

NSW Government Response

Council on the Ageing NSW Election Platform 2019

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government thanks the Council on the Ageing NSW for the opportunity to address their State Election Platform 2019.

Health and wellbeing

1. Allocate funds for the development and implementation of diverse, scalable free or low-cost programs that offer a range of exercise options for older people as they age.

The NSW Ageing Strategy Year Three Action Plan was launched on Wednesday 20 February 2019. The Plan describes initiatives to be undertaken in the third year of the Strategy and builds on actions undertaken in the first two years. It includes both new and existing actions that seek to positively influence outcomes for older people, including in the area of health and wellbeing.

For example, the Getting Active Plan aims to increase physical activity in older people by partnering with sporting codes to address the barriers older people face when looking to stay fit and healthy in older age. Initial funding was provided to Football NSW, Netball NSW and Gymnastics NSW in 2017. Funding has also been provided to Table Tennis NSW, Softball NSW and Basketball NSW to expand the range and reach of the modified sports program. Further funding has been committed to Football NSW to expand the Walking Football pilots into regional NSW. To date, 607 older citizens have participated in the program with a projected further 1,200 participants as the program continues to be rolled out across NSW.

The NSW Government is also supporting older people to remain active through the NSW Seniors Card – Fitness Industry Partnerships program. In 2019, NSW Seniors Card will be working to recruit more fitness-oriented businesses into the program, to support older citizens to live healthier, happier and more active lives.

Through the Liveable Communities grant program, COTA NSW was funded in 2017-18 to pilot the 'Living Longer, Living Stronger' program in NSW. The program is designed to increase participants strength, balance, flexibility, coordination and confidence, as well as reducing their risk of falls; and increase opportunities for socialising and reducing social isolation

COTA NSW was also funded through Liveable Communities in 2017-18 to deliver Cycling Without Age, which aims to bring people together by sharing experiences on a bike. The program involved local volunteers to visit local aged care and senior citizens facilities, and offer older people an opportunity to be a passenger on a Trishaw.

Further to this, NSW Active Ageing includes a number of free and low-cost programs that offer a range of exercise options for older people living in the community. These include

- Stepping On which is a free community program implemented across NSW aimed at preventing falls and encouraging active living in older adults,
- Staying Active which is an initiative aimed at increasing community-based physical activity and social opportunities for older people, and
- the Active and Healthy website which provides an up-to-date directory to help older adults find physical activity and falls prevention programs that they can participate in.

2. Fund the expansion of NSW Health’s Hospital in the Home (HITH) program and Clinical Nurse Specialist positions, with a focus on regional and rural areas with ageing populations.

Hospital in the Home (HITH) is delivered from most major metropolitan and rural public hospitals in NSW with over 60 services across the state.

In 2017-18, \$6.7 million was allocated recurrently across all Districts to strengthen clinical leadership and grow HITH services in NSW. Far West Local Health District was able to establish its first HITH service at Broken Hill with the funding.

NSW Health is committed to providing patient-centred, value-based healthcare. HITH is an innovative model of care that supports the key directions of NSW Health and a key strategy of the NSW Health Plan – Towards 2021.

HITH means that, when appropriate, an older person is able to receive hospital level care in the comfort of their own home, including a residential care facility where applicable. The NSW HITH model and other community based services support ageing in place.

The expansion of HITH services is in line with the growth in health care services across the state and with an ageing population, the services will be directed to managing the health needs of the older population where clinically appropriate.

Local Health Districts are responsible for determining their nursing workforce, including Clinical Nurse Specialist positions, to be responsive to models of care and local population needs.

Housing choices

1. Decrease the eligibility age from 80 to 67 for inclusion on the NSW Housing priority waiting list for public housing.

The NSW Government, through the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) allocates properties off its social housing waitlist based on the circumstances of the people waiting and the length of time applicants have been waiting. Tenants who are in need of urgent assistance and cannot meet that need in the private market, are approved for priority housing and are offered housing ahead of other applicants on the NSW Housing Waitlist. For those able to satisfy their need of housing assistance in the private rental market, FACS makes private rental products available including the Rent Start Bond Loan and Tenancy Guarantee which assist clients establish a private rental tenancy. Additionally, FACS has properties allocated specifically for seniors over the age of 55 years across the State. Furthermore, the social and affordable housing fund will deliver an additional 3,400 social and affordable housing homes across NSW, with a particular focus on vulnerable older women in housing stress.

