

REPORT ON THE 2011 ACT OLDER PERSONS ASSEMBLY and Government Response to Recommendations



Minister's Foreword

As the Minister for Ageing I am proud to introduce this Report on the ACT Older Persons Assembly held on 30 September 2011. The Assembly was the outcome of a 2010 Legislative Assembly resolution to hear and understand the key issues that affect the lives of older people and to encourage them to participate in policy development.

In June 2010, Canberra was invited to join the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities. This invitation was based on the work done in developing the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards an Age-Friendly City*. Membership of the Global Network involves a commitment to the continual improvement of a city's age-friendliness and genuine engagement with older citizens.

While the ACT has relatively young population compared to most other Australian jurisdictions we do have one of the fastest growing populations of older people in Australia, including one of the fastest growing rates of persons aged 85 and over. This means that we need to update the way we operate as a community and be more open to the opportunities that come with a larger population of older citizens.

Our increasing longevity is causing us to question traditional retirement ages and the social roles associated with older age. People are now coming up to retirement age with quite different outlooks to that of their parents and grandparents. While the Age Pension and a relatively sedentary and impoverished retirement used to be the norm, the Baby Boomers have very different aspirations and expectations of what their older years will look like. They are seeing their retirement years as their third age, a time to live life to the full, when generally speaking, they have met their responsibilities regarding children, careers and a mortgage.

I expect to see a steady increase in the number of older workers and volunteers in Canberra and an increased older customer-base for business. However, we must also acknowledge that for many, especially those of advanced years, the need for support services is ever growing. After a lifetime of service to their families, the community, and the economy, we must be mindful of their right to a comfortable and dignified later life, and as much as possible, one which enables them to stay connected and active within the community.

The messages that came from the Older Persons Assembly echoed these themes, with delegates stressing the importance of employment and volunteering opportunities and the need for community support services.

The motions that came from the Older Persons Assembly, along with the results of the 2011 Age-Friendly City Survey, will be used to develop the next Positive Ageing Action Plan. I am confident that by using a whole-of-government approach we will continue to make real and meaningful change that will benefit our older citizens and our community as a whole.

Joy Burch MLA, Minister for Ageing



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Overview

The ACT has one of the fastest growing populations of people aged 60 years and over in Australia and that this is expected to grow from 15.5% in 2010 to 19.0% by 2020¹.

The ACT Legislative Assembly has recognised the significant contribution of older persons to the ACT community and on 17 November 2010 passed a resolution to hear and understand the key issues that affect the lives of older people and encourage them to participate in policy development by holding an Older Persons Assembly.

The Older Persons Assembly was held on 30 September 2011 on the eve of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons.

The ACT Older Persons Assembly was the first of its kind for Australia and was a unique opportunity for older Canberrans from across ACT electorates to raise issues and propose solutions for the future.

All ACT residents aged 55 years and over were invited to nominate. One-hundred and seventy nominations were received by the closing date of 30 June 2011.

An assessment panel selected the delegates to ensure a broad cross-section of ACT older citizens was represented, with two-thirds of the places being allocated to individuals and one-third to representatives from older persons' organisations. Seventy Canberrans attended the Older Persons Assembly.

Development of the program for the Older Persons Assembly was guided by a Steering Committee that included members of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, COTA ACT, Combined Seniors Group, Community Services Directorate and the advisor to the Minister for Ageing.

Delegates attended a briefing session on 19 September 2011 to receive background information on discussion topics and to gain an overview of the day's proceedings.

The ACT Older Persons Assembly program was chaired by the Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly and included speeches by the Minister for Ageing, keynote speaker, Mr Bryce Courtenay and the Chief Minister. Delegates then had the opportunity to participate in solution-focussed discussions through committee hearings.

Concurrent committee hearing sessions were held in the morning and afternoon, with individual hearings chaired by members of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing with support from staff from the Community Services Directorate.

Topics discussed reflected those identified by candidates through the nomination process and the seven themes of the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards an Age-Friendly City*, including Information and Communication; Health and Wellbeing;

¹ ACT Population Projections: 2009-2059

Respect, Valuing and Safety; Housing and Accommodation; Support Services; Transport and Mobility; Work and Retirement. Delegates also discussed innovation and new ideas.

Three key priorities were identified from each hearing and reported back to all delegates as motions in the Assembly Chamber by the Committee Chairs. Delegates voted on the motions through a ballot process. As a result of the voting process, 24 recommendations were made to Government. A Government response to these recommendations has been prepared and is included in this Report.

Outcomes of the Older Persons Assembly will guide development of the 2012-2014 Action Plan for the *Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing* - a blueprint for a coordinated approach across Government and the community to support positive ageing and an age-friendly city where older people are respected, valued and supported to actively participate.

The Assembly formal proceeding was recorded and is available on <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/ageing/OPA>

Assembly Resolution



OLDER PERSONS ASSEMBLY

At its meeting on Wednesday, 17 November 2010, the Legislative Assembly passed the following resolution:

“That this Assembly:

- (1) acknowledges the significant contributions older people make to the Canberra community;
- (2) wants to hear and understand the key issues that affect their lives, and encourage them to participate in policy development;
- (3) notes:
 - (a) that the ACT has one of the fastest growing populations of people aged 60 years and over in Australia and that this is expected to grow from 15.8% in 2010 to 19.6% by 2020; and
 - (b) the establishment of an Older Persons' Assembly in Scotland in 2009; and
- (4) supports the establishment of an Older Persons' Assembly to be convened for one day at the ACT Legislative Assembly that:
 - (a) is coordinated by the ACT Government in consultation with the Speaker and peak ageing and seniors' organisations;
 - (b) is a cross-electorate forum that involves a public nomination process for attendees and a selection process involving older people;
 - (c) encourages Ministers and other Members to appear at debates and hearings; and
 - (d) will have all motions and recommendations responded to by the ACT Government within three months”.

Background

All Australian states and territories are experiencing growth in the number of people aged 65 years and over, led by the Northern Territory with an increase of 7.3% over 2010-11, followed by the ACT with an increase of 4.5%².

ACT 60+ & 65+ population as percentage of total population

	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
60+	15.5%	19.0%	21.4%	23.3%	25.9%
65+	10.4%	14.0%	16.7%	18.4%	20.3%

(Source: ACT Population Projections: 2009-2059)

In the year ended June 2011, the largest increases in the number of people aged 85 years and over occurred in the Northern Territory with 10.6% followed by the ACT with 7.7%.

The ageing population will present a range of challenges and opportunities for Government in areas such as affordable housing, transport, health, disability, aged care and mature age employment.

Long-term planning is required to address the future needs of our ageing population to create opportunities and remove barriers to allow the growing number of older Canberra residents to participate fully and to age well.

The ACT Government recognises and values older citizens and their contribution to our community as workers, volunteers, neighbours, and carers, and is now putting in place mechanisms to make Canberra a more age-friendly city.

ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards and Age-Friendly City

In *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century*, in the context of the demographic shift to an older population, the ACT Government committed to:

‘give attention to specific actions that will benefit older people. Building on the *2007-2009 Policy Framework for Ageing*, we will formulate a comprehensive strategy to support healthy and meaningful ageing, decrease social isolation and help people adapt to retirement. We will also increase our efforts to reduce elder abuse’.

(Chapter on ‘A Fair and Safe Community’, *New and Future Directions - Healthy and Meaningful Ageing*)

In 2009, in response to this commitment, the then Minister for Ageing directed that a whole-of-government Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing be developed to better coordinate the work of Government in supporting its older citizens and promoting positive ageing.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3101.0 – Australian Demographic Statistics, Jun 2011

The ACT Government through the then Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, and in partnership with the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (MACA) prepared a Discussion Paper for a consultation in early 2009. Three community forums were held across Canberra, each attended by about 80 people, including a mix of individual seniors, seniors groups, community and age-care organisations, and interested Government Officers. Smaller meetings were also held and written submissions received.

Following this consultation, a Draft Strategic Plan was produced and a further forum was held in August 2009.

Assisting in the project was a specially convened Inter-Departmental Committee and MACA.

In December 2009, the Minister for Ageing, Joy Burch MLA, launched the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards an Age-Friendly City*.

The Plan is based on seven Strategic Priorities identified by the community:

1. Information and Communication
2. Health and Wellbeing
3. Respect, Valuing and Safety
4. Housing and Accommodation
5. Support Services
6. Transport and Mobility
7. Work and Retirement

Each Strategic Priority had a stated goal and a number of Actions for the first reporting period to June 2011. Performance indicators were linked to each Action.

MACA has been monitoring the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing* to ensure that it is effectively implemented.

WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities

During the 2009 consultation for the *Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing*, it was suggested by one of the attendees that we align ourselves with the work of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Age-Friendly City Program - an Age-friendly City being defined as 'an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing'(WHO).

In June 2010, the Office for Ageing was one of the first cities to join the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities, a group of municipalities that seek to improve the living experience of its senior residents. Other members of this Network include cities such as New York City in the USA, Manchester in the UK and London in Ontario, Canada. Two other Australian municipalities have also joined: Warrnambool in Victoria and Melville in Western Australia.

Age-Friendly City Survey

The *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-14* included the requirement that progress be measured through the use of the WHO Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly

Cities. This Checklist identifies eight domains: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; community and health services.

Membership of the WHO Network is also dependent upon direct involvement and feedback of older residents of the city in a five year cycle of planning, implementation and review. This involves an initial 2 year planning period to develop a 3 year Action Plan, to be followed by subsequent Action Plans of up to 5 years. The ACT Government is currently preparing its first 3 year Action Plan.

In order to build on the work of past consultations and the framework established in the Strategic Plan, it was important to develop a clear baseline measure of the lived experience of Canberrans of their city. To achieve this, the Australian National University's Centre for Mental Health Research was contracted to undertake a Survey to identify positive and negative examples of infrastructure and practices, and to make suggestions for making Canberra a more age-friendly city.

Key indicators used in this survey will be used in subsequent surveys to provide a useful measure of long term change.

The Older Persons Assembly was another strategy for consulting with Canberra's older citizens. It provided an opportunity older people to talk directly with politicians and Government about their issues and concerns and to suggest plans for the future.

Process

The ACT Older Persons Assembly was inspired by the Scottish Older Persons Assembly held in 2009 and 2010, and other Older Persons Assemblies held in the United Kingdom.

Scottish Older Persons Assembly

The guiding principle of the 2009 Scottish Older Persons Assembly was to let older people from across Scotland listen and participate in discussions on the important issues that face them, and convey their experiences to Members of the Scottish Parliament, civil servants, Scottish Ministers, and each other. It also enabled them to take part in debates about the strategies and approaches being formed at the highest level of the Scottish Government and local authorities.

