in the federal budget for an aged care reform package that responds to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and provides the potential to deliver important initiatives to seniors.

However, given Queensland's growing population of seniors, it is critical that Queensland receives its fair share of this allocation. Our seniors are some of our community's most vulnerable. This money must deliver the support needed on the ground for our seniors. While it is great to see funding to support the recruitment and training of 33,800 additional aged care workers, the poor wages regime in the aged care industry needs urgent adjustment if we are to successfully attract jobseekers to these important community care roles, particularly in a workforce shortage period such as we are beginning to see.

While aged care is primarily a federal government responsibility, the Palaszczuk government values the contribution that seniors have made to the development of our state, and we are committed to supporting them in every way we can. Our government's commitment includes almost \$450 million in support for electricity, rates, water, gas, car and boat registration concessions via Queensland Seniors Cards and more than \$10 million for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, the Seniors Enquiry Line and other support services.

The Palaszczuk government launched the Age Friendly Strategy in 2016, but given the challenges of the pandemic it is timely that we revisit and review the strategy. It is our intention to hold a series of seniors' events across the state over this term of government to give older Queenslanders the opportunity to tell us what is now important to them and to inform the development of a renewed Age Friendly Strategy. It will give government a chance to ensure that seniors are aware of the supports available to them to handle the cost-of-living pressures that affect people on fixed incomes. Advice presented by agencies such as the Queensland Police Service on home security and Queensland Health on the COVID vaccine rollout will be useful in keeping seniors connected, safe and well informed.

Our first seniors' event was held on Bribie Island on 28 April this year, and I thank the member for Pumicestone for her work in helping us put that together. We held another smaller event in Longreach during last week's community cabinet. I also met with Yarrabah elders during a community visit there last Thursday. At Bribie Island it was great to meet 94-year-old Ellie Neilsen, an internationally recognised printmaker and art teacher, and present her with flowers to acknowledge her starring role

in one of our B.OLD feature films. In Longreach I got to meet members of the CWA and the men's shed to hear what matters to them; for example, simple things like levelling footpaths and making shopfronts seniors and disability accessible. Yarrabah elders highlighted key issues relating to the NDIS, staying connected to community and country, reducing isolation and maintaining relationships with young people.

Over the coming months we propose to hold a series of events in regions including Hervey Bay, Redcliffe, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Gold Coast, Maroochydore, Cairns and potentially more. As previously announced, we are expanding Seniors Week this year to Seniors Month across the entire month of October. Bookended by the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October and National Grandparents Day on 31 October, it will support around 300 events promoting social connection. Partnering with the Council on Ageing Queensland, we have committed grant funding of \$100,000 that will provide up to \$1,000 for individual events. Applications are now open until 31 May. I look forward to meeting many more inspiring seniors across our state, and I will continue to update the House on these events throughout the term.