2. Set standards to include an annual target of 75% of new social and affordable housing dwellings designed to a minimum Gold Livable Housing standard.

The NSW Government is currently underway with the biggest social housing building program in the country. Through Communities Plus, the NSW Government is building 23,500 new and replacement social and affordable housing dwellings over the next 10 years. Each home is internally designed and built to Silver level standard under the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines to ensure they are easily adaptable for residents with disabilities and those with limited mobility.

3. Fund the establishment of a state-wide older people's housing information and support service to bring together fragmented resources and reduce the risk of homelessness.

The Department of Family and Community Services, funds Mission Australia, through the Tenant Participation and Community Engagement program to link FACS housing tenants to outreach, advocacy and support services that can assist them to manage their tenancies and participate in their communities.

Further, the NSW Government funds tenancy advice and advocacy services through two main avenues: by providing funding to the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program and through Fair Trading's contact centres, engagement and complaints unit and compliance and enforcement activities. Fair Trading's free tenancy complaints service provides impartial advice to both tenants and landlords and makes suggestions as to the best way to finalise the complaint.

The Liberal National Government has also introduced new mediation services within NSW Fair Trading for retirement village disputes, improving the availability and cost-effectiveness of dispute resolution options for retirement village residents in NSW. The service is free for retirement village residents and operators and is conducted on-site at a resident's village by skilled mediators from Fair Trading.

4. Reduction in stamp duty for people 70+ purchasing owner occupier properties that have been built to Liveable Housing standard.

The NSW Government has abolished eight taxes since 2011, and provided over \$5 billion in tax cuts since the 2016-17 Budget, while also providing record funding for better services and new infrastructure across NSW. We have also cut stamp duty through indexation of stamp duty thresholds.

Support for pensioners is provided in a number of areas. This includes concessions in relation to motor vehicle registrations, driver's licences, travel on public transport, energy bills and property and water rates. Concessions are also provided for ambulance services, the Community Transport Program and Home and Community Care services and pharmaceuticals.

5. Create a legislative and regulatory environment that supports innovative housing models which allow older people to choose where they live.

Retirement Villages

One of the priorities of this Government was to amend the Retirement Villages Act 1999 to provide residents with immediate benefits following the Inquiry.

The Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2018 (the Amendment Act) was passed by Parliament on 28 November 2018, bringing in a raft of changes and improvements.

The Amendment Act was developed in response to the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry and delivers on a range of key improvements for residents and the sector, including:

- minimum standards around safety and emergency plans and awareness of evacuation procedures,
- annual contract 'check-ups' to give residents clarity around the process involved when leaving a village and, most importantly, the costs involved,
- mandatory rules of conduct for operators, with penalties for non-compliance,
- improved transparency around maintenance and replacement costs through an asset management plan, which will be available to current and prospective residents,

- a consent process for the appointment of a village's auditor, putting power back in the hands of residents, and
- enhanced powers for Fair Trading to collect, share and publish retirement village sector information.

The Amendment Act represents just the first set of reforms to be implemented by this Government in response to the Inquiry. In February 2019, the Liberal National Government announced that it intends to enact further recommendations of the Inquiry by introducing mandatory buy back provisions and a cap on recurrent service charges under the Retirement Villages Act 1999.

Under the proposed changes, a 42-day limit will be applied to operators and villages for the length of time that they will be able to charge residents for general services once they have exited the village. Additionally, the changes will require operators to either sell, or buy back, a unit within six months of the resident's departure, when living in metropolitan areas, or 12 months if they are located in a regional area.

These proposed changes are designed to save departing retirement village residents thousands of dollars and return their hard earning money that is often needed to move into aged care or make other arrangements sooner.

Residential tenancies

In 2018, the NSW Parliament also passed reforms to ensure that tenants also have stronger protections. These reforms included conferring on the Commissioner for Fair Trading the power to order repairs be undertaken to tenanted residential properties, prescribing that landlords must consent to certain minor modifications and, for the first time in NSW, setting out minimum standards with which tenanted properties must comply.