The Assembly included mini-debates by expert speakers on topics such as, 'Means Testing or Universal Benefits'; 'The Future of Caring For Older People'; and 'Speaking Up or Being Spoken For'.

Expert panels also discussed how to support and improve the health of older people; how life-long learning offers benefits for both society as a whole and older people; and barriers to achieving equality for older people, particularly around age discrimination in employment.

Key points raised in discussions following the mini-debates, and expert panels informed the priorities that emerged from the Scottish Older People's Assembly and were recorded in the Scottish Older Person's Assembly Report on Outcomes and Recommendations. Priorities were determined through a show of hands by delegates on the day. The Scottish Government prepared a response to each priority.

A second Scottish Older People's Assembly was held in November 2010. The event included workshops which explored issues of importance to older people. The workshops were led by topic leaders, community activists and facilitators and scribes.

Delegates agreed on a number of actions based on workshop discussion and were asked to vote on these by postal ballot to decide what priorities the Scottish Older People's Assembly should progress.

The *Scottish Older People's Assembly 2010: Report on Outcomes and Recommendations* indicates that the actions taken forward as a result of the Assembly will be linked to existing structures and mechanisms in the Scottish Government, local authorities, health boards, and the Voluntary/Third Sector and that issues raised by the Assembly will be used by the Older People's Consultative Forum. Further, the Steering Group decided that any future Assembly will feed back results to delegates on the day and dispense with the need to ballot delegates. This will ensure all in attendance have their vote counted.

A Government Response to priorities identified by the 2010 Scottish Older People's Assembly was published in April 2010.

The third Scottish Older People's Assembly took place on 25 October 2011. The Program included presentations via video link from Highland Senior Citizens' Network and Dumfries & Galloway Seniors Forum and from the 'House in the Park', Hamburg, Germany. There was also a discussion between the Scottish Youth Parliament and older people from Edinburgh's 'A City for All Ages' group on "The Voice of a Generation - Are You Being Heard?"

ACT Older Persons Assembly Steering committee

The Minister for Ageing established a steering committee which met monthly to progress development of the ACT Older Persons Assembly. The Committee included representatives of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (MACA), seniors clubs, COTA ACT and the Community Services Directorate. Membership of the steering committee is at **Appendix A**.

Nomination process

The ACT Older Persons Assembly was open to all ACT residents aged 55 years and older. The total number of delegates was limited to 70 to accommodate delegates in the ACT Legislative Assembly Chamber. A public nomination process was held and included extensive advertising through the Canberra Times, Canberra Chronicle, *The Senior News*, local radio, and email networks such as the Community Development Network, (CDNet) and Multicultural News Bulletin. Brochures were distributed through ACT Libraries, ACTION bus

services, seniors clubs and organisations, ACT Government Shopfronts and to clients of the Red Cross Meals on Wheels Service and Regional Community Services. Nominations opened on 24 April 2011 and closed on 30 June 2011. One hundred and seventy nominations were received.

Selection of delegates

Nominations were assessed by a selection panel that included representatives of the Older Persons Assembly Steering Committee. Nominations were considered against the published selection criteria to ensure that a broad cross-section of older citizens was represented. Demographic information provided by the Community Services Directorate Data and Research team was also used to select a representative sample of the 55+ population from:

- each electorate;
- each gender group;
- each age sub-group;
- the culturally and linguistically diverse community;
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities;
- various socio-economic groups; and
- people with disabilities.

Two-thirds of the places were allocated to individuals and one third to representatives of older person's organisations.

Organisations were prioritised according to the following criteria:

- Senior specific organisations;
- Range of cultural diversity;
- Peak bodies or seniors' lobby groups with a significant membership base; and
- Representation of broader issues rather than individual issues.

Where there was more than one group with similar aims and goals, one representative was selected, usually from the largest group.

Final approval of the nominations was made by the Minister for Ageing.

A list of delegates is included at **Appendix B**.

Pre-briefing session

On 19 September 2011, a pre-briefing session was held with all delegates. This was an opportunity to prepare delegates for the Older Persons Assembly by providing an overview of the proceedings and background information to the committee hearings. Delegates gained an overview of the *Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing*, a summary of the results of the Age Friendly City Survey and an overview of ageing-related programs and services administered by the Federal and ACT Governments. The session also covered the 'rules' of the Assembly and provided delegates with an opportunity to hear from expert speakers who provided an overview of current situation and future plans relating to topics that were

discussed in the committee hearings. A copy of the program is at **Appendix C**. Delegates also received an information pack which provided more detailed fact sheets to supplement the presentations.

Delegates were assigned to committee hearings based on preferences identified on their nomination forms.

Evaluation

Delegates were asked to complete an evaluation form for the pre-briefing session and for the Older Persons Assembly. The feedback has been collated and will inform future consultation processes.



Program

8.15am - 9.00am	Registrations
9.00am - 9.45am	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome to Country - Agnes Shea OAM 2. Opening by Speaker of the Assembly - Shane Rattenbury MLA 3. Speech by Minister for Ageing - Joy Burch MLA 4. Keynote Speaker - Bryce Courtenay AM
9.45am - 10.15am	MORNING TEA
10.15am - 11.15am	Committee hearings
11.15am - 12.00pm	Voting
12.00pm - 12.10pm	Chief Minister's address - Katy Gallagher MLA
12.10pm - 1:00pm	LUNCH
1.00pm - 2.00pm	Committee hearings
2.00pm - 2.45pm	Voting
2.45pm - 3.15pm	AFTERNOON TEA
3.15pm - 3.45pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarise proceedings 2. Identify next steps

Committee hearings

Delegates participated in solution-focused discussions through committee hearings.

Concurrent committee hearing sessions were held in the morning and afternoon, with sessions chaired by members of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing with support from staff from the Community Services Directorate.

Topics discussed reflected the seven themes of the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-2014: Towards an Age-Friendly City*, including Information and Communication; Health and Wellbeing; Respect, Valuing and Safety; Housing and Accommodation; Support Services; Transport and Mobility; Work and Retirement. Delegates also discussed innovations and new ideas.

Where possible, delegates were assigned to committee hearings based on topic preferences identified on their nomination forms.

A summary of discussions that took place in the committee hearings is outlined below.

Voting

Three key priorities were identified from each hearing and reported back to all delegates as motions in the Assembly Chamber by the Committee Chairs. Delegates voted on the motions through a ballot process. As a result of the voting process, 24 recommendations were made to Government.

The method used to count the votes took into consideration the need to fully enumerate delegates' preferences, the need to quickly deliver a result and resource constraints.

The *Schulze method* was chosen as a mathematically proven method that satisfies most of the criteria considered desirable in a voting system.

The method begins by counting the number of occasions where delegates preferred one motion over another. As the method examines all possible pairs it is always the case that a majority of the delegates will prefer motion X over motion Y or vice versa (although ties are possible).

The method also deems that if there are delegates who prefer motion A to motion B to motion C, then they are implicitly stating that they prefer motion A to motion B, motion B to motion C *and* motion A to motion C. The method considers the latter case when counting the number of delegates who prefer motion A to motion C.

Committee Hearing: Information and Communication

Discussion points

- Community surveys and focus groups are required to evaluate the success of communication strategies.
- Consider literacy and numeracy in all communication methods. Access to information should be accessible to those who are illiterate, have limited education, are visually or hearing impaired, or from a non-English speaking background.
- Many older people are not computer literate and require better access to screen based information and communication.
- Costs of Internet Service Providers and computer hardware required to access information online can be prohibitive for many older people.
- A lot of information is available but it is difficult to access. A centralised information point is required which provides information by a variety of methods including face-to-face communication, phone and internet, visual displays and printed literature. This needs to be complemented by awareness raising, training and support to assist older people identify what information is available and how to access it
- Access to information on the internet about support services may be restrictive for those with limited literacy, numeracy skills and those whose first language is not English. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of links and information about translating and interpreting services.
- Libraries and community groups can assist older people to access information and can teach them to use multiple communication channels e.g. through computer courses.
- Library opening hours extended in mornings to cater for the needs of older people.
- Older people access information through the post (must be personally addressed), Canberra Times, local news (print, TV, radio), and free newspapers such as the Canberra Weekly.
- Seniors living independently require better access to information on community activities.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Implements a comprehensive multi-media 'Information Portal' covering all forms of available information.
2. Introduces information sessions, via multi-media, targeting older age groups, on all ageing related matters, to be introduced in 2012.
3. Introduces publications that are more user friendly, translated into community languages, and that are meaningful to the targeted age group, to be commenced in 2012.

Committee Hearing: Health and Wellbeing

Discussion points

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a shorter life expectancy than the community average and can experience age related health problems at a younger age. Access to health services should be provided on a needs basis for ATSI people.
- Successful health promotion programs should be funded on an ongoing basis.
- Develop a health promotion strategy to deal with Alzheimer's/dementia, including affordable, seniors-specific activities, including mind stimulating games; awareness raising; GPs encouraging healthy lifestyles; and development of health service delivery hubs with 'age friendly' older persons clinics.
- Investigate Bhutanese model for measuring happiness and contentment of older people.
- Open fitness facilities in Retirement Villages to all older persons in the community and promote them as 'seniors fitness centres' [the group acknowledged that retirement villages are privately run and government has little influence on how, and to whom, they provide their services.]
- Provide free exercise sessions for seniors 55+.
- Provide better access to fitness opportunities for older persons with disabilities. The Chifley YMCA gym provides fitness opportunities but cannot meet demand.
- Educate 'Baby Boomers' with elderly parents to ensure they are aware of services.
- Plan long term services and integrate planning of services.
- Establish a sports complaints handling body.
- Use different forms of media to ensure information about community activities for older people reaches a broad audience e.g. Canberra Connect, Community Notice Boards, 666 local radio, community announcements, TV, carers' networks.
- Future housing planning needs to consider proximity to services to allow 'ageing in place'. Consideration also needs to be given to the affect of service closures and moves.
- Encourage GP's to bulk bill and lobby Commonwealth for access to medical concessions.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Provides access to health related services on a needs basis for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. Enhances health delivery service hubs to cater for the broad needs of older people.
3. Reduces the burden on community groups to reapply for grant funding with an accreditation process

Committee Hearing: Respect, Valuing and Safety

Discussion points

- Older people are often perceived as frail and are treated as such.
- Promote services and programs for older people through weekly articles/advertising in the Canberra Times.
- Profile older people in colleges and through the media and encourage opportunities to share their personal experiences.
- Create opportunities through existing community organisations for all age groups to work together in the Arts. This may include mentoring programs.
- Many older people do not feel confident to raise concerns about disruptive neighbours as they fear damaging relationships or retribution. Some feel that complaints are not responded to.
- Proximity of accessible parking to (Gungahlin) library.
- Improve accessibility of facilities by considering safety and parking, proximity to services, number of spaces, and criteria for accessible parking.
- Undertake safety audits to assess safety and accessibility in public/communal spaces.
- Increase CCTVs and lighting in car parks and shopping centres.
- Expand the Neighbourhood Watch Program to provide safety houses for older people. Provide a phone number or phone people living alone.
- Include older people in urban planning.
- Raise awareness about available elder abuse prevention strategies. Increase publicity & education including young people. Promote the Older Persons Abuse Prevention Information and Referral Line more widely.
- Address age discrimination by educating human resource managers in Government and business to value and respect older customers and workers.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Introduce a program into the ACT school curriculum to educate students about the importance of respecting elders in our community, e.g. through intergenerational sharing of stories and experiences.
2. Ensures that facilities are more accessible to address the issues of parking, opening hours, mobility and safety - particularly with new buildings.
3. Promotes greater respect for older persons through increased public relations that highlights the personal experiences and stories of older people.

