



Summary

Factors about Qld

- 125 Councils across Queensland
- The most decentralised population in Australia
- The highest growth in population in Australia 2.3% (ABS)
- In 2000 there was a higher percentage of over 65 living outside the capital city
- Trends for 2021 still show that the communities with the highest median age groups are rural and remote Councils
- Decline in rural community capacity to support the elderly
- Decline in professional expertise in rural and remote areas
- The issues regarding the ageing a specific and varied depending on the location of the Local Government
- Local Governments can deliver services as long as
 - they are fully funded (including all administration and overheads)
 - application, reporting and acquittal red tape is reduced
 - professional staff and management can be employed

General Provision of Service by Local Government directed to the Aged

- Respite Care/HACC
- Home Assist/Home Secure

Where programs are externally funded they are often topped up by in-kind and Council general revenue sources. Councils would like Commonwealth funding direct hence less reporting and red tape.

- Community Centres
- Council owned aged housing

Some general Council services are provided to the aged and funded by rates and charges. Many Councils offer pensioner remissions which deflates the Council's ability to fund additional Aged Care services. Rates remissions provided by Local Government to pensioners was \$30.345 million in 2000/01 and increased by 3.7% to \$31.475 million in 2002/03.

Given Council's limited powers to raise revenue this is a significant contribution to the sector.

As the proportion of self funded retirees increases Councils are coming under increasing pressure to provide a remission to these ratepayers.

Rising land prices and reduced capacity to pay by elderly residents have continually ignited the rating burden debate for Local Government. The following examples relate to comments on the issue in the last two weeks.

Sunshine Coast Daily (Maroochydore), 08/05/2003, General News, Page 4, ClipRef 7546337, ByLine: Peter Hall

Caloundra pensioners are seeking a rates rebate concession increase in response to hiking rates charges. Caloundra City Council have signalled they are prepared to review the rate as part of this years financial plan.

Gold Coast Sun, 07/05/2003, General News, Page 31, ClipRef 7539506, ByLine: Pauline Griffin

A letter to the editor on the issue of property rates on the Gold Coast. The correspondent argued rates were increasing so that the Gold Coast City Council could price people out of their homes for development purposes.

Gold Coast Sun, 07/05/2003, General News, Page 47, ClipRef 7539605, ByLine: Marilyn MacKenzie

A special budget committee meeting of the Gold Coast City Council has rejected the call by the Concerned Ratepayers Group for either a rate freeze or an averaging method to calculate any rise. The rise in property values in the area has seen unimproved capital valuations increase significantly and the Group says many retirees and pensioners are being forced to move elsewhere.

These are not isolated issues and are not new. What is new is the growing percentage of people in the community who fall into the retiree/aged pensioner category. Council are being slowly squeezed between the decision to provide services, the increase in costs and the want to develop equitable ways to raise revenues within the community.

Where then does it shift the burden too? Young families or those trying to save for self funded retirement? Is this possible in small communities where more than 30% of the population is aged?

Planning for the Ageing.

Most Council are aware of the growth in the aged but few have come to grips with the magnitude of the impact at a local level.

Many are approving aged care facilities with knowing if the development is meeting the needs of the residents.

Most Councils do not have skilled professionals that can evaluate social planning issues or the resources to engage consultants to do the work.

Large centres like Brisbane and the Gold Coast have undertaken a lot of work in the area however their stories are individual because of individual circumstances.

Ageing in Rural Areas

The ageing of rural residents is not only having an impact on the aged care services it is having an impact on the fabric of rural and remote communities.

Populations are declining as the population ages. This is creating communities that no longer have the capacity to support themselves. Those who were local volunteers for the aged are now the aged.

Service delivery is inhibited because there is no longer the experience in the community to deliver. Local Government is currently bearing the brunt of this phenomenon. The ageing western Council's CEOs are retiring and professionals are no longer willing to move to the areas to fill these gaps. Small Councils are starting to offer packages of \$120K + to attract CEOs. Funds they cannot afford.

Local Governments cannot provide extra services for the ageing when they are struggling to provide the basics of administration and management in the local area.

The Dept of Local Government and Planning has provided forward statistics to 2021 on the projected ages of populations. 62 Council areas will have populations with a higher than median age by 2021. Median age being 40 in 2021. Of those 29 Council areas will have a median age of 45+.