Building laws

The NSW Government has also committed to improving building standards. If re-elected the NSW Government will:

1. **Appoint a Building Commissioner:** the NSW Government will appoint an expert Building Commissioner to act as the consolidated building regulator in NSW.
2. **Overhaul compliance reporting:** new laws that require building practitioners involved in designing buildings to submit building plans to the Commissioner (so that they may be audited), declare that the plans are BCA compliant and meet other relevant requirements and provide reports explaining why that is the case for performance solutions. Builders will also have to declare that their buildings are constructed in accordance with these plans. It will be an offence to knowingly or recklessly declare non-compliant plans or fail to lodge the documents on time. Disciplinary action will be able to be taken against practitioners who improperly make these declarations.
3. **Require building practitioners with reporting obligations to be registered:** ensure that building plans are completed accurately by having the Building Commissioner register the building practitioners who can lawfully make a declaration that plans are compliant or make a declaration that plans accurately reflect a building's as-constructed design. These practitioners will have to maintain the necessary skills and insurance to meet the registration requirements and will be subject to disciplinary action for professional misconduct.
4. **Ensure that there is an industry wide duty of care to homeowners:** clarify the law to ensure that building practitioners owe a duty of care to owners' corporations and subsequent

titleholders of residential developments, as well as unsophisticated construction clients who are small businesses. This means that homeowners will have a right to compensation when they suffer damage because of a building practitioner's negligence.

Getting around

1. Double annual funding to the Accessible Transport Program to \$266 million to expedite the completion of train station accessibility upgrades.

The Transport Access Program (TAP) is an initiative to provide a better experience for public transport customers by delivering accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure. The NSW Liberals & Nationals recognises the importance of improving accessible facilities and services across the network for those with disability or limited mobility. TAP is a key initiative of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2022 which is a commitment to deliver programs that improve accessibility of the transport network.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has invested more than \$2 billion through the Transport Access Program since 2011, with more than 450 projects either completed or underway. Since coming to government, we have upgraded 52 stations to make them wheelchair accessible but we recognise that there is more to do. I am pleased to advise that a further 68 train stations and 14 ferry wharves will receive upgrades such as new lifts, ramps and footbridges to make them more accessible under a re-elected NSW Liberals & Nationals Government. It is anticipated that at the completion of these works approximately 80% of the network will be accessible, with over 98% of customers having access to an accessible interchange.

2. Create an Active Transport Infrastructure Commissioner responsible for ensuring that planning for all new and existing community residential developments pay attention to active transport infrastructure, particularly footpaths.

Thanks to the strong economic management of the NSW Liberals and Nationals Government, we have committed to investing a further \$197 million into walking and cycling infrastructure over the next four years. This will bring the NSW Liberals and Nationals total investment to over \$600 million, the largest commitment in the State's history.

The NSW Liberals and Nationals Government's *Future Transport 2056 Strategy* sets the 40 year vision, directions and outcomes framework for customer mobility in NSW, which will guide transport investment over the longer term. The Strategy is the first transport plan in Australia to harness technology to improve customer and network outcomes, and it starts with a long term vision for our communities. For the first time, we have aligned how we plan the future of the transport network, including walking and cycling, with how Transport for NSW plans land usage by working closely with key stakeholders such as the Greater Sydney Commission, Infrastructure NSW and the Department of Planning and Environment. Further information about our vision for an integrated multi-modal transport network is available at future.transport.nsw.gov.

The NSW Liberals and Nationals Government is focused on cycling projects in line with *Future Transport Strategy 2056*. The Strategy identifies the government's 40-year vision for transport planning to meet the demands of the predicted population growth in NSW. The strategy prioritises the delivery of connected cycling networks within 10 kilometres of metropolitan city centres by 2026, and within five kilometres of strategic centres by 2036. This vision supports the Greater

Sydney Commission's objective of achieving a 30-minute city, where people live within 30 minutes of their workplace or services via active or public transport.

3. Provide funding to local councils to improve access to transport and shopping precincts by upgrading unsafe footpaths and streets and other impediments to safe access.