Committee Hearing: Housing and Accommodation

Discussion points

- Introduce age friendly audits of private homes similar to the Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project (CLASP) where a suitable person can identify problems and help older people reduce safety and security risks in and around their home.
- A list of reliable tradespersons would be helpful to assist older people and avoid exploitation of elderly.
- There is a need for more social housing for older people.
- Provide low interest loans to self funded retirees to move in accommodation of their choice.
- Due to the Global Financial Crisis, many self-funded retirees do not have sufficient reserves of money or investments to replenish their assets. This may make it difficult for older people to down-size as their family home may be their only asset.
- Install Crim Safe security doors and Crim Safe Security screens on the ground floor and street level windows in all Public Housing developments. Install alarm systems in new housing developments for older people.
- Offer subsidies to encourage private/public sector partnerships for affordable housing.
- Increase crisis accommodation for older people within the first day of homelessness.
- Delegates commented positively about the following housing initiatives: incorporating a minimum standard of universal design in new housing; the push for improved regulation of ACT Retirement Villages to encourage uniformity in the services and amenities provided and ensure legislation is consistent with other jurisdictions; Older Persons Housing funded through the Commonwealth Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan Initiative.
- Areas for improvement included: land release for self-funded retirees to build housing more suitable for their needs; reducing 'red tape' to avoid lengthy timeframes for building and approval; building suitable, affordable private and public housing; introducing universal design in all homes; and concessions available for modifications and stamp duty.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Release land and shorten building approval times in areas where older people want to live; and reduce stamp duty.
2. Consider group accommodation and cooperative housing for single older persons at appropriate sites.
3. Introduce a program to support older persons to transition from their own accommodation to aged accommodation.

Committee Hearing: Support Services

Discussion points

- Establish mechanisms to regularly review Government websites to ensure that they are standardised, comprehensive and accessible to older people. Clutter, small print and background colours can make reading difficult for people with vision impairment.
- Remove the ACT Government tax (Utilities Network Facilities?) on telephone bills.
- Concession cardholders in multi-unit complexes should not be disadvantaged. Utility concessions currently only relate to individual personal accounts and in Retirement Villages and community complexes, water and sewerage accounts are in the name of bodies corporate, not individual unit owners.
- Participate in inter-governmental and inter-sectoral bodies to ensure that support services are suitable, adequate and of a high standard. Duplication should be avoided and the variety and availability of support services increased. Services should be tailored to the needs of individual clients rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' approach.
- Public seating should be provided in all (including private) shopping centres. Seating should be of a suitable height and have arms to assist older people in getting up. Seating should be suitably spaced over large distances.
- Improve Canberra Connect's accessibility by engaging more trained staff and by extending hours for offices and call centres. Canberra Connect should be centrally located in shopping malls and provide a hub of information about support services.
- Enlist the support of the private sector to incorporate a greater variety of fun and interesting community activities in Seniors Week e.g. movie tickets, entertainment and dining.
- Social isolation in community is caused by reduced physical capability, difficulty in accessing public transport, illness, lack of community contact, family moving interstate, and neighbours dying or moving away.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Ensures that Canberra Connect's accessibility be improved to reduce waiting times by employing more staff (including seniors in call centres) and increased hours of service i.e. beyond 9am-5pm.
2. Improve support services for carers of people with mental health issues living in the community.
3. Use its influence in inter-governmental and inter-sectoral bodies to ensure that the ACT has a comprehensive range of support services which are of a high standard and produce good outcomes.

Committee Hearing: Transport and Mobility

Discussion points

- Increase the number of disabled parking spaces and widen half of existing spaces.
- Create targeted taxi services for people with disability, including driver training.
- Improve the accessibility of the disability taxi service – increase numbers, decrease waiting times and improve the booking system.
- Control disabled parking using an electronic chip or bollard.
- Improve regulation of disability taxis and parking.
- Increase the Taxi Subsidy Scheme by 25% so that it reflects actual consumer costs.
- Introduce bike lanes similar to those used in Copenhagen.
- Introduce a driving test at age 75.
- Undertake medical assessments for drivers on basis of health and disability not age.
- Widen high traffic pathways shared by pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters.
- Increase the number of footpaths in new suburbs to allow safer walking routes e.g. grandparents taking children to schools.
- Ensure ACTION buses
 - Use accessible buses on all routes. Prioritise buses near residential facilities.
 - Use mini buses in new suburbs with narrow roads.
 - Amend routes to accommodate hospitals and the needs of seniors.
 - Have reader friendly time tables at bus stops and terminals.
- Include facilities for trolleys and walkers on community buses.
- Accessible public transport for people who live on hills e.g. re-route some buses along the top so people can walk downhill to their home.
- Coordinate transport to ensure access to activities and programs.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Ensure that ACTION revamps its policies to: increase routes to hospitals and seniors venues; ensure bus shelters are protective; incorporate facilities on community buses for trolleys and mobility scooters; install more handrails and wheelchair spaces; more reader-friendly timetables.
2. Incorporate Universal Design principles in all infrastructure and buildings by end of 2012, with retrofitting as well as new developments.
3. Ensure that all footpaths are constructed and maintained to facilitate safe sharing between pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters.

Committee Hearing: Work and Retirement

Discussion points

- Raise awareness of services that assist people enter retirement.
- Develop and promote programs to educate potential retirees about retirement activity options.
- Support older people to gradually transition from work to retirement.
- Provide opportunities to older workers to learn new skills and undertake volunteering.
- Consider incentives and changes in legislation to encourage employers to look more favourably on older workers treat them with greater respect.
- Enact legislation that allows older people to undertake employment without this negatively affecting their total income and access to pensions and concessions.
- Review current ACT policies on employment of older persons.
- Change attitudes by promoting the positive aspects of employing older workers.
- Establish a well publicised & easily accessible register that identifies older people willing to work and the skills they have to offer.
- Provide advocacy and education in retirement (similar to defence forces).
- Harness the skills and energy of new retirees to start new businesses.
- Require that job vacancies specify whether job sharing or part time options are available.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Consider legislative changes and incentives to promote the positive aspects of employing older workers, and to dispel the myths regarding older workers.
2. Allow part-time casual employment to meet the needs of special groups, and review, re-invigorate and enforce ACT policies on employment of older persons.
3. Initiate an award recognition program for ACT employers who encourage and retain older workers.

Committee Hearing: Innovation and New Ideas

Discussion points

- Reduce the entry price to events for seniors.
- Repeal sections of the Crimes Act 1900 that make it illegal to assist suicide and set up a professionally staffed unit in The Canberra Hospital to assist those contemplating suicide to decide what they want to do and provide a safe place for them should they decide to end their lives.
- Initiate discussions with the Federal Government regarding a scientific trial of injectable opioids as an alternative treatment for people with opiate addictions.

Motions

That the ACT Government:

1. Funds/provides a service to help maintain physical health and wellbeing by providing age appropriate practitioners who have access to e-health.
2. Establishes an incentive scheme to utilise the skills and experience of older persons for the benefit of society e.g. barter/ exchange of skills and services; mentoring; contributing to community skills.
3. Extends Seniors Week to one month - to offer more activities across the various ACT districts and create more interaction amongst older people.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations from Morning Committee Hearings

The top twelve priorities for the morning sessions as voted by delegates, in order of preference, were that the ACT Government:

1. Implements a comprehensive multi-media 'Information Portal' covering all forms of available information.
2. Enhances health delivery service hubs to cater for the broad needs of older people.
3. Ensures that Canberra Connect's accessibility be improved to reduce waiting times by employing more staff (including seniors in call centres) and increased hours of service i.e. beyond 9am-5pm.
4. Introduces information sessions, via multi-media, targeting older age groups, on all ageing related matters, to be introduced in 2012.
5. Ensures that facilities are more accessible to address the issues of parking, opening hours, mobility and safety - particularly with new buildings.
6. Introduces publications that are more user friendly, translated into community languages, and that are meaningful to the targeted age group, to be commenced in 2012.
7. Improves support services for carers of people with mental health issues living in the community.
8. Reduces the burden on community groups to reapply for grant funding with an accreditation process.
9. Introduces a program into the ACT school curriculum to educate students about the importance of respecting elders in our community, e.g. through intergenerational sharing of stories and experiences.
10. Promotes greater respect for older persons through increased public relations that highlights the personal experiences and stories of older people.
11. Uses its influence in inter-governmental and inter-sectoral bodies to ensure that the ACT has a comprehensive range of support services which are of a high standard and produce good outcomes.
12. Provides access to health related services on a needs basis for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendations from Afternoon Committee Hearings

The top twelve priorities for the afternoon sessions as voted by delegates, in order of preference, were that the ACT Government:

1. Allows part-time casual employment to meet the needs of special groups, and review, re-invigorate and enforce ACT policies on employment of older persons.
2. Incorporates Universal Design principles in all infrastructure and buildings by end of 2012, with retrofitting as well as new developments.
3. Considers legislative changes and incentives to promote the positive aspects of employing older workers, and to dispel the myths regarding older workers.
4. Establishes an incentive scheme to utilise the skills and experience of older persons for the benefit of society e.g. barter/ exchange of skills and services; mentoring; contributing to community skills.
5. Releases land and shorten building approval times in areas where older people want to live; and reduce stamp duty.
6. Funds/provides a service to help maintain physical health and wellbeing by providing age appropriate practitioners who have access to e-health.
7. Considers group accommodation and cooperative housing for single older persons at appropriate sites.
8. Ensures that all footpaths are constructed and maintained to facilitate safe sharing between pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters.
9. Ensures that ACTION revamps its policies to: increase routes to hospitals and seniors venues; ensure bus shelters are protective; incorporate facilities on community buses for trolleys and mobility scooters; install more handrails and wheelchair spaces; more reader-friendly timetables.
10. Introduces a program to support older persons to transition from their own accommodation to aged accommodation.
11. Initiates an award recognition program for ACT employers who encourage and retain older workers.
12. Extends Seniors Week to one month - to offer more activities across the various ACT districts and create more interaction amongst older people.