The following table shows the Shire with the highest medium ages for 2021.

Shire	Median Age 2021	Percentage of Population 65+ (state average 16.8%) 2021
Bauhinia	49	21.7%
Flinders	49	22.4%
Stanthorpe	49	25.8%
Tara	49	27.4%

Isis	50	26.1%
Monto	50	31.8%
Wambo	50	27.1%
Warroo	50	27.7%
Wondai	51	31.5%
Nanango	52	31.6%
Etheridge	53	27.2%
Redcliffe*	53	31.3%
Taroom	55	30.9%
Biggenden	56	36.8%
Mt Morgan	60	37.7%

Only one of these Shires is coastal.

The magnitude of the issue of delivering service to the aged in these communities can only be highlighted by showing the distance factors involved to the coast where the majority of services are offered.

Shire	Services Available	Km	Time to travel without break
Etheridge	Cairns	405 km	5 hrs 40 min
Flinders	Townsville	381 km	4 hours 35 min
Bauhinia	Rockhampton	348 km	3 hours 50 min
Taroom	Brisbane	466 km	6 hours 10 min
Warroo	Brisbane	556 km	7 hours 20 min

The make up of the aged is also a consideration for dealing with the future service needs. The current gender splits of the 65+ group provides an insight into complexity.

Central West Queensland Statistical District 2001 (ABS)

Shire	Males 65+ 2001 %	Females 65+ 2001%
Aramac	57%	43%
Barcaldine	51%	49%
Barcoo	64%	36%
Blackall	51%	49%
Boulia	65%	35%
Diamantina	64%	36%
Ilfracombe	67%	33%
Isisford	88%	13%
Longreach*	50%	50%
Tambo	58%	42%
Winton	56%	44%
QLD	45%	55%

* Longreach has an equal gender split of 65+

This example shows that elderly males currently dominate the ageing population in remote areas.

Local government would like the aged cared for locally.

Tara

Tara Shire raised the issue of housing the aged in 1997. Their comments were:

“Aged lifetime law abiding residents are forced to become residents of Homes in regional centres away from their relatives and this can then be seen as regionalisation in its cruellest form.people who have been community minded and worked for years for the betterment of their town..... have to relocate when they are less able to cope”

The situation has not changed and a number of small remote Councils continually raise the issue.

Cloncurry

North West Star (Mt Isa), 13/05/2003, General News, Page 7, ClipRef 7597567

Cloncurry residents will meet tomorrow to seek the support of the Shire Council to keep aged care hostel William Presley Place open. Council has argued previously that it does not have the funds to refurbish the low-level care hostel to meet accreditation standards.

North West Star (Mt Isa), 08/05/2003, General News, Page 6, ClipRef 7545008

An editorial on the issue of preventing the closure of the William Presley Place aged hostel in Cloncurry. `The community had clearly shown the council what it wants - it is now up to the council to heed the advice and for the committee to come up with alternatives to keep the hostel open.`

Cloncurry Shire Council has now closed the 15 bed centre. The facility was built in 1991-92 and is only eleven years old. It required a \$1 million upgrade to continue operating. Bluecare wanted \$300,000 per annum to run the facility but the Council could not find those funds in its budget.

The issue is economies of scale. A 40+ bed facility may have a chance of breaking even but few remote communities could sustain that number of beds. Larger communities have the economies of scale and the local Council is not asked to provide a community service obligation to top up the tin.

The legislation and compliance issues are written for coastal communities. There needs to be cost efficient ways of providing safety and other compliances that do not place such a burden as to close facilities.

Even when a remote area can provide the facilities and funds there are few suitable staff to manage that facilities.

The solution suggested is a partnership by Commonwealth, State and Local Governments in such situations.

Commonwealth	Capital outlays
State	Operational Funding
Local	Bed Licenses

Cloncurry Shire would be happy to be a test case for a three government partnership.

Blackall

***Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton), 13/05/2003, General News, Page 7,
ClipRef 7599330, ByLine: Natalie Smith***

An aged-care facility will be constructed in Blackall, enabling older residents in the area to stay closer to home. Currently the closest facility is in Longreach

Information to Support the
PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO
LONG TERM STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS
THE AGEING OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION
OVER THE NEXT 40 YEARS.

