

Department of TERRITORY FAMILIES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Northern Territory Seniors Policy 2021-2026



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Minister's message



The Northern Territory (NT) Government wants to keep senior Territorians safe and healthy and provide opportunities to increase their quality of life as they age.

The findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety offers a strong reminder of our obligations to examine the way we care for our ageing population. Our focus is on supporting people to age with dignity and respect, ensuring they can access the services they need to maintain their independence, and providing high quality services that protect their safety and rights. We also commit to working closely with the Australian Government, who has funding, regulatory and policy responsibility for residential and community home based aged care for people over 65 and for Aboriginal people over 50.

To achieve our goals, senior Territorians must first and foremost be recognised and celebrated. Age need not be a barrier to participation or engagement.

The NT Seniors Policy, over the next five years, will guide a whole-of-government approach to revitalising pathways to services and programs for senior Territorians. The Policy Priorities, Actions and Outcomes will ensure reforms are embedded in service delivery and reinforce Government's commitment to work

in partnership with seniors and service providers to:

- minimise ageist views that affect individuals, families and the wider community and address wrong assumptions about older adults
- tackle the abuse of older persons
- provide events to inspire participation of seniors in community groups and social activities for a healthy lifestyle
- support families caring for loved ones who may be experiencing physical and cognitive issues and planning for end of life.

This Policy has been guided by feedback from public consultations and the Minister's Advisory Council for Senior Territorians.

The release of the NT Seniors Policy is a starting point to effect change. The Implementation Plan to be released later this year, will provide more detail on how coordinated efforts will make the changes NT seniors have asked for their communities, all levels of Government, the community sector and relevant partnerships.

The Hon Lauren Moss MLA
Minister for Seniors

August 2021

Introduction

The NT currently has the fastest population growth rate of seniors aged 65 years and older in Australia. The demand for services for senior Territorians will continue to expand across the next five years. Four priority areas and a range of actions have been outlined to provide future directions to address these priorities for our ageing population.

Staying healthy and active for as long as possible and having the financial and social resources to maintain connections to our family, our friends and our community

is what we all seek and this is no different as we get older. This is strongly supported by the NT Government through the targeted policy directions and through a whole-of-government response.

The NT Seniors Policy 2021-2026 is grounded in acknowledging active ageing and age-friendly communities that support senior Territorians in their independence and wellbeing. Communities where all Territorians recognise and respond proactively to our growing senior population.



Seniors in the Territory

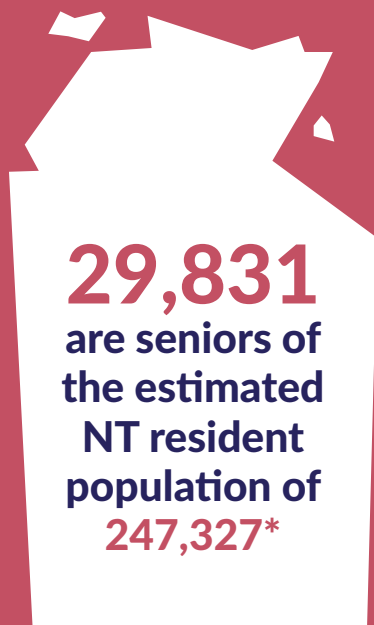
Seniors are an important and vital part of the NT community that come from a range of backgrounds including Aboriginal nations and people who have decided to make the NT their home, including migrants. As a population group, senior Territorians are a significant driver and contributor to the economy, society and communities.

The NT Seniors Policy 2021-2026 is inclusive of people from the age of 50. This approach allows for future planning to accommodate an increasing ageing population and takes into account that there are particular cohorts of the NT community that currently have lower life expectancy rates.

For the purposes of particular legislation, programs and services however, the following categories apply:

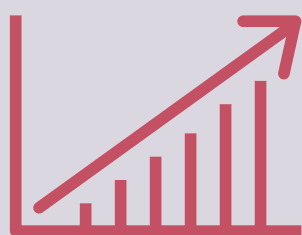
- to be eligible for an Age Pension people must be 66 years or older
- the NT Seniors Recognition Scheme (NTSRS) is for eligible NT residents aged 65 years and over
- the NT Concession Scheme (NTCS) is for eligible NT residents in receipt of an eligible Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs pension
- NT residents are eligible to register for an NT Seniors Discount Card at 60 years or older.





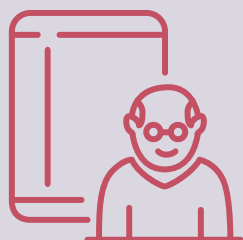
Majority of seniors reside in suburbs in the major urban centres of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy, there are also 73 remote communities across the NT where seniors live.

The Territory's total population will grow from 245,678 in 2016 to 351, 607 in 2046. The Projections of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations show steady population ageing, with the proportion of persons aged 65 and over projected to increase.¹



43%
total population
growth by 2046

The proportion of people over
65 years
is projected to increase



In 2020-21, a total of **20,762**
Territorians accessed concessions and
payments under the NTCS and NTSRS.



At 30 June 2021 the membership
of the NTSRS was 15,564 and the
NTCS membership was 17,953.²



64% of seniors rated their satisfaction level with health and medical services in the last year at 8 or above³



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82% feel very safe or relatively safe in their community³

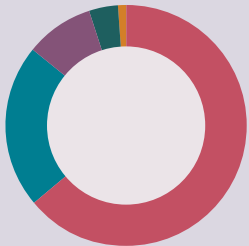


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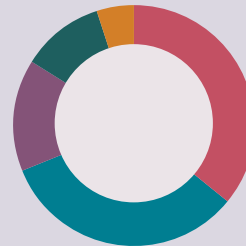
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62%

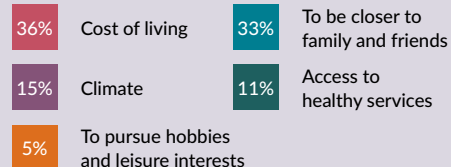
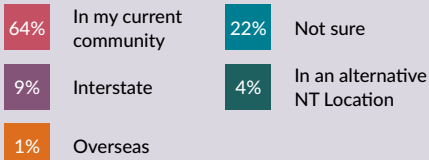
20%



68% thought they would still be living in the Territory in 5 years³



36% said cost of living was the main reason why people would leave the Territory³



* Australian Bureau of Statistics June 2018

1 Source: Department of Treasury and Finance Northern Territory Population Projections 2019 release

2 Source: Territory Families, Housing and Communities, NT Concessions Unit, July 2021

3 Source: Taken from a snapshot of COTA NT's 2018 Survey of Senior Territorians with responses from 900 people aged between 50 and 100yrs.

Vision and Principles



Vision

Senior Territorians are valued members of the community and are independent, healthy and well. All Territorians recognise and respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges associated with ageing.

Principles

- ◆ Adopt an age-friendly approach in the development of policies and initiatives.
- ◆ Essential services are available and accessible to all senior Territorians, regardless of their location.
- ◆ Ensure information is easy to understand for all senior Territorians and is translated where possible and appropriate into Aboriginal languages and languages other than English.
- ◆ The rights and dignity of senior Territorians are valued and protected.
- ◆ Seniors are supported and provided the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the workforce and community.
- ◆ The diversity of seniors is recognised, respected and celebrated.





Priority Areas and Actions

The NT Seniors Policy 2021-2026 provides outcomes and actions for four key priority areas, and a whole-of-government policy direction for senior Territorians wherever they live.

The outcomes, priority areas and actions outlined in the NT Seniors Policy align with the seven domains and outcomes of the [NT Social Outcomes Framework](#). The Framework is a tool which provides a clear and consistent focus on identified priorities that governments, organisations and the community can use to collectively measure progress on social outcomes that affect the wellbeing of all Territorians, including seniors.

Priority 1: Economic Participation and Financial Security

Focussed Outcomes and Actions

1. 1 Mature-age workers are supported to continue to participate in the workforce, taking into consideration their changing needs and preferences.

- » Work in partnership with key organisations to identify programs that can support employment opportunities for senior Territorians, including vocational education and training.
- » Promote strategies under the NT Public Service ageing workforce framework across NT Government agencies to better support mature-age workers.

1. 2 More workforce, training and education choices and opportunities are available for senior Territorians.

- » Attract, develop and retain seniors into the NT Public Service acknowledging that pre-retirees and seniors are the fastest growing group in the NT population, and the public sector is the largest employer in the NT and across a range of industry sectors.
- » Investigate incentives for businesses to retain and hire mature-age workers, provide targeted assistance for mature-age job seekers and training and re-skilling services, including programs for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal Territorians.





1.3. Seniors are well informed about their financial options with a focus on financial security in later years.

- » Ensure current, relevant and easy to understand financial information is available to all senior Territorians, including on superannuation and retirement savings for people planning to retire.
- » Encourage and support the use of interpreters when providing financial planning information and services wherever necessary.
- » Provide access to financial planning and counselling services.

1.4. Seniors are supported with the costs of living in the NT.

- » Improve and simplify access to the NTCS and NTSRS for eligible members, in particular for seniors living in remote areas and people on temporary visas who have a Medicare card.
- » Promote streamlined processes for membership for the NTCS and NTSRS, including the availability of the identity verification form for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander seniors.
- » Encourage the participation of more Territory businesses to offer discounts to seniors and produce and distribute the annual Seniors Discount Card Business Directory.

Priority 2: Safety and Security

Focussed Outcomes and Actions

2.1 Senior Territorians are safe at home and in the community.

» Focus on community safety through community justice and preventative community safety initiatives to reduce crime and reoffending.

2.2 Raise awareness of prevention strategies and respond to the abuse of older persons through specialist and mainstream services and community awareness initiatives.

» Contribute to cross jurisdictional work on the abuse of older persons through working groups associated with the implementation of the *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians*.

» Fund services and initiatives to support older people experiencing abuse.

» Support organisations and their workforce under the *NT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018 - 2028* to respond to the abuse of older persons.

» Run the 1800ElderHelp phone line through Territory Families, Housing and Communities' FACES Family Support Line NT.

» Coordinate Australian and NT governments and non-government agencies in responding to the abuse of older people across urban, regional and remote locations.

2.3 Senior Territorians have access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing options and are supported to age in place.

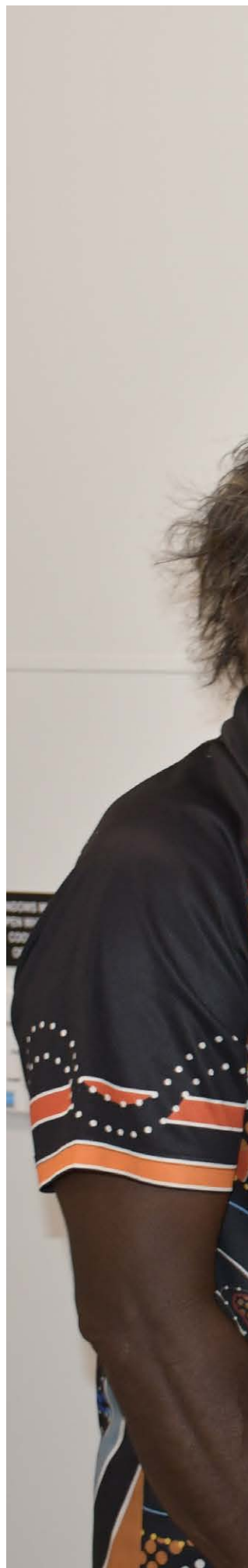
» Develop and encourage provision for private, public and affordable housing for senior Territorians across urban, regional and remote locations.

» Increase options for retirement villages and ageing in the home to support senior Territorians to remain in the NT.

» Work in partnership with the Australian Government and non-government sectors, to increase housing options for senior Territorians, including those residing in Aboriginal communities.

» Increase accessible housing stock to improve the lives of people who are ageing or living with a disability and those who support them. This will be achieved through:

- Applying liveable housing design standards under the National Construction Code for new residential building in the NT.
- Continuing to modify existing public housing dwellings to meet specific requirements of people with mobility issues.







Priority 3: Health and Wellbeing

Focussed Outcomes and Actions

3.1 Senior Territorians have access to high quality, culturally secure preventative, primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare.

- » Identify opportunities, and work with the Australian Government to increase the capacity and accessibility of medical facilities and services in proportion with population growth and changing need.
- » Identify opportunities, and work with the Australian Government to increase focus on preventative health, screening and early intervention to reduce the impacts of age-related illnesses, chronic disease and injury.
- » Provide accessible and easy to understand information about aged-care options available to senior Territorians,
- » Work with the Australian Government and the NT Public Health Network to explore options to improve mental health services and ensure uniform and coordinated approaches for seniors.
- » Improve regional health systems and support those that are eligible to access the current National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- » Promote and advocate for the implementation of LGBTQI+ awareness training for NT Aged Care Services and workers.

3.2 The health and wellbeing of senior Territorians is promoted and protected.

- » Identify opportunities to work with the Australian Government to influence the development of a long-term strategy for aged-care services in the NT.
- » Promote and support programs and activities that improve the social and emotional wellbeing of senior Territorians.
- » Ensure disability supports are provided to those that are not eligible for access to the current National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- » Continue to promote and provide Advanced Personal Planning in advance of loss of capacity and end of life. Promote the option of using the NTSRS pre-paid card to pay for the development and lodgement of Advanced Personal Plans.
- » Explore opportunities to increase access to culturally secure palliative care and respite services, including investigating options to allow for the culturally appropriate choice of facilitating death 'on country'.
- » Advocate on behalf of Territorians to have the choice for legislated assisted dying options.



Priority 4: Social Inclusion and Diversity

A culturally responsible policy is needed that engages all senior Territorians and enables older people from all backgrounds to develop, maintain and enjoy active, connected and productive senior years. Staying connected in communities through senior years is vital to emotional, mental and physical wellbeing.

Focussed Outcomes and Actions

4.1 An inclusive society that values, respects and contributes to the positive role that seniors bring to living in the NT.

- » Support social participation through grant funding for community groups to celebrate and recognise Seniors Month.
- » Continue to produce and distribute a Seniors Month events calendar to support social participation.
- » Provide grant funding for social inclusion and wellbeing programs that support seniors from diverse backgrounds and communities.

4.2 All senior Territorians have access to activities, recreation and events that encourage social participation.

- » Promote and support volunteering opportunities for senior Territorians in partnership with community organisations.
- » Promote healthy lifestyles, social connection and physical activity for older people through relevant public health and community-led initiatives.
- » Develop a Seniors Active Recreation Plan in the NT mapped to the existing *NT Active Recreation Strategy 2020-2024*, supported by grant funding.

4.3 Physical environments are safe, accessible and appropriate for seniors – including buildings, recreation spaces, roads and footpaths.

- » Promote and advocate the use of age-friendly strategies for outdoor spaces and buildings, including with local governments.

4.4 Government information is accessible and useful for seniors, acknowledging there is a “digital divide” for some Territorians.

- » Identify opportunities for mature-aged workers to undertake vocational training programs as part of the NT digital economy.
- » Identify programs that support improved digital literacy skills for seniors where needed, including those offered by non-government organisations and local government.



4.5 Safe, accessible transport is available for seniors and ensures they can maintain involvement and independence in social, economic, health and other essential lifestyle pursuits.

- » Maintain public transport safety through Transit Safety Officers and CCTV monitoring.
- » Provide concessions through