Government Response to Recommendations

Preamble

The ACT Older Persons Assembly has provided valuable information to the ACT Government on the interests, needs and opinions of older people in Canberra. The Government response considers current Government initiatives and, in response to the recommendations of delegates, reflects on improvements that could be made to policies and services that support the Territory's older citizens.

To facilitate the development of recommendations, a pre-Assembly briefing session was attended by most delegates prior to the Older Persons Assembly. The purpose of this session was to inform delegates of the arrangements and procedures on the day of the Assembly, and to inform them about the services that are currently provided by the ACT Government. Nonetheless, some of the recommendations from the committee hearings include a call for services that already exist. Where this is the case, the Government accepts the challenge of improving these services and promoting them further. The Government acknowledges that this limited awareness about services is an issue in itself, and resolves to address it through more effective communication strategies.

Furthermore, while the recommendations from the Older Persons Assembly attempt to prioritise the actions that should be undertaken in support of older persons in the ACT, this work is also being progressed through the *ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010-14: Towards an Age-Friendly City*, the Canberra Age-Friendly City Network and the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing.

Recommendations from Morning Committee Hearings (in order of priority):

That the ACT Government:

- 1. Implements a comprehensive multi-media 'Information Portal' covering all forms of available information.**

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government recognises the need to provide older people with accessible, relevant and accurate information, and appreciates that although there is a wealth of information available about programs and services, this is often difficult to navigate.

In October 2010, the ACT Government created an online portal, *Seniors Information Online* (www.seniors.act.gov.au), which is a gateway for ACT seniors related information. It links users to information about ACT Government services and information, community services, activities and groups. Web links are arranged under 12 topic boxes including finances, support services, lifelong learning and seniors organisations. While predominantly providing ACT-specific links, it also provides links to relevant Australian Government services, including www.seniors.gov.au, their premier source of information for Australians over 50.

The Office for Ageing website at <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/ageing> also provides links on its home page to a 'Frequently Asked Questions' page, and to information on such areas as the Seniors Card, Elder Abuse, and the Seniors Grants and Sponsorship Program.

The Canberra Connect website at <http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au> is a comprehensive information and services portal for all citizens, including seniors. The Canberra Connect telephone service can be accessed by calling 13 22 81 and Canberra Connect shopfronts provide a means for seniors to access face-to-face services and hard copy information.

Libraries ACT serve as a distribution channel for seniors' information and they work actively with other ACT Government agencies to obtain information resources, ensuring that the community is well informed. Sixty per cent of Canberrans are registered library users. There are approximately 1.7 million visits made to public libraries in the ACT every year.

The ACT Government's Open Government Initiative aims to make available as much government information as possible and to open up new channels for the dissemination and use of this information.

A number of Open Government initiatives have been completed to date:

- Establishment of the Government Information Office in June 2011;
- A weekly online cabinet summary report which has been available since 6 July 2011;
- The new Community Engagement manual released in July 2011;
- Virtual Community Cabinets have been held using Twitter on in July, August and November 2011;
- The ICT Strategic Plan (2011-15) was released in October 2011;
- An Open Government website was launched in October 2011 which provides:
 - Access to material released through Freedom of Information applications;
 - A central point for accessing background reports, Government reviews, Cabinet summaries, Government data and community consultations; and
 - Access to a growing number of Government data sets which can be used by application developers and researchers.

Ongoing Open Government initiatives include:

- Increasing the number of reports and datasets available to the Community through creation of Whole-of-Government policy, procedures and targets;
- A '*knowledge management project*' to promote accessibility of data, sharing of information and the business of government; and
- Exploring new ways to use social media to engage with the community.

Whilst embracing new technology to communicate to the broader community, the Government acknowledges that information for seniors needs to be available in a range of formats as the older age spectrum covers a number of generations, many of whom are not well-versed in the use of current technology. With this in mind, the Government continues to communicate information about programs and events through traditional media such as printed material, radio and telephone, and offers assistance to seniors who wish to increase their technological skills. Libraries ACT, for example, offer 'Internet for Seniors' classes and technology 'tasters' that demonstrate social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 1:

Future initiatives to improve information transfer include:

- Promoting Seniors Information Online (www.seniors.act.gov.au) and improving its ease of access and usage.
- Gradually integrating social media tools into the pages of the Office for Ageing and Seniors Information Online.

2. Enhances health delivery service hubs to cater for the broad needs of older people.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government acknowledges that as people live longer, the prevalence of chronic diseases and associated co-morbidity and mobility issues will increase markedly. This changing pattern of disease will create greater diversity in the care needs of older people, especially among those aged over 85 where it will present new challenges in caring for the very frail.

In order to respond to increasing diversity in the care needs of older people, the ACT Government is developing a broader range of services that are integrated and coordinated across the aged care sector, the rehabilitation sector and the broader health sector, both within and outside of public health services.

Through the Health Infrastructure Program, the ACT Government is committed to investing in health services to meet the growth in demand for acute, sub-acute, rehabilitation and community based services for older Canberrans, ensuring access to the best possible services in the least invasive environment. This commitment includes expanding the range of acute and sub-acute hospital services, transition and community based services.

The '*Your health – our priority*' (Stage 1 and Stage 2) public communication documents outlined at the start of the Health Infrastructure Program Planning process, outline the ACT Government's goals for the health system of the future and the infrastructure program designed to achieve those goals.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 2:

An updated public communication document on the ACT Government Health Infrastructure Program is currently being developed with an expected release date in the first half of 2012.

This will raise awareness of the work ACT Government is doing to meet the ACT population's health needs for the future, including the increasing diversity of needs of our older people.

3. Ensures that Canberra Connect's accessibility be improved to reduce waiting times by employing more staff (including seniors in call centres) and increased hours of service i.e. beyond 9am-5pm.

Current Government initiatives:

Canberra Connect's shopfronts are currently located mostly in town centres (with the exception of Dickson) and are part of the main shopping precincts in these areas. Shopfront wait times are under 12 minutes on average.

Libraries ACT provide internet computers so that seniors can access the Canberra Connect website across the library's opening hours each week.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 3:

Continuous quality improvement will continue to be pursued by the Government, seeking other forums to share information. Work will be undertaken to improve response times.

4. Introduces information sessions, via multi-media, targeting older age groups, on all ageing related matters, to be introduced in 2012.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government provides relevant information to seniors through a variety of media including print, radio, telephone, email, the internet, as well as through face-to-face communication.

Opportunities for older people to attend information sessions presented by a number of Government agencies and seniors groups on a variety of age-related topics are held throughout the year, including during Seniors Week. Examples of topics covered in Seniors Week 2011 included: 'Accommodation Options', 'Accessible Design for Successful Ageing', 'Independent Living Centre Drop-In Sessions' and a seminar on the importance of having a Will and Enduring Power of Attorney.

The Office for Ageing periodically provides community information sessions on such topics as elder abuse prevention, the ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing, Seniors Grants and Sponsorships and engaging with seniors for professionals.

In 2011, the Health Directorate introduced a 'Find a health service' on-line portal (<http://www.health.act.gov.au/health-services/find-a-health-service>) with a link to this in Seniors Information Online. The Directorate also provides access to Health*Insite*, an online health information service (www.healthinsite.gov.au), and a 24 hour telephone health advice service (1800 022 222), both of which are administered by healthdirect Australia. The Public Trustee has expanded its information sessions on the importance of having an up-to-date Will and Enduring Power of Attorney by introducing an annual Wills Week in

October 2011. Two information sessions will be held during Wills Week to complement an equivalent session held each year during Seniors Week.

The ACT Government website lists all social media accounts such as Twitter, You Tube and blogs that can provide information for seniors. These are at:

<http://www.act.gov.au/browse/about-act-government/social-media>

See also response to Recommendation 1.

COTA ACT currently receives Government funding to provide peer education sessions such as the Positive Outcomes Program (POP). This consists of free, fun and interactive 45 minute information sessions designed to help seniors better consider and respond to their diet, fitness and general wellbeing. COTA ACT is also funded to provide education sessions on mental health and medicines.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 4:

The ACT Government continues to seek opportunities to engage with Canberrans through the *Time to Talk* campaign. The *Time to Talk* website at <http://www.timetotalk.act.gov.au> provides an opportunity to comment on ACT Government community engagement activities.

The Office for Ageing will continue to respond to requests from the community to speak on relevant topics.

5. Ensures that facilities are more accessible to address the issues of parking, opening hours, mobility and safety - particularly with new buildings.

Current Government initiatives:

Canberra's membership of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities involves continually assessing and improving the city's age-friendliness to create an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing.

Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure documents the technical standards applicable to all infrastructure works constructed by, on behalf of, or for ultimate management by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate of the ACT Government. They are intended for use by professionals involved in the planning, design and construction of urban infrastructure in the ACT and complement the appropriate National Standards and Guides. The Standards provide guidelines on pedestrian and cycling facilities, parking areas, public lighting design, shopping centre pavements and other public urban space infrastructure.

Recent changes to the Building Code of Australia (2011) include measures for the design and delivery of new property construction to fully align with the requirements for full accessibility in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This focuses on providing building facilities that are accessible to all irrelevant of age. For existing buildings,

when facilities upgrade work triggers the requirement to comply with the current Building Code of Australia, the facilities are also required to respond to DDA requirements.

The Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner can take complaints regarding age discrimination in accessing premises under the *Discrimination Act 1991*.

The ACT Government has a number of initiatives to address infrastructure and safety matters. Roads ACT addresses safety issues relating to lighting and community path deficiencies on a prioritised case-by-case basis through the capital upgrade program. All maintenance condition issues are inspected and prioritised within the annual recurrent maintenance program. Territory and Municipal Services Directorate is currently upgrading bus stops and shelters to meet the legislative compliance target of 55% of bus stops meeting disability standards in accordance with the DDA by 2012. This work is being done through the 'bus stop upgrade to disability standards' capital works program.

Since undertaking a recent public safety survey in Civic, Manuka and Kingston, the ACT Government, through ACTION, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate has taken steps to increase lighting in areas such as bus stations with ACT Government CCTV Safety Systems. Unnecessary street furniture has been removed to open up public spaces and allow CCTV cameras to obtain better footage.