Hearing with the LGAQ in Brisbane on the 20th May 2003.

Background:

The LGAQ participated in the above Inquiry by forwarding a submission to the Standing Committee in January 2003. The Association outlined concerns under the following headings:

1. Cost Shifting and the Aged
2. Pensioner Rates Remissions and Rates Assistance Arrangements and Local Government Revenue
3. Aged Housing and Affordable Housing Options for the Aged
4. Community or Social Services (HACC, CAP and Senior Citizens Centres)
5. Health and Medical Services.

As a result of our submission the Association was then invited to participate in a face-to-face meeting with the Committee in Brisbane. Notification of this meeting was very short allowing for only the briefest of consultation with Local Government. A circular was posted on LGAQ net requesting feedback and information disseminated via the Social Policy Advisory's email groupings.

Response to request for feedback

Responses were received from the following Councils:

- Townsville
- Miriam Vale
- Bundaberg
- Sarina
- Brisbane
- Noosa
- Nanango
- Maroochy

Notes from these conversations are attached.

This relationship incurs less reporting requirement and red tape than an arrangement whereby State Government is also involved.

The concerns:

- **How do Councils plan for the future?** Need support to identify future needs (housing, recreational, health etc). Most Councils do not have the people, skills and resources to do this work. Even Councils like Brisbane raise the point that they are approving planning applications (for aged care facilities and the like) without really knowing what they are doing. **What is best practice?**
- Strong concerns that an ageing population puts the brakes on Council's **ability to increase rates**.
- Concerns re **land values** in areas where property values rising, in some cases forcing older people out of the area. Many people in retirement homes in Agnes Waters area are from Sydney (disconnection from family issues).
- **Regional centers** (Bundaberg for example) expressed serious concern about the increase in demand for services (particularly health and medical services) as a high growth area – services not keeping pace. Additional pressure on Council.
- Some concerns re HACC funding from Feds (which comes via State) re. Red tape. Three levels of Govt involved.

- With a population cap in place current demographic projections indicate (study completed for Council last year looking at anticipated demographics given the population cap through to 2016) that by 2016 over 50% of the Shire's population will be over 50 years of age - and this is a conservative estimate.
- This will have an impact on the Shire's capacity to provide the necessary social infrastructure in terms of age care facilities, accessible public transport, accessible services etc. Lack of public transport for example is impacting on seniors living in the hinterland areas especially as they approach the age when for medical reasons they are no longer able to drive.
- Given the rising costs of land/houses within the Shire (which are being pushed up due to the population cap and the limited availability of land suitable for development), Seniors who find themselves in this position are being forced out of the Shire as they cannot afford to relocate within Noosa. As such the issue of housing affordability is of particular concern to Council at present.
- Related to the above is the provision of accessible services given the lack of public transport and State Govt policy directions regarding centralisation of key services into major centres - for example Maroochydore. In the absence of public transport many Seniors (especially those needing to access medical services) are also being forced into relocating elsewhere.
- Whilst Council certainly recognises the need for forward planning in terms of social infrastructure it is anticipated will be required to accommodate an ageing population (for example Senior Citizens Centre/upgrades to existing facilities to make them more accessible to those with mobility problems etc), concern has been raised as to Council and the community's capacity to attract the necessary level of funding to address such. It being noted that given the population cap and govt policy re key centres it will be increasingly difficult for Noosa to attract State and Federal funding to assist with the provision of necessary services and facilities.

Brisbane City

- See attached – BCC will make their own presentation to the Committee.

Sarina Shire

- See attached

Maroochy Shire (Manager CD)

- Agree with points raised in LGAQ paper.

Bundaberg Shire (Manager Corp Ser)

- Significant aged pop- retirement villages (one with approx 1000 residents)
- As a regional centre a lot of pressure espec. health and medical
- Impossible to attract medical specialists

Proposed Discussion Paper RE:- OLDER RESIDENTS PLAN SARINA SHIRE.

* **Rights of Older People:-**

Indipendence
Participation
Care
Self-fulfilment
Dignity

* **Council Role:-**

PLANNER Participation in Service coordination.
Networking -Policy development.
Research, Analysis and
recommending appropriate directions.

