



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

QUEENSLAND DIVISION

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2024 - 2025



May 2024

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

Queensland Division represents 5 Branches of AIR from Brisbane to Cairns including a Regional Branch.

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited was formed in Queensland in 1990. AIR is now a National, not-for-profit, non-party political 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.

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 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018-19 financial year) indicates that there were 750,000 retired persons over age 45 in Queensland. This represents 40% of the population.

Statistics show that the percentage of older people in the total population is gradually increasing. 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 this is given favourable consideration when Government prepares the 2024 - 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 — Cost of domestic electricity

ISSUE 2 — Maintain concession funding for seniors

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

ISSUE 4 — Provide a reduction in 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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

ISSUE 1 — 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 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 Queensland 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 Queensland Rail (QR) provides to Queensland Pensioners to Queensland Seniors Card holders. Also introduce off-peak discounts substantially better than the existing ones.

ISSUE 4 — Provide a reduction in 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 Coalition Government has taken the initiative by 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 remains at \$60 per person per night. This is a definite assistance to patients but requires reviewing in line with current costs. Also, the application process is 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 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 MP asked the Treasurer to commit to a review of the land tax valuation threshold commensurate with land valuation increases. Answer was NO.

We applaud the Queensland Government’s 30 September 2022 announcement that the proposal to include the value of any interstate land owned by a Queensland resident, would be indefinitely scrapped.

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 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. We would welcome an allocation of funds in the Budget to help with this developing issue.

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