

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 776**

**Asked on 24 May 2011**

MR ELMES asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

### **QUESTION**

Given that Queensland is no longer referred to as the low-tax state and that in all other states and territories in Australia seniors turning 60 receive concessions on state services, will the Minister outline what consideration has been given to introducing a seniors card (not a seniors business discount card) for residents turning 60 and the cost impact on the budget of lowering the age threshold from 65 to 60?

### **ANSWER**

The Queensland Government has the widest range of concessions in Australia and is committed to assisting Queenslanders to reduce the cost of living. That is why we have increased concessions funding to \$1.385 billion in 2011–12 for concessions, retail discounts, rebates and assistance to families, pensioners and other Queenslanders in need.

A Seniors Card holder can access concessions on everyday cost of living expenses including help with rates, electricity, water, gas, train, bus and ferry travel, medical equipment and even mortgage relief.

We've increased the Pensioner Rates Subsidy by 11.11% and the SEQ Water Subsidy by 20% in addition to more than 6% increase on the Electricity Rebate, Electricity Life Support, Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession and the Natural Gas Rebate.

Social housing tenants benefit from paying only 25 per cent of household income in rent. It is equivalent to an average benefit of \$7,253 a year for 2010–11 and is expected to rise to \$8,231 a year in 2011–12. The Government will also expend an average of \$3,235 per household for maintenance in 2010–11. This is a direct concession for families because they don't have to pay for general maintenance. All up, the benefit of social housing alone can be more than \$10,000 per year.

Queensland has a two tier system of eligibility for a Seniors Card:

- residents aged 65 years or older and not working full time
- residents who are 60 to 64 years of age and not working full time who hold a Commonwealth concession card issued by Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The two tier system of eligibility for a Queensland Seniors Card ensures those residents most in need have access to Government concessions. Approximately 564,000 Queensland residents hold a Queensland Seniors Card.

The Queensland Government cares about the cost of living for Queenslanders. We know every dollar counts and the Government is committed to ensuring its extensive range of concession programs and the levels of subsidies delivered to Queenslanders are sustainable.