PROVIDER Delivering of community services
as required for the municipality
and the Region.

ADVOCATE Identifying and advocating for the
needs of the needs of the community
to all level of Government and
private Industry.

* **Action Plan Development :-**

* Home and Community Care
* Food Services
* Caring for Carers
* Leisure and Social support
* Volunteers
* Health and Well-being
* Accomodation
* Safety and Security
* Mobility and Transport
* Choice and Affordability
* Public Relation and Promotion/Marketing
* Education and Information
* Urban Planning

* **To Identify :-**

* Council Responsibility
* Associated Agencies
* Performance Indicators
* Timing

Older People in Brisbane Today

- 2001 - 218,224 people over 60 living in Brisbane - 14.6% of the city's population of 1,490,475 (a slight decrease from 1996 of 14.7%).
- By 2050, 25% of Brisbane's population will be over 60.
- Women can expect to live to 80.4 years, 6 years longer than men.

Older People in Brisbane Today

- Most older people live in their own homes until their mid-seventies.
- Most people are fully retired by age 65.
- Most older people are supported by the pension.
- Most have good health, but need support services as they age.

Projections

- 60+ population of Queensland will increase by 10% by the year 2031.
- The fastest growth rate is in the 30+ age group.
- The number of people aged 60-69 will rise slowly at first, then rapidly from 2007.
- All older age groups will steadily increase in size.

Projections

- The old-age dependency ratio will rise rapidly from 2011.
- The proportion of women in the older population will increase.
- Many people will extend their working lives beyond 65.
- A lower proportion of older people will rely on a pension; more will be self-funded, or funded by superannuation.

Key issues

- Major labour market shift to older workers
- Health, housing and care needs
- Active community involvement post-retirement
- Disadvantage, discrimination, victimisation
- Transport and mobility
- Technological change

Local Government Role

- Some effects same for everyone - ageing workforce, need to adapt services to older population, impact of technological change.
- No involvement in income support.
- Will stay out of direct service and support provision unless fully funded by other levels of government.

Local Government Role

- Key provider in transport - need to address access issues and specific needs of older people.
- A significant role in active ageing/community participation agenda - recreation, community development, library services, public facilities, etc.
- Housing needs of older people - significant impact on Council planning schemes.

BCC Activities for Older People

- Brisbane Seniors Online
- GOLD, Walking for Pleasure
- Pans of Concert Program
- Council Cab
- Rates Rebates
- Flexible approach to core business.
- Facilities - bowls clubs, senior citizens centres, etc.
- Library activities - high use by older people.

Our Future Challenge

- Move from isolated activities to integrated strategy.
- Creating an older person friendly organisation - for all areas of business.
- Our own workforce - focus on retention, HR impacts of labour shortage.

13 January 2003

Committee Secretary - Dr Margot Kerley
Standing Committee on Ageing
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Kerley

Long Term Strategies to Address the Ageing of the Australian Population over the Next 40 Years.

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) welcomes the Federal Government's enquiry into the issues impacting upon Australia as a result of the ageing of the population. The ageing of the population, particularly combined with the shift in demographic, is an issue of concern for Queensland Local Government.

The LGAQ policy statement makes it very clear that we understand the issues affecting the ageing to be primarily a State Government responsibility, however Local Government has a coordination, facilitation and advocacy role to play to ensure aged issues are adequately addressed.

Please find following a list of the concerns that the LGAQ would like to see the Parliamentary Committee consider on behalf of Queensland Local Government.

1. Cost shifting and the Aged

Local Government in Queensland is responsive to Community needs in a local setting. With respect to issues arising from the proportion of older people in the community, it is unlikely that there will be a uniform response across the 125 Councils in Queensland.

Issues thought to be relevant to Local Government responses include:

- Pensioner Rates remissions, rates assistance arrangements and special discounts for dog registrations, bus fares, entrance to Council facilities etc
- Aged Housing (directly and indirectly)
- Community or social services (HACC, Senior Citizens Centres)
- Health and medical services

The fact that the proportion of older people in our communities is increasing will have its affect on the use of services and programs provided by Local Government. We are in an era of extreme pressure on the capacity of communities to fund basic Council services and operations, with decreasing (in real terms) revenues from other levels of government.