Older Women's Safety Audits funded through the 2010-11 ACT Government Seniors Grants and Sponsorship Program provided opportunities for older women to discuss safety concerns and generate ideas for improving the safety of public spaces. The final project report will be submitted to ACT Government in early 2012.

Canberra Connect has in recent years upgraded its disability access and installed hearing loops in its Shopfronts, especially to assist senior customers. This was recognised through an ACT Government Inclusion Award.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 5:

The ACT Government will consider recommendations of the Older Women's Safety Audit Report to prioritise actions addressing this recommendation.

Outcomes of the Transport for Canberrans consultations will provide actions relevant to this recommendation. Consultations closed in 2011, but the papers can be viewed at <http://www.timetotalk.act.gov.au/time-to-talk/transport/>

6. Introduces publications that are more user friendly, translated into community languages, and that are meaningful to the targeted age group, to be commenced in 2012.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues, accessible to as many people as possible. Members of the public with difficulty reading

standard printed documents can request publications in alternative formats such as large print or audio; those whose first language is not English can access the Translating and Interpreting Service; and people with a hearing or speech impairment can request the TTY typewriter service or National Relay Service.

Further support for people whose first language is not English has been provided by the Commonwealth Government. In July 2011, funding of \$2.2 million was provided to engage interpreter services to help older people in aged care facilities from non-English speaking backgrounds to communicate on health and aged care matters. The new service will include on-site visits and telephone interpreting services and services will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Libraries ACT is a partner in providing a website called *My Language* which is a portal to enable people to search and find information on the internet in over 65 languages. *My Language* provides access to information links: search engines, web directories, government websites, digital library projects and syndicated news headlines.

See also Recommendation 1.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 6:

The Office of Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is currently drafting the ACT Language Policy. The ACT Language Policy sets out the responsibilities of the ACT Government in regards to language accessibility and interpreter services. The ACT Language Policy will be released in early 2012.

7. Improves support services for carers of people with mental health issues living in the community.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government recognises the important role of carers in the ACT.

In October 2011, the ACT Government launched the ACT Carers' Charter which acknowledges the vital role that carers have in the lives of people they care for and raises awareness about the contribution that they make in strengthening our community. The Charter is a policy framework to guide the way government and community services meet the needs of carers in the ACT.

In the 2010-11 Budget, the ACT Government allocated \$424,000 over four years for a Carers Advocacy Service. The Service, provided by Carers ACT, commenced on 1 July 2011 and provides individual or family advocacy on a one-to-one basis to resolve difficult or complex matters. This may involve navigating service systems, negotiating with services, referrals, or support in dealing with specific concerns about caring for people with disability, mental illness, chronic conditions or the frail aged.

The Carers Advocacy Service works in conjunction with existing carers support services in the ACT to streamline access to services and better support carers in the ACT community.

In September 2011, ACT Mental Health Services appointed a carer consultant, whose role is to ensure that the Service responds to the needs of carers, including carers of older people.

In addition, the Health Directorate Older Persons Mental Health Unit has supported staff to undertake facilitator training in the Partners in Depression Course, run by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health. Clinically trained Health Directorate staff have run several six week courses in 2011 for carers of older mental health consumers. Older Persons Mental Health Unit staff have also participated in outreach mental health education for staff in ACT aged care residential facilities.

The Human Rights Commission has powers under the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* to take complaints about:

- health services, including services for carers of people with a physical or medical condition
- services for people with a disability and their carers
- services for older people and their carers

A carer may make a complaint to the Commission about a service provided to them as a carer, or on behalf of a person in their care.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 7:

The ACT Government will support an ACT Carers Summit in early 2012. The Summit will involve representatives from the caring and community sector and Government, and will explore options and opportunities in the areas of housing, tenancy and support options available to people with a disability in the ACT, including the needs of people who have a mental illness and dual disability.

8. Reduces the burden on community groups to reapply for grant funding with an accreditation process.

Current Government initiatives:

In 2010, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services undertook a review of grants administration and in 2011 the ACT Government released its *Administration of Grants in the ACT Policy*. Neither of these recommended that an accreditation system be adopted. The Government advises that an accreditation process would not reduce the work required by community organisations. Even with a 'pre-approved' system, specific grant applications would still need to be submitted to clarify who is applying, current contact details, current legal and insurance status, current bank details, and to outline the nature of, and rationale for, the proposed project.

The 2011 *Administration of Grants in the ACT Policy* was developed to enable consistent, efficient and effective administration of ACT Government grants in accordance with legislation and government policy objectives. This Policy is supported by the ACT Government Grants Portal which enables applicants to find information on, and apply for, more than 22 ACT Government grant programs. The website is located at <http://www.grants.act.gov.au/>.

The site has been developed to assist applicants find the best source of funding and, in some cases, manage their applications online through the *SmartyGrants* grants administration system. This software has been adopted by a number of ACT Government agencies, including the Community Services Directorate and the Health Directorate, to streamline grant application processes. It provides a user-friendly on-line format for organisations to complete and submit their applications and supporting documents. It is expected that this system will be expanded within the ACT Government. The *SmartyGrants* system does not facilitate the automated re-use of organisational profiles for multiple grant applications, as this would not be good practice due to inevitable changes in staff and organisational details.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 8:

One of the options being considered in the ACT Government's Targeted Assistance Strategy, currently under development, is to work with our community sector partners to streamline service purchasing arrangements and reduce overheads. The Strategy is expected to be finalised by the end of March 2012.

9. Introduces a program into the ACT school curriculum to educate students about the importance of respecting elders in our community, e.g. through intergenerational sharing of stories and experiences.

Current Government initiatives:

In the ACT, public schools presently work with two distinct curriculum documents. These are the Australian Curriculum and ACT curriculum framework for Preschool to year 10, *Every Chance to Learn*. Both these documents address the need for educating our students about the importance of showing consideration for their elders.

Using the Australian Curriculum, teachers will use a number of strategies to support students' understanding of the need to respect older people. These include examining and commenting on photographs and oral histories of parents, grandparents and other elders and listening to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders, grandparents and older community members tell stories associated with the local language groups and the land to which they belong. The Australian Curriculum also has general capabilities interwoven through it. These refer to ethical behaviour, personal and social competence and intercultural understanding. These general capabilities engage students in developing concern for and understanding of others. In terms of understanding older people, these

capabilities are enacted through hosting grandparents in schools, visiting retirement villages and through specific lessons on respect, recognition and understanding.

In areas not yet covered by the Australian Curriculum, *Every Chance to Learn* is used as the core curriculum document, including teaching students about understanding and respecting older persons.

Many ACT Seniors Grants have supported intergenerational activities, such as bringing school choirs into aged-care homes, and encouraging young people from the Tamil community to learn traditional cooking skills from their seniors.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 9:

Libraries ACT is investigating a Grandparents and Books program based on one operating in the United States.

The ACT Government supports the establishment of an ACT Grandparents Day on the last Sunday in October. This celebration is an opportunity to bring families together to celebrate and honour older people and highlight the contribution grandparents make to family and community life.

10. Promotes greater respect for older persons through increased public relations that highlights the personal experiences and stories of older people.

Current Government initiatives:

The Office for Ageing within the Community Services Directorate has a key role in promoting positive ageing through a range of programs and events. The Life's Reflections Photographic Competition, the Seniors Grants and Sponsorships Program and the Older Persons Assembly itself have provided opportunities to promote a more positive profile of older Canberrans through the media.

The Office for Ageing publishes 'Talking about older people in our community', a leaflet which refutes some of the negative community perceptions held about older people. The Office also publishes the ACT Business Guide to Older Customers and the Guide to Mature Workers, both of which aim to promote the status of older people to the business community.

The Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate administer the Canberra Gold Chief Minister's Awards to recognise the unique contribution and commitment of individuals and groups who have resided or operated in the ACT for fifty years or more. A total of 2538 individuals and 44 groups have now received a Gold Award since its inception in 2005. In 2010 and 2011 the Canberra Museum and Gallery hosted the Canberra Gold Exhibition, where award recipients were honoured through a series of short stories and artefacts. The most recent Canberra Gold exhibition ran from 26 February to 26 July 2011, with an attendance of approximately 17,500 people. On 15 March 2011 a special community program was held:

Canberra's Golden Tales: A Canberra Day Morning Tea in association with the exhibition and the Canberra Festival.

Libraries ACT, through the ACT Heritage Library seeks to have the stories of older Canberrans (in hard copy or digital format) deposited in the library as a record of the social history of Canberra.

The Federal Age Discrimination Commissioner is working to overcome age prejudice in society by publishing 'Age Positive' stories on the Commission website that highlight valuable contributions being made by older people. More information can be found at: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/age-positive/index.html>.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 10:

The Canberra Museum and Gallery will continue to host the Canberra Gold Exhibition, with the next one scheduled for 10 March to 1 July 2012.

The Office for Ageing will continue to explore opportunities to highlight the personal experiences and stories of older people, for example, through the placing of photographs from the Life's Photographic Competition on its website, and using the media and occasional publications.

Libraries ACT will continue to seek stories as a record of the social history of Canberra.

11. Uses its influence in inter-governmental and inter-sectoral bodies to ensure that the ACT has a comprehensive range of support services which are of a high standard and produce good outcomes.

Current Government initiatives:

The Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) principle focus in 2010-2011 was on progressing national health care reforms. The reforms, agreed to by all governments, delivered States an additional \$16.4 billion over four years.

The ACT will be a major beneficiary of the new arrangements receiving an extra \$300 million in Commonwealth health funding between 2014-15 and 2019-20.

Work underway includes developing a National Disability Insurance Scheme and National Injury Insurance Scheme which will provide a unified approach aimed at improving the lives of people with a disability.

Under the national health reform, the Commonwealth will take full funding responsibility for the provision of basic community care services through the Home and Community Care program (HACC) program for clients over the age of 65 years (and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years) from 1 July 2011 and full operational responsibility from 1 July 2012 (except in Victoria and Western Australia).

The Commonwealth has committed to no changes to service delivery during the first three years of the changed roles and responsibilities. The Territory will retain funding and program responsibility for the provision of basic community care services under the HACC program for clients under 65 years (and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under 50 years).

A new national partnership agreement will govern the transition year of 2011-12, with a number of key projects to be completed prior to 30 June 2012. As the Territory will become responsible for the delivery of basic community care services to those under 65 years, the Health Directorate will be working closely with the Community Services Directorate to explore the interfaces between the provision of basic community care services and specialist disability services.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 11:

The ACT Government *access health* document sets the future direction for public health services for the next three years. *access health* is about ensuring that people have access to the right type of health care and through our partners in primary health *access health* will help us maintain our high standard of health in the ACT and ensure that we build on a good foundation to provide health care to our residents when and where they need it.

