

2022 – 2023 Queensland Government State Budget and what it means for Older Queenslanders



COTA Queensland

June 2022

COTA QUEENSLAND 2022-23 QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT BUDGET ANALYSIS

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland is the peak body for Queensland seniors. COTA has advanced the rights, needs and futures of older Queenslanders since 1957. COTA helps guide government legislation and policies to shape more supportive community attitudes towards ageing and older people. COTA helps foster social change by providing leadership and expert advice on ageing issues, working with other stakeholder groups across Queensland.

The 2022-2023 Queensland State Budget did not contain any new initiatives targeted specifically at older Queenslanders' funding for elder abuse prevention and seniors' legal advice has increased. Older Queenslanders are consumers of Queensland health services and accordingly they will benefit from increased funding allocated to health services and infrastructure. However, patience will be required, it will take a number of years before the increased health capacity is available.

No new initiatives or funding was announced for social housing, however, the joint social housing development project with the Brisbane Housing Company provides more certainty over new social housing construction. The information presented below is largely taken from the 2022/23 Queensland Budget documents that are available at: <https://budget.qld.gov.au/>

1. Health

The government is providing increased health funding of \$6.784 billion over 4 years to support the ongoing growth in demand for health and ambulance services. The Government has committed to provide 2,200 additional overnight beds across fifteen facilities over the next six years. The government has restated its commitment to employ an extra 9,475 staff in this term of government.

In 2022–23, Queensland Health will:

- continue to develop and implement a Palliative and End-of-Life Strategy including a new Workforce Plan which will support the provision of frontline specialist palliative care. New community-based palliative services will also commence in 2022–23
- continue to lead the implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying scheme, with access to voluntary assisted dying commencing on 1 January 2023. The government is providing additional funding of \$9.3 million over 2 years to support information and communication technology, clinical and administrative implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Scheme.
- will continue to lead the delivery of the 7 Satellite Hospitals through a Prescribed Partnership Approach, in collaboration with other agencies and relevant HHSs
- continue to lead the health equity reform agenda to ensure all Queenslanders have an opportunity to attain their full health potential and no-one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential through the Making Tracks Together: Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Framework
- \$1.1 billion in 2022-23 for the Queensland Ambulance Service, up 11 per cent on last year

- The government is providing additional funding of \$1.645 billion over 5 years for Queensland Health's new 5-year plan, Better Care Together. This will be funded through a new mental health levy (large employers will be levied) and is proposed to commence from 1 January 2023. Better Care Together will improve mental health, alcohol and other drugs services as well as the suicide prevention system of care and support.

Health Capital Expenditure

- \$9.78 billion additional funding over six years for the Capacity Expansion Program, which will build three new hospitals, a new Queensland Cancer Centre and 11 hospital expansion projects across Queensland and deliver around 2220 additional beds from 2024 to 2028
- \$229.7 million funding over two years allocated for the Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program, which will deliver around 289 additional beds from 2023 to 2024 across seven projects in West Moreton, Gold Coast, Metro South and Cairns
- \$943.5 million funding over seven years provided to replace rural and remote health facilities and staff accommodation under Phase 2 of the Building Rural and Remote Health Program, with the first tranche of Phase 2 to replace hospitals in Moranbah, Bamaga, Normanton and Tara and health facilities in Pormpuraaw and Cow Bay

The Capacity Expansion Program mentioned above will deliver:

- New Coomera Hospital – \$1.3 billion investment that will deliver around 404 beds
- New Toowoomba Hospital – \$1.3 billion investment that will deliver around 118 beds
- New Bundaberg Hospital – \$1.2 billion investment that will deliver around 121 beds
- Redcliffe Hospital Expansion – \$1.06 billion investment that will deliver around 204 additional beds
- New Queensland Cancer Centre – \$750 million investment that will deliver around 150 beds
- Ipswich Hospital Expansion Stage 2 – \$710 million investment that will deliver around 200 additional beds
- Logan Hospital Expansion Stage 2 – \$530 million investment that will deliver around 112 additional beds
- Townsville University Hospital Expansion – \$530 million investment that will deliver around 143 additional beds
- QEII Hospital Expansion – \$465 million investment that will deliver around 112 additional beds
- Princess Alexandra Hospital Expansion – \$350 million investment that will deliver around 249 additional beds
- Prince Charles Hospital Expansion – \$300 million investment that will deliver around 93 additional beds
- Cairns Hospital Expansion – \$250 million investment that will deliver around 96 additional beds
- Mackay Hospital Expansion – \$250 million investment that will deliver around 128 additional beds

