

## Question on Notice

No. 1325

Asked on 5 August 2010

MS JOHNSTONE asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

### QUESTION

Will the Minister advise how Townsville seniors are supported by the State Government?

### ANSWER

The State Government has committed \$345,049 per year for the Townsville Seniors Legal and Support Service, which is a free legal and support service for seniors concerned about elder abuse and financial exploitation.

The Government has also committed \$150,000 per year to the Townsville Thuringowa Transport Service to deliver transport services to vulnerable people in the Townsville area to attend medical and other appointments, community access and recreation activities.

Seniors Week 2010 was held from 14 to 22 August 2010. Community organisations across Townsville held events to celebrate the valuable achievements and contributions of Queensland seniors, dispel common myths and stereotypes about older people, and inform people about services. The Townsville Regional Committee on the Ageing is supported by the Queensland Government to coordinate and promote local seniors week activities.

Seniors Card is a partnership between the Queensland Government and participating businesses to provide discounts and Queensland Government concessions on a range of products and services to Queenslanders over 60. These concessions are designed to assist seniors in Townsville and around the State to reduce the cost of regular household bills, access essential services and maintain a healthy active lifestyle.

Senior Shopper is an independent telephone shopping service that helps Seniors Card and Seniors Business Discount Card holders obtain the best price on a range of goods and services. Senior Shopper may assist clients with a better price on items like electrical goods, travel, motor vehicles, computers, mowers, furniture, white and brown goods, fishing tackle, pools and equipment, cameras and many other items.

The Department of Communities has assisted in the establishment of the Seniors Cross Government Working Group to bring together local, State and Federal government agencies who work with seniors and seniors groups in the Townsville area. Its purpose is to provide strategic coordination on matters which impact on seniors' wellbeing and quality of life in their local community.

Positively Ageless—Queensland Seniors Strategy 2010–20 is a 10 year vision for seniors to 2020, with an initial two-year action plan which contains 138 initiatives of which 32 are new. The initiatives benefit Queensland seniors, particularly those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or socially isolated. The Community Participation Team in Townsville is supporting the implementation of Positively Ageless with a range of activities including organising a Seniors Workshop in October 2010.

The Seniors Workshop is intended to assist non-government organisations to identify practical solutions to implement the Strategy and improve seniors service delivery locally.

In addition, 47 per cent of social housing tenants are aged over 55. Social housing tenants benefit from paying only 25 per cent of household income in rent. It is equivalent to an average benefit of \$7,253 a year for 2010–11. The Government will also expend an average \$3,235 per household in maintenance in 2010–11. This is a direct concession for families because they don't have to pay for general maintenance. All up, the benefit of social housing alone can be more than \$10,000 a year. That's an enormous benefit to people on low fixed incomes, such as pensioners or people with a disability. That's why social housing is so important and why the Federal and State Labor Governments are investing in social housing across Queensland.

Another important way seniors across the State are supported by the State Government is through the Every Dollar Counts website I recently launched. Not only does the Queensland Government offer more concessions than any other State Government in Australia but we have made it easier for people to access them.

The Every Dollar Counts website is a one-stop shop which includes information on every rebate and concession available through the State Government. It includes information on Queensland's \$216 pensioners electricity rebate, public transport and other travel subsidies, concessions for rates as well as health concessions like the new \$216 medical cooling and heating rebate for people with multiple sclerosis and related health conditions.

Every Dollar Counts includes information on everything from the \$1,000 Solar Hot Water Rebate to information about the increased first home buyers grants for people setting up home in regional Queensland.

Anyone can visit the Every Dollar Counts website at [www.qld.gov.au/everydollarcunts](http://www.qld.gov.au/everydollarcunts). For people without internet access, they can phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and request a copy of *Every dollar counts: Concessions made easy*—a hard copy booklet providing a convenient listing of the many concessions, rebates and subsidies provided by the Queensland Government.

I thank the Member for her support for the delivery of these important Queensland Government initiatives in the Townsville electorate.