Following recommendation 12.5 of the 2011 Productivity Commission 'Caring for Older Australians' Inquiry Report, the ACT Government expects to work in the near future with other Australian jurisdictions through COAG to harmonise retirement village regulation.

12. Provides access to health related services on a needs basis for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT continue to experience poorer health outcomes than non-Aboriginal residents and has developed a number of initiatives aimed at improving this situation.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Portal found on Health Directorate website provides information about access to health and community services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

<http://health.act.gov.au/health-services/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander/>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families can also seek aged care services and referrals from the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service.

Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) is funded by the ACT Government to provide a range of services under the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) including domestic assistance, social support, personal care, home maintenance and transport. NAC also receives funding from the Commonwealth, for community aged care packages in both the ACT and NSW, and from the NSW Government for HACC services.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 12:

Information and communication strategies around options for aged care services will be considered in the review and refresh of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Family Wellbeing Plan* currently being undertaken by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Forum.

Members of the Health Forum include the: Winnunga Nimmityjah Health Service; ACT Medicare Local; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body; Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing; and the Health Directorate.

Recommendations from Afternoon Committee Hearings (in order of priority):
That the ACT Government:

- 1. Allows part-time casual employment to meet the needs of special groups, and review, re-invigorate and enforce ACT policies on employment of older persons.**

Current Government initiatives:

The Federal Department of Treasury's Third Intergenerational Report - *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges* indicates that the number of people aged over the traditional retirement age is increasing both as an absolute number and as a percentage of the population. The Report suggests that a future healthy economy is dependent on maximising the number of people in the workforce, and maximising participation (hours worked) and productivity levels. This includes the need to retain and utilise the skills and experience of older workers and remove barriers and disincentives to participation.

The ACT Government, through its ACT public service enterprise bargaining agreements, has adopted various initiatives to encourage the continued employment of mature age employees. In mid-2008 the Government was the first public sector jurisdiction to introduce provisions allowing for up to 52 weeks grandparental leave without pay to be granted to permanent full, or part time, staff and to long-term temporary staff.

Grandparental leave is provided to staff who are immediate family grandparents, step-grandparents, grandparents through adoption, or through their children taking parental responsibility under a law of a State or Territory (e.g. *ACT Children's and Young People Act 2008*). The way grandparental leave can be taken is extremely flexible. It can be taken as single or multiple days within a week, fortnight or month or in blocks suitable to particular family situations.

The ACT Government was the first to introduce a Mature Age Payment (MAP) to staff seventy years or older where the payment of employer superannuation contributions is prohibited under superannuation legislation or under superannuation fund membership rules. Under the MAP, staff can be paid a fortnightly additional payment of 9% where it is deemed that the employee possesses the knowledge, skill and experience for the Directorate to retain. The ACT Government also encourages mature age employees to consider transition to retirement including the conversion to part time employment.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 1:

Work is continuing on the development of an ACT Public Service Mature Age Employment Strategy, consistent with commitments made as part of Enterprise Agreements.

On 30 March 2011, the Federal Government established the Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians. The panel considered how Australia can capitalise on the varied life experiences and intellectual capital of all senior Australians. In December 2011, the panel released its third and final report, *Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: turning grey into gold*. The Recommendations of the Report included:

Recommendation 13: The federal government engage peak employer and industry groups to assist individual employers to develop and implement older worker employment strategies, starting with a series of high profile seminars across the country.

Recommendation 14: The federal, state and territory governments: embed age diversity within their workforces and model best practice on attracting, developing, and retaining older workers; and report annually on age diversity in each agency and successful initiatives put in place.

Recommendation 15: The federal government work with industry to extend flexible work arrangements to people aged 55 and over; by amending the National Employment Standards to include the right to request flexible work for this age group; or through best practice industry standards.

The Federal Government is currently considering their response to recommendations of this Report.

The report can be found at:

http://www.treasury.gov.au/EPISA/content/publications/grey_gold/

2. Incorporates Universal Design principles in all infrastructure and buildings by end of 2012, with retrofitting as well as new developments.

Current Government initiatives:

Universal design standards deliver accessible and adaptable private dwellings that improve independence and social inclusion, enhancing the ability to age in the home.

Under the Affordable Housing Strategy, the ACT Government has committed to incorporating Universal Design Guidelines (UDG) for a proportion of new, detached housing. This initiative was announced as part of Phase II of the Affordable Housing Action Plan, to support housing options for older people who want to 'age in place'. The ACT UDG will adopt the principles of the Commonwealth Government's 'Livable Housing Design Guidelines'.

Access to public buildings is subject to capital works bids and provides for wheelchair style access.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 2:

The percentage of new detached developments that will comply with UDG is currently under consideration.

UDG will be incorporated into the Building Code of Australia.

3. Considers legislative changes and incentives to promote the positive aspects of employing older workers, and to dispel the myths regarding older workers.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Discrimination Act 1991 makes it unlawful to treat a person unfavourably because of their age. The ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner takes complaints of unlawful discrimination under the Act; promotes an understanding and acceptance of and compliance with the Act; and undertakes research and develop educational and other programs to promote the objectives of the Act.

The Federal Government has also recently appointed the Hon Susan Ryan AO as Australia's first full-time Age Discrimination Commissioner. This is the first time such a position has been created at the federal level, and represents a positive step forward in ensuring that age discrimination is on an equal footing with other areas of discrimination.

The Age Discrimination Commissioner is responsible for raising awareness of age discrimination, educating the community about the impact of age discrimination and monitoring and advocating for the elimination of age discrimination across all areas of public life. The Commissioner also has a particular focus on addressing barriers to equality and participation faced by mature workers and older Australians.

In order to promote the positive aspects of employing older workers, and to dispel the myths regarding older workers, the ACT Government in collaboration with the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and the business community have developed an *ACT Business Guide to Older Customers* and an *ACT Business Guide to Seniors to Mature Age Workers*. These Guides provide practical information and advice to assist the ACT business community to better understand, and respond to, the needs of seniors as customers and employees. The Guides have been promoted with the assistance of the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Canberra Business Council. The Guides have been distributed widely to the ACT business community, with some businesses incorporating them in staff training.

Other ACT Government employment initiatives are identified in Recommendation 1.

4. Establishes an incentive scheme to utilise the skills and experience of older persons for the benefit of society e.g. barter/ exchange of skills and services; mentoring; contributing to community skills.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government recognises the contribution made by many older people through paid and unpaid work.

In addition to the response to Recommendation 1 and 3, the Government offers 3 days paid leave to full-time ACT Government employees wishing to volunteer.

The Golden Gurus Program, which commenced on 1 January 2010, provides mature age Australians (aged 50 years and over) with a range of opportunities to support community organisations and small businesses. This national Program aims to recognise the valuable contribution that mature age people make to Australian communities and small businesses. Through Golden Gurus, mature age Australians are able to meet new people, develop social networks, access free training, and participate in an Ambassadors Program.

The Program aims to raise awareness among mature age people and the community of the benefits of skilled volunteering and small business mentoring. The Program also aims to increase:

- the number of mature age people who participate in skilled volunteering and small business mentoring roles; and
- the availability of skilled volunteering and small business mentoring opportunities for mature age people.

The Golden Gurus Program is being delivered by a community of Golden Guru Member Organisations across Australia. The Smith Family has been listed under ACT organisations on the Golden Gurus website. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to organisations delivering the program, to help prepare mentors for their roles.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 4:

In late 2011, to better encourage and recognise volunteering, the Community Services Directorate launched the ACT Volunteering Statement. Titled 'Volunteering thrives in the ACT', the Statement sets out four concise high-level principles which recognise the benefits, opportunities and requirements associated with volunteering and represents a central point of reference for volunteering in the ACT.

The Volunteering Statement provides a platform for good practice and a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to supporting and recognising volunteers. The Community Services Directorate is now promoting this initiative through posters, bags and wallet cards.

The Office for Ageing will continue to promote Volunteering ACT and the on-line tool 'Go Volunteer', through Seniors Information Online.

http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/ageing/ACT_Seniors_Directory/volunteering

Those interested in volunteering in the ACT are encouraged to visit:
www.volunteeringact.org.au

5. Releases land and shorten building approval times in areas where older people want to live; and reduce stamp duty.

Current Government initiatives:

Under the ACT Indicative Lane Release Program, land will be released for 600 aged care units in the period 2011-12 to 2014-15.

The ACT Government Revenue Office administers the Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme on behalf of the ACT Government. The Scheme assists eligible pensioners to move to accommodation more suited to their needs by charging duty at a concessional rate. The Scheme commenced on 1 July 2008 and was to expire on 30 June 2011, but has been extended for one more year. At a more general level, the ACT Taxation Review will assess the overall efficiency and equity of the ACT taxation system.

Draft Variation 306 to the Territory Plan proposes to include a new form of residential use – “secondary residence”. Subject to certain conditions secondary residences are proposed to be permissible on all blocks over 500m². This will provide more housing choice by enabling elderly persons to remain at their address by moving out of the main residence into a smaller residence on the same block, which is also built to adaptable housing standards.

6. Funds/provides a service to help maintain physical health and wellbeing by providing age appropriate practitioners who have access to e-health.

Current Government initiatives:

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle plays an important role in supporting older people to age well.

The Health Promotion Branch within the ACT Government’s Health Directorate, has formulated close links between Medicare locals, and the primary and chronic disease network to assist with maintaining physical health and wellbeing.

In recognition of GP access difficulties in the ACT, a GP business-hours locum service to support GPs and residents of residential aged care facilities has been implemented. It will receive GP referrals and provide primary care to patients in the community, such as those in residential aged-care facilities or who are house-bound.

The GP Development Fund is another initiative which is a four year bi-annual grants pool totalling \$4 million for general practices that commit to attracting, retaining, sustaining and developing the general practice workforce. It is one of the five initiatives within the GP Workforce Program, a package of \$12 million over four years to support and expand our general practice workforce.

The Health Promotion Branch of the Health Directorate has been actively promoting healthy lifestyles through the ACT community and in particular through a free phone ‘Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service’ (1300 806 258). 19.2% of calls made to this service were from the 50-59 age group and 13% from the 60-69 age group.

The Health Promotion Branch also continues to promote healthier lifestyles through the ‘Swap it. Don’t stop it’ campaign. This campaign is partially funded by the Commonwealth Government and promotes the message of swapping unhealthy behaviours for healthy behaviours such as food portion sizes, physical activity and active transport. This campaign has been promoted on TV, print and through local events.