2. Pensioner Rates Remissions and rates assistance arrangements and Local Government Revenue

The Queensland State Government provides a subsidy for pensioner rates remission. This subsidy would be universally applied across Queensland Local Government, as it is a scheme which provides up to \$180 subsidy for rates and charges payable by pensioners with respect to their principal place of residence. Councils may have their own pensioner rates assistance arrangements, and if they do, the scheme will usually "piggy back" or be aligned with the criteria for eligibility for the State subsidy.

Councils administer the State Pensioner Subsidy scheme at a local level, managing the application and approval process, and claiming subsidy allowed to eligible pensioners. This scheme has been in place for over a decade, and while systems have been streamlined, there are administration costs associated with the scheme borne by local governments.

Rates assistance for (mainly) pensioners can also be provided through arrangements to defer debt recovery until ownership of the property passes to the owner's estate. This could have an impact on Council's cash flows and involve more intensive administration of the rating activity for those properties.

In addition pensioner discounts for dog registrations, swimming pool entrance fees, bus fares and the like are common in the majority of Local Governments in Queensland. This assistance has been factored into the operations of Councils over many decades and reflect similar assistance provided by other levels of government and private enterprise.

The obvious result of an increase in the number of people in this category increasing, coupled with a decrease in the group who pay full rates and charges, is a drop in revenue. As well, there continues to be considerable pressure on Local Government, from State and Federal Government and the community, to extend these discounts to other groups within the community.

Local Government tries to accommodate this as much as possible by providing support to a wide range of individuals and community organisations, however the capacity to extend this is limited.

3. Aged Housing and Affordable Housing options for the aged

Many Councils directly provide Aged accommodation/housing for pensioners in their communities. This can be as an accident of history - Pensioner Units taken over by Council from an expiring Community organisation in the 50's, or as a deliberate decision by Council to help retain members of the community in the town.

Generally, the State Government has provided the majority of the Capital cost of constructing such accommodation. Councils typically contribute at least 10% of required funds plus the land and services to the land.

The ongoing operation and maintenance costs are borne by the Council, funded by rental income from pensioner tenants. Anecdotal evidence is that full cost recovery from rentals is not always achieved, and that Council's general fund supports this activity. Indirectly, Councils are often requested to assist community organisations with a social welfare/aged care charitable focus. Meals on Wheels rate remissions, and grants to Senior Citizens centre programs are commonplace.

The well documented lack of affordable housing options in some parts of the state is a high level concern for the LGAQ. This issue impacts heavily upon the aged, particularly in regional and remote parts of the state where the population is ageing is above the state average. In these areas the Local Council may have taken on the role of housing provider and manager. This presents a considerable challenge to smaller councils who are very often not adequately resourced to provide this service and do not have access to support networks in the local area.

4. Community or social services (HACC, Senior Citizens Centres)

In Queensland, some Councils have taken on the role of co-ordination of the Home And Community Care scheme, although most such schemes would usually be managed by a community organisation. Again, anecdotal evidence is that since the program's inception, the amount of grant funds has gradually (and increasingly) fallen short of the actual costs of the scheme. Councils operating HACC schemes directly are forced to make up the difference from general revenue, and where community organisations are involved, it would be common for the local council to provide some assistance.

Senior Citizens Centres are also provided and resourced by Councils in Queensland to varying extents. One model is for the Council to provide and maintain the building, while a Committee manages activities. Other models see the Council providing resources for the programs as well.

5. Health and medical services

Many Councils in Queensland provide immunisation services, usually directed at children immunisation against common childhood diseases. However, the service is available free to all age groups for ADT (adult diphtheria and tetanus) at least, and possibly other vaccinations.

In rural and remote areas, there are instances of Councils purchasing medical centres to ensure that basic medical services are provided to their communities, especially aged and young people who might not have transport options available to travel for basic medical services.

The Association would appreciate being kept informed of the Parliamentary Committee's progress and request that we be placed on your data base.

The Association's contact on this matter is **Desley Renton, Social Policy Advisor on 30002216 (desley_renton@lgaq.asn.au).**

I hope that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hoffman PSM
Director, Policy and Representation