Since 2011 the Office of Local Government has allocated more than \$1.1 billion to NSW councils including funding from the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, Stronger Communities Fund, Companion Animal Fund and Innovation Fund.

As locally elected and largely independent bodies, Councils are the appropriate body to make decisions on behalf of the community about allocating public resources.

RMS also has funding programs and develops policies, technical directions and guidelines for road crossing facilities for pedestrians. See <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/business-industry/partners-suppliers/lgr/active-transport/walking.html>

Inclusive communities

1. Provide and promote information in a range of accessible formats and languages to older people in NSW.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) leads the implementation of the NSW Ageing Strategy 2016-2020. As the lead agency, FACS aims to ensure no-one is disadvantaged because they do not speak English, or have difficulty speaking English, or because of their cultural or religious background. FACS provides translated information in 24 languages to help people learn about the services FACS offers.

FACS also provides its internet website content in an accessible format for people with visual impairments.

Consultation regarding the next iteration of the ageing strategy will include targeted activity to ensure the voices of older people are included.

2. Reinstate funding for Sector Support Officers to support the implementation of the NSW Ageing Strategy through community development initiatives, realisation of local ageing strategies and capacity building of service providers.

I am advised it is difficult to determine what positions the questions is referring to.

Service Sector Development Officers (SSDOs) were funded by ADHC to support capacity of service providers to deliver principally disability services.

HACC Community Support Officers were funded 66 per cent from the Federal Government and 33 per cent from ADHC. The HACC roles ceased being funded by ADHC in 2018. Their role was to support Home and Community Care (HACC) service delivery in local government areas. Prior to the NDIS, HACC services were provided to older people and some people with disability. The roles have also supported general ageing and disability work in many local government areas.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring older people in NSW understand and embrace the inherent benefits of living longer. This year we continue to build on major aspects of the NSW Ageing

Strategy to ensure today's generation of seniors are more independent, healthy and socially connected.

In 2018-19, \$8.8 million has been allocated to implement the NSW Ageing Strategy.

The NSW Government is providing \$600,000 in Liveable Communities grants for local community projects to help local councils, NGOs and businesses to deliver active living, accessibility, and mobility projects for older people.

We are also providing \$650,000 to the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit to provide information, support and referrals relating to the abuse of older people living in the community.

The NSW Government has committed an additional \$50,000 in 2018-19 for a phone-based case coordination trial which extends the services provided by the Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit.

We are investing \$500,000 for the Seniors Card program, to expand the number of businesses offering discounts for key living expenses, especially in rural and remote areas.

We are also investing \$1.7M to continue to deliver the NSW Seniors Festival, which is just one of the ways the government celebrates and recognises seniors for their valued contributions to their families and communities across the state.

Modern technology has changed the way we communicate and stay connected with our loved ones. Interactive and social media can build new communities, connect people and combat isolation, and allow access to a host of new services.

We are committed to ensuring that seniors fully benefit from the opportunities technology offers, so I'm pleased that we are continuing funding for the very successful Tech Savvy Seniors program with an additional \$500,000 in 2018-19.

3. Provide recurrent funding (3-5 year funding period) for community-based social support programs that target isolated and vulnerable older people experiencing loneliness.

The NSW Ageing Strategy 2016-2020 is the NSW Government's commitment to respond to the opportunities and challenges of our ageing population. The priority area 'Inclusive Communities' focuses on keeping older people in NSW connected and contributing to their communities. Each year, projects and initiatives shift and evolve over the remaining years of the Strategy as outcomes are assessed and learnings are integrated.

The Strategy is currently in its third year and includes new and existing programs that promote social engagement and staying connected. For example, the NSW Seniors Card program will continue to operate and will increase the geographic spread of businesses offering discounts to older people. The program will deliver more major corporate partnerships to reduce the cost of living for older people, while supporting them to be active and healthy.

We will also be undertaking a new initiative to determine the proportion of local government areas that factor age-friendliness into community plans. From this, we will promote resources for creating Ageing Friendly communities such as the Integrated Age-Friendly Planning Toolkit for Local Government in NSW to all local councils.