The Health Promotion Branch coordinates a mail-out to all 45-49 year olds encouraging them to be proactive regarding healthy ageing and to go to their GP for a health check. The Branch also funds the Heart Foundation's Heartmoves (<http://heartmoves.heartfoundation.org.au>) and walking programs (<http://www.canwalk.org.au>) as well as social marketing messages such as 'Find 30 per day' to encourage all Canberrans to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Promotion of lifelong health and fitness through the Health Promotion Branch and Sport and Recreation Services is also encouraged. Some of the projects funded in the 2010/11 *Stay On Your Feet Falls Prevention Round* included:

- Arthritis ACT – Helping people with musculoskeletal conditions to stay on their feet.
- Diabetes Australia ACT – Diabetes Education and Falls Prevention Exercise in High Risk Populations.
- The Goodwin Falls Prevention Program.
- Multiple Sclerosis Ltd – Tai Chi for Health and Balance.
- Southside Community Services (SCS) – Falls Prevention for a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Population.

The Health Directorate has a number of existing or planned initiatives aimed at improving the accessibility of clinical and service information for both consumers and health care providers.

The implementation of a Health Services Directory was publicly launched in September 2011. Based upon the Victorian Health Services Directory, it is aimed at providing a single source of provider information for access by both consumers and health service providers on Health Services operating within the ACT. The Service Directory is currently populated with Health Directorate, community pharmacy and GP practice information, with dental and allied health services planned as the next services to be targeted for inclusion.

The Health Directorate currently provides Electronic Discharge Summaries and electronic pathology reports to all GPs with the necessary Practice Management Software. The electronic provision of radiology reports from the Emergency Department is also in the process of being implemented and is planned for full release in February 2012.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 6:

The Canberra Institute of Technology plans to run a fee-for-service physical health program for older adults if there is sufficient demand.

The GP Development Fund will continue (funded to June 2013) to assist in developing a sustainable general practice workforce.

The Health Directorate, is an active participant in the national Personally Controlled Electronic Health Records (PCEHR) system, and will be in the position to be able to participate in this program when this national system becomes available.

In the first instance, services within the Health Directorate will be able to view information housed within the PCEHR shared record and provide a copy of discharge summaries.

The implementation of a Consumer Portal, with the purpose of providing consumers of Health Directorate services with access to information maintained within the Health Directorate about their health care and to provide a platform on which future interactions between consumers and service providers may occur electronically e.g. Sharing and updating Care Plans. The first phase of this project is to provide consumers with access to the list of their scheduled appointments, a list of their previous episodes of care, access to their discharge summaries, notification of referrals requiring renewal, and the ability to update changes to their address information held within the Health Directorate. This project has been approved and is in the implementation planning phase.

The implementation of electronic medication management within the Health Directorate will enable the ability to improve the capture and sharing of medication information with other providers. This project is in the procurement phase.

7. Considers group accommodation and cooperative housing for single older persons at appropriate sites.

Current Government initiatives:

Through the Intentional Community Housing Initiative, Disability ACT has worked closely with Housing ACT to develop housing solutions that respond to the unique accommodation needs of people with disability.

A number of projects have been progressed including:

- a purpose built house for four younger people with high and complex care needs who moved out of residential aged care in November 2010; and
- an innovative accommodation option that develops approximately 25 properties on one site with some dwellings specifically for people with disability.

Housing models developed through this initiative may be suitable for single older people.

Betty Searle House is currently sub-let by Housing ACT to Community Housing Canberra Affordable Housing as group share accommodation for older single women. There are options to further explore this model based on the appropriate location and tenancy management.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 7:

In January 2012, the ACT Government promoted 19 new properties across Canberra that were available for lease under an ACT Government-funded initiative which has already eased the rental burden for six older Canberra couples. The *Come Home Affordable Rental Scheme*, run by the ACT Affordable Rental office, offers homes within older persons public housing complexes at a 25 per cent discounted rate to eligible older couples and individuals who currently rent in the private market.

Also in January 2012, the ACT Government announced the sale of land parcels in Isabella Plains and Calwell to two prominent operators of accommodation for people over 55 and residential aged care (Lend Lease and Innovative Care). These property developments form part of the ACT Government's on-going planned approach to providing for the accommodation needs and preferences of older Canberrans. The construction of these developments is expected to commence in late 2012.

8. Ensures that all footpaths are constructed and maintained to facilitate safe sharing between pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters.

Current Government initiatives:

All footpaths constructed within the ACT are constructed to the relevant Australian and Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) standards. Roads ACT have in place a system for on-going inspection and maintenance of footpaths. Areas of inspection are ranked based on their location to services such as shopping centres, schools and aged care facilities. Roads ACT have identified 26 high pedestrian movement areas which are inspected more frequently.

The provision of footpaths within new estates is a requirement of the Territory Plan and of the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.

All footpaths and off-road cycle paths within the ACT are classified as community paths that can be shared by both pedestrians and cyclists. The ACT road rules state that cyclists must give way to pedestrians. Roads ACT are continually looking at the provision of more on-road cycle lanes, as either a retrofit during the resealing works or as new works in greenfield estate developments.

Canberra Connect's 'Fix My Street' initiative, introduced in mid-2010, continues to grow in popularity with 7,228 reports by the community of issues in their neighbourhood. This initiative allows residents to report issues, such as graffiti, potholes and broken paths, at any time of the day, and then track the progress of their request online.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 8:

In 2005, the ACT Planning and Land Authority issued maps of our cycle paths and footpaths titled 'The Canberra and Queanbeyan Cycling and Walking Map'. The maps need to be updated and reissued to reflect Territory and Municipal Services 'Design Standard 13 - Main Routes Network'.

The ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2011-13 includes the following action, 'Continue to provide safety measures on shared paths, including appropriate markings, signage and lighting'. One of the measures to achieve this is education and raising awareness of road users. The ACT Government 'Share the Road' campaign which promotes courtesy between all road users has potential to, over time, be expanded to also cover the issue of shared pathways.

9. Ensures that ACTION revamps its policies to: increase routes to hospitals and seniors venues; ensure bus shelters are protective; incorporate facilities on community buses for trolleys and mobility scooters; install more handrails and wheelchair spaces; more reader-friendly timetables.

Current Government initiatives:

The ACT Government recognises the need for seniors to easily move around their community and to provide affordable, safe transport and mobility options.

ACTION delivers bus services specifically targeted to older persons through the 70 series. These bus routes are dedicated accessible buses that stop at nursing homes, major and group centre shopping facilities, as well as hospitals during the week-day off-peak when older people might prefer to travel.

The option for larger print timetable exists and can be arranged for anyone that requests it. Information about this may be found on ACTION's website on the "Accessible Travel" page: http://www.action.act.gov.au/accessible_travel.html#accessiblerequest.

Community buses have Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant wheelchair lifters and each have space for two wheelchairs. ACTION's Easy Access urban transit buses are built to current Australian specifications that comply with the DDA and relevant design rules. ACTION continues to engage with the Australian bus manufacturing industry with regard to the latest accessible innovations available and wherever possible integrate those innovations into the specification of the ACTION Easy Access bus build.

The ACT Disability & Community Services Commissioner considers complaints about the provision of services for people with disability and/or for their carers and promotes improvements in the provision of services for people with disability and their carers

The regular bus services of ACTION are complemented by the ACT Community Bus Service. This service was introduced in 2008 to assist people who are at risk of being socially isolated because of a lack of transport options, including seniors with mobility or confidence problems. A similar transport program is also funded through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, a service that focuses on assisting eligible people to get to healthcare practitioners.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 9:

The ACT Government has provided funding in the 2011-12 ACT Budget for more frequent services from Woden to the Canberra Hospital. These improvements will be incorporated as part of the next network, scheduled to commence in mid 2012. Further, in 2012 the Canberra community will be invited to provide input into a more extensive review of the ACTION network in preparation for a new network in 2013. Everyone, including older people, in the community will be encouraged to contribute to discussion around the new network.

A comprehensive study of community transport is planned for early 2012. Transport Planning is also currently investigating the role of demand responsive transport in the ACT public transport system.

10. Introduces a program to support older persons to transition from their own accommodation to aged accommodation.

Current Government initiatives:

Under the Commonwealth Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan Initiative (Nation Building), the ACT received \$87m to construct social housing. The total number of properties completed is 421. As part of this initiative, and to support its older tenants 'age in place', Housing ACT commenced an older person's public housing construction program. Under the program approx 297 homes were constructed in 8 suburbs of Canberra that were adaptable, purpose built, energy efficient, easy to live in and maintain. These dwellings largely consisted of mainly two bedroom units, with a small number of three bedroom units to enable those high needs tenants requiring a live-in carer to be accommodated. Older tenants whose current home was larger than what they required were encouraged to apply for these specific older person dwellings.

The objectives were to:

- develop sites that best met older tenants needs to stay in or near familiar neighbourhoods and their established support networks;
- establish community care service provisions for each site to improve their awareness of what services were available;
- expand knowledge and understanding of our older tenants needs and improve data collection and partnership arrangement with community care providers; and
- foster community building by building strong partnerships with community care providers and housing managers.

To support the older tenants a transition support package was provided that was tailored to the individual relocation difficulty and needs. The package consisted of but was not restricted to financial assistance with:

- removalist fees;
- reconnection fees for utilities;
- cleaning of premises;
- disposal of excess goods; and
- packing/unpacking

Construction on the older person's sites has been completed and the majority of these dwellings are tenanted. Housing ACT continues to support older tenants to 'age in place' and continues to work intensively with older tenants who wish to relocate. Relocation packages are available to older tenants who wish to move to smaller accommodation that better meets their needs.

Client Support Coordinators and the Client Engagement Officer from Housing ACT 'Helping our Senior Tenants' (HOST) program are consistently developing coordination and networking opportunities to assist older public tenants. The HOST project has worked in collaboration with the Council of Ageing, Older Persons Mental Health and Red Cross to develop tools to assist in identifying the needs of seniors.

Housing ACT has completed a survey of single tenants 80 years or older. Government and community organisations have been able to provide relevant program information and assistance with accessibility to resources to those tenants that highlighted vulnerability indicators.

Beyond this initiative, properties are being constructed to support the adoption of the Liveable Housing Design under the capital construction program. The introduction of the liveable design features will allow public housing to be easily adapted as people age, supporting the concept of ageing in place. Older people can also still register to apply to move into more suitable accommodation such as in Aged Persons Flats or Units.

The Australian Government has committed to work with the States and Territories to improve transition from hospital to aged care by 2011-12 with an additional 2,000 transition care places for older Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This has enabled the expansion of the ACT Transition Care Program to increase to a total of 58 places.

The Residential Aged Care Liaison Nurse (RACLN) is part of the Aged Care Assessment and Liaison Unit, in the Residential Aged and Community Care (RACC) stream of the Health Directorate and it supports transition into aged care facilities. The RACLN offers support and advice to clients and their families who require information regarding permanent placement in a residential aged care facility. The RACLN will also assist with the transition by liaising on the client's behalf with the aged care facilities.

The Australian Government funds the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) program which is designed to help frail, low income older people who are renting, in insecure housing or who are homeless, to remain in the community. This flexible program is intended to ensure that needs are met in the most appropriate way. The type of assistance provided for ACHA clients varies to suit the needs of the individual.

ACHA providers work with state government housing authorities to assist eligible clients to obtain better, more stable accommodation. Once this is organised, the client is linked to appropriate community care services. In the ACT the ACHA program is provided by Woden Community Service Inc., Southside Community Services Inc. and Northside Community Service Inc.

The ACT Revenue Office administers the Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme on behalf of the ACT Government. The Scheme assists eligible pensioners to move to accommodation more suited to their needs by charging duty at a concessional rate. The Scheme commenced on 1 July 2008 and was to expire on 30 June 2011, but has been extended for one more

year. At a more general level, the ACT Taxation Review will assess the overall efficiency and equity of the ACT taxation system.

COTA ACT's Housing Options Advisor can assist people over the age of 50 with housing issues such as funding housing; public and private housing options; accessing community support systems to stay in your home; what to look for in buying another home; and information about the range of retirement villages and residential aged care facilities.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 10:

As stated in Recommendations 7, in January 2012, the ACT Government promoted 19 new properties across Canberra that were available for lease under an ACT Government-funded *Come Home Affordable Rental Scheme*, run by the ACT Affordable Rental office.

Also, as stated in Recommendation 7, in January 2012, the ACT Government announced the sale of land parcels in Isabella Plains and Calwell to two prominent operators of accommodation for people over 55 and residential aged care.

11. Initiates an award recognition program for ACT employers who encourage and retain older workers.

Future directions in response to Recommendation 11:

The ACT Government will explore options to institute such an award.

12. Extends Seniors week to one month – to offer more activities across the various ACT districts and create more interaction amongst older people.

Current Government initiatives:

Current annual seniors initiatives outside of Seniors Week (held in March each year) include the Seniors Sanctuary at the National Multicultural Festival (held in February), the Canberra Retirement and Lifestyle Expo (held in May), and celebrations of the International Day of Older Persons (1 October).

Future directions in response to Recommendation 12:

The ACT Government will work with COTA ACT to increase awareness about existing programs and events for seniors and to consider possibilities for providing more seniors events throughout the year.

The ACT Government supports the establishment of an ACT Grandparents Day on the last Sunday in October. This celebration is an opportunity to bring families together to celebrate and honour older people and highlight the contribution grandparents make to family and community life. In 2012, the Office for Ageing will work with the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support to develop suitable events to celebrate this day.

Next Steps

The Government Response to the recommendations of the Older Persons Assembly will guide its endeavours to support positive ageing and an age-friendly city where older people are respected, valued and supported to actively participate.

The Canberra Age Friendly City Network and ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing will continue to work with the Office for Ageing to investigate and develop additional positive ageing initiatives.

The Government proposes that an Older Persons Assembly be held once in an electoral cycle.

Appendix A: Older Persons Assembly Steering Committee members

Alan Hodges AM	ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (Co-Chair)
Meredith Whitten	Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy, Community Services Directorate (Co-Chair)
Neil Finch	Advisor, Minister Burch's Office
Adrian Roberts OAM	ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
Ken Stone	ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
Gayle Sweaney	ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
Chin Wong	ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
David Rymer	Combined Seniors Group of the ACT
Vivienne Sinderberry	COTA ACT
Jacinta Evans	Manager, Office for Ageing
Anna John	Senior Policy Officer, Office for Ageing (Secretariat)

Appendix B: Delegates

Krishan Aggarwal	Mandir Society of Australia Inc.
Hilaria Amoyen	
Chris Ansted	
Jeanne Arthur	
Margaret Astbury	ACT Retirement Villages Residents Association
Jill Bailey	
Bruce Baratta	
Annette Barbetti	Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association (SCOA)
Maureen Bartle	
Stella Battenberg	
John Brook	University of the Third Age (U3A)
Sankar Chatterjee	Indian Senior Citizens Association
David Clinch OBE	Association of Independent Retirees
Graham Cooke	
Diane Cronin	
Rhonda Daniell	
Claire Dickens	
Roslyn Dixon	Bellerive Residents Association
Brian Docherty	
Deborah Evans	
Jessie Falconer	
Marie Falconer	Carers ACT
Michael Flynn	St Vincent De Paul Society
Jennifer Fowler	
Lydia Jessma George	
Brian Gilmore	Probus - Tuggeranong
Rosemary Godfrey	
Malcolm Grimley	Belconnen Senior Citizens Club
Audrey Guy	
Elizabeth Hannan	Kangara Waters
Teri Hobbs	

Geoff Holt	
Jean Hughes	
Brian Hughes	
John Jervis	
Viola Kalokerinos	Greek Orthodox Community and Church of Canberra and District Inc.
Denise Kay	
John Kinsella	
Gwen Kirk	
Hugh Littlewood	
Margaret Lovell	
Tamara Makeev OAM	
Anne Mann	
Patricia McCabe	ACT Kindred Organisation Committee
Peter McDougall	
Herbert Michaelis	Returned Services league (RSL) Community Care
Kaye Miller	
John Neil	
Francesco Papandrea	
Joy Pettingell	National Seniors Australia
Ann Peut	Australian Association of Gerontology
Antoni Podolak	
John Robinson	
Sinnian Sivapathasingam	Tamil Senior Citizens Association
Evalyn Smith	
Venerable Quang Ba Thich	Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre
Ian Trehwella AM	
Ailsa Turrell	
Marion Watson	
John Webster	
Ray Weedon	Young at Heart
Petronella Wensing	
Ann Wentworth	COTA ACT

George Whitfield

Francis Williams JP

Sam Wong AM

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum

John Wright

Halina Zachara

*Three of the selected delegates did not attend on the day of the Older Persons Assembly.

Appendix C: Pre-briefing Program

Time	Topic	Speaker
10.00am - 10.30am	Registrations Tea and coffee on arrival	
10.30am - 10.45am	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Persons Assembly - Overview • Agenda • ACT and Federal issues 	<i>Ms Meredith Whitten</i> , Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy, Community Services Directorate <i>Mr Alan Hodges AM</i> , Chair, ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
10.45am - 11.00am	Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing - Status	<i>Ms Jacinta Evans</i> , Manager, ACT Office for Ageing <i>Mr Alan Hodges AM</i> , Chair, ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
11.00am - 11.20am	Information and communication	<i>Liz Howarth</i> , Manager, Citizens Advice Bureau <i>Bruce Thompson</i> , Manager, Communications and Engagement, Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate <i>Vanessa Little</i> , Director, Libraries ACT
11.20am - 11.35am	Health and wellbeing	<i>Merryn Hare</i> , Director, Health Promotion Branch, Health Directorate
11.35am - 11.45am	Respect, valuing and safety	<i>Mary Durkin</i> , Health Services Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission
11.45am - 12:00noon	Support services	<i>Esther Duffy</i> , Project Officer, Environment and Sustainable Development

Time	Topic	Speaker
		Directorate <i>Meredith Whitten, Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy, Community Services Directorate</i>
12.00noon - 12.30pm	Lunch	
12.30pm - 12.45pm	Housing and accommodation	<i>David Collett, Senior Director, Asset Management Branch, Community Services Directorate</i> <i>Dr Murray Coleman, Small Quinton Coleman Architects</i>
12.45pm - 13.00pm	Transport and mobility	<i>Kristin Blume, Senior Manager, Transport Policy Coordination</i> <i>Carl Pillig, Assistant Manager, Transport Support and Promotion</i>
13.00pm - 13.10pm	Work and retirement	<i>Maureen Cane, CEO, Volunteering ACT</i> <i>Des Linehan, Manager, Corporate Development, Effective People Pty Ltd</i>
13.10pm -13.30pm	Innovation and New Ideas	<i>Peter Matwijiw, Policy General Manager, National Seniors Australia</i>
13.30pm - 13.45pm	Age Friendly City Survey - Results	<i>Professor Kaarin Anstey, Director, Ageing Research Unit, Australian National University</i>
13.45pm - 14.00pm	The Legislative Assembly – Overview and Procedures	<i>Mr Neal Baudinette, Education Officer, ACT Legislative Assembly</i>
14:00pm	Close	

Appendix D: Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people who made the Older Persons Assembly such a successful event.

ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing

Alan Hodges AM (Chair)

Marion Reilly (Deputy Chair)

Pam Graudenz

Brian Hill AM

Adrian Roberts OAM

Pamela Rosenberg

Vivienne Sinderberry (COTA ACT representative)

Ken Stone

Gayle Sweaney

Chin Wong

Community Services Directorate

Meredith Whitten, Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy,
Community Services Directorate

Office for Ageing/Concessions

Jacinta Evans, Manager

Anna John, Senior Policy Officer

Gerry McKeon, Senior Policy Officer

Lindsay Burge, Senior Projects Officer

Aimee Young, Senior Projects Officer

Cathy Mayers, Team Leader, ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme

Fitri Fitri, Administrator, ACT Spectacles Scheme

Media and Communications

Kanchan Dutt, Manager

Renee Cutrupi, Senior Communications Officer

Data and Research

Gemma Wood, Senior Manager

Colin Farlow, Data and Research Officer

Scribes

Michelle Bamford, Policy Officer, Office for Women

Rebecca Collette, Senior Policy Officer, Community Development Services

Leslie Irvine, Senior Policy Officer, Community Development Services

Angela Lee, Policy Officer, Strategic Policy

Rowan Ford, Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy

Kylie Beer, Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy

Jane Roderick, Project Officer, Strategic Policy

Fran Fitzgerald, Executive Assistant, Policy and Organisational Services

Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate

Bruce Thompson, Manager, Communications and Engagement

Legislative Assembly

Tom Duncan, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Janice Rafferty, Clerk Assistant

Neal Baudinette, Education Officers

Joanne Cullen, Education Officers

Val Barrett, Manager, Hansard, Communications & Library

Ray Blundell, Technical Officer, Hansard

Rod Campbell, Security Controller/Principal Attendant as well as other Assembly attendants.

Other

Neil Finch, Advisor, Minister Burch's Office

David Rymer, Combined Seniors Group of the ACT