- Hervey Bay Hospital Expansion – \$40 million expansion that will deliver around 35 additional beds
- Robina Hospital Expansion – lease arrangement that will deliver around 114 additional beds

2. Housing, Homelessness and Community Services

COTA Queensland, in partnership with other community service organisations, has been strongly advocating for a substantial increase in the construction of social and affordable housing in Queensland. The budget announcement of a substantial increase social housing construction was welcomed in last year’s budget as a first step towards meeting the high level of demand for affordable housing in Queensland.

Under The *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–25* the Government announced last budget that it planning to achieve 7,400 new builds over the next four years under the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative (QHIGI). The Government also established a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund as part of the 21/22 Budget. Unfortunately, to date there have not been an increase in new social housing builds as expected. The Government did announce that in partnership with the Brisbane Housing Company and the Queensland Investment Corporation it is intended to build up to 1200 new social and affordable houses. The first stage of the project will build 600 homes across seven projects, further details have not yet been released. The Government announced in May 2022 that the first 118 new social and affordable homes built under the Housing Investment Fund would be constructed at Chermside and Redcliffe.

The Government also advised that it would invest \$21.9 million in 2022–23, as part of a total package of \$125.6 million over 4 years, to strengthen the community and social service sector. This funding will focus on elevating the role and functioning of neighbourhood and community centres. A new neighbourhood centre will be established in Rockhampton. This increase in funding is in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness.

3. Seniors’ Programs

There has been an increase in the level of funding provided through the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships for elder abuse prevention, Age-Friendly initiatives, seniors legal and support services and financial protection advice.

The State Government’s Budget 2022/23 announced increased funding to develop the next senior’s strategy and to respond to prevent elder abuse, amounting to \$12.2M over the next four years. 3.65 million additional funding will be available in 2022/23 and \$2.845m over the following three years. The 2022/23 expenditure will cover \$100,000 to continue the Seniors Expo program, \$710,000 to develop the next senior’s strategy and \$2.845 million to improve and expand elder abuse prevention and intervention responses.

The increased elder abuse funding in 2022/ will support:

- increased funding for 11 existing seniors legal and support services operated by CLCs or RAQ at 11 locations by 10% per year
- expand the seniors legal and support services to new areas where there is evidence of unmet need: Ipswich, Logan/Beaudesert and Moreton Bay North, and to provide outreach services to the Outback and to the Cape and Torres region.

4. Employment

The ongoing issue of Mature Age unemployment is still not considered a high priority issue for the Queensland Government. No new funding or initiatives were announced to address this issue that is causing financial and emotional hardship to many older Queenslanders.

5. Concessions

There have been no changes made to the range of concessions available to older Queenslanders. However, a range of concessions have been increased based on cost-of-living adjustments and are shown below. The Cost-of-Living Rebate in 2022–23 will be \$175 and will be paid to households through their electricity bill from September 2022.

- Electricity Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to approximately \$372 per annum (increased from \$341), to assist with the cost of domestic electricity supply to the home.
- Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession Scheme provides a rebate of up to approximately \$372 per annum (increased from \$341) for eligible concession card holders with a medical condition who have dependence on air conditioning to regulate body temperature.
- Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to approximately \$81 per annum (from \$76) to assist with the cost of reticulated natural gas
- Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme is aimed at assisting seriously ill people who use home-based life support systems by providing a rebate of up to approximately \$758 per annum (previously \$694) for users of oxygen concentrators and a rebate of up to approximately \$508 (increased from \$465) per annum for users of kidney dialysis machines to meet their electricity costs. The concession is paid quarterly and is subject to the patient being medically assessed in accordance with Queensland Health eligibility criteria.
- Light vehicle registration concessions for a four cylinder vehicle last year reduced the registration fee from \$340.20 to \$170.10 this year the registration fee is \$348.70 and the discounted fee payable is \$174.35.