



Australian Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited
ACN 102 164 385

QUEENSLAND DIVISION

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025



Australian Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited (known as AIR) is a national not for profit, non-political, volunteer organisation that works to advance and protect the interests and independent lifestyle of Australians in or approaching retirement.

Queensland Division represents 4 Branches of AIR from Brisbane to Cairns including a Regional Branch.

INTRODUCTION

Australian Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited (known as AIR) was formed in Queensland in 1990. AIR is now a National, not-for-profit, non-party political, volunteer organisation. Members are Australian residents over 50 years old who intend to be or are fully or partly self-funded in retirement. AIR is the peak body representing the interests of retirees who have planned for a sustainable retirement, not wholly reliant on the Government aged pension.

Income from superannuation, private savings or defined benefits pensions are all considered self-funding.

Members of AIR have a wide range of views, however, they all expect Government policies to be fair and non-discriminatory. It is in the interests of both Federal and State Governments to adopt policies which provide incentives for all retirees to maintain a reasonable level of retirement income in order to retain their independence, contribute to the economic development of the nation and to avoid becoming a drain on the public purse. The State can help by doing the right thing for people who've done the right thing their entire lives paying their taxes and dues.

Fully and partly self-funded retirees need assistance given escalating costs, the increasing levels of inflation and the ever more uncertain world political and health situation. These factors continue to impact negatively on retirees who have limited opportunities to increase their income without added risk. Despite these factors, retirees make a significant contribution to the nation as taxpayers, family supporters and through volunteering.

The number of older Queenslanders has more than tripled over the last 40 years, to 900,000 people in 2023. Overseas migration and interstate migration have contributed to this population growth in older Queenslanders. From 2018 to 2021 Queensland saw the largest increase in retiree numbers in Australia, with more than 76,000 people moving to the State. Many of these would be fully self-funding their retirements. From 2023, 43% of Australians at retirement age were estimated to be fully self-funded compared with 22% in 2000.

In 2023 around 1 in 6 Queenslanders were 65 years or older up from around 1 in 10 in 1983.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020-21 financial year) indicates that 40% of the total population over age 45 in Queensland were retired. In March 2020, 15.7% of the Queensland population were aged 65+ and 6.6% were aged 75+. The majority of them would be eligible to vote at State elections.

The Queensland Division of AIR welcomes the opportunity to provide these Pre-Budget Priorities and requests that they are given favourable consideration when Government prepares the 2025 State Budget.

Should you require any further details in relation to this Submission or other matters pertaining to self-funded retirees, please contact:

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ISSUES of Concern

ISSUE 1 — Qualifying age for Seniors Card

ISSUE 2 — Maintain concession funding for seniors

ISSUE 3 — Provide Seniors with the same Queensland travel entitlements as Pensioners

ISSUE 4 — Reducing stamp duty when seniors downsize their principal residence

ISSUE 5 — No new or increased taxes

ISSUE 6 — Increase the Patient Travel Subsidy for accommodation

ISSUE 7— Lifting the base rate for computation of Land Tax

ISSUE 8 – Electric/personal mobility devices especially E scooters – enforcement of rules

ISSUE 9 — Cost of domestic electricity

ISSUE 10 – Driving Licence Issues

RECOMMENDATIONS:

ISSUE 1 — Qualifying age for Seniors Card

Queensland Seniors Cards are available to those aged 65 and over who are working less than 35 hours a week. In the majority of other Australian States and Territories, eligibility for the Seniors Card is 60. Given that the current Age Pension age is now 67 years there needs to be some recognition that many people cease full time work and are not eligible for any State government assistance until age 65. Australians from other States can obtain a Seniors Card at 60 and when in Queensland can obtain concessions that Queensland citizens can only obtain at age 65. This is not equitable.

ISSUE 2 — Maintain concession funding for seniors

Continue the existing level and eligibility for concessions currently available to Seniors Card holders and Pensioners.

ISSUE 3 — Provide Seniors with the same Queensland travel entitlements as Pensioners

Brisbane City Council is to be commended for introducing free off-peak travel on buses and ferries for all Seniors but Queensland Rail has not. Extend the concession entitlements that Queensland Rail (QR) currently provides to Queensland Pensioners to Queensland Seniors Card holders.

ISSUE 4 — Reducing stamp duty when seniors downsize their principal residence

Allow a reduction in the rate of transfer duty for retirees over 65 who are downsizing accommodation for health, financial hardship or other reasons. The Federal Government has taken the initiative in addressing downsizing by implementing a means of placing some of the proceeds into a superannuation fund.

ISSUE 5 — No new or increased taxes.

Stamp Duty was increased on insurance contracts. This move by the Government needs to be reversed as it has had a detrimental effect on industry and has placed an unfair burden on all involved. Insurance is an important issue with retirees.

ISSUE 6 — Increase the Patient Travel Subsidy for accommodation

The “commercial accommodation” component of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme is \$70 per person per night. This is a definite assistance to patients but requires reviewing in line with current costs. Also, the application process is still unnecessarily complex.

ISSUE 7— Lifting the base rate for computation of Land Tax

While property prices have increased markedly over the years in Queensland, the Government has not revised the base rate and/or the land tax rate bands since 2007. This has an impact particularly on retirees with investment properties. The tax-free threshold is currently \$600,000 for individuals and \$350,000 for companies and trustees. In May 2022, Sandy Bolton Independent MP for Noosa, asked the then State Labor Party Treasurer to commit to a review of the land tax valuation threshold commensurate with land valuation increases. The answer was NO. We call on the LNP to undertake a review of this impost.

ISSUE 8 – Electric/personal mobility devices especially E scooters

We are concerned about the increased number of E scooters and other personal mobility devices on local footpaths and roads and the potential danger to pedestrians, especially seniors. Lack of enforcement of the newly introduced rules seems to be the major problem. Increased and updated signage in public areas is also needed. A registration process with visible ID front and back on all electric bikes and scooters would aid in identifying any wrong doers. A warning sound when approaching pedestrians is vital, especially as many seniors have hearing issues. Pedestrians should have priority on footpaths. E bikes, skate boards and scooters should be prohibited in all Pedestrian Malls. The increasing number of recent house fires caused by charging electric devices is also alarming. Greater government control over foreign imported devices is required. We would welcome an allocation of extra funds in the Budget to help with this developing issue. The recent drone blitzes and confiscation of offenders’ devices is to be commended.

ISSUE 9 — Cost of domestic electricity

Electricity costs need to be brought under control and reduced to manageable levels. Big increases in the cost of domestic electricity over recent years have been identified as a significant concern to retirees — particularly those on limited income from investments.

ISSUE 10 – Driving Licence Issues

We commend the decision that from 1 July 2024, all licence fees will be frozen at their current level for 1 year to ease cost-of-living pressures for Queenslanders. However, there are no concessions for seniors or pensioners licence fees offered in Queensland. The medical certificate required for drivers aged over 75 is not required in all Australian States and Territories. Self-disclosure of medical issues is all that is required. Consistency is needed for all Australians no matter where they reside.

In NSW, from age 85 you can opt for a modified licence, allowing driving only within your local area. We encourage the Queensland government to consider this option.

Linking organ donation to the Queensland driving licence: In Queensland you can no longer register to be a donor when applying for or renewing your driver’s licence. The current system also no longer allows ‘donor’ to be clearly visible on Queensland driver’s licences. The current level of donors is very low in Australia and by instigating this small change the situation would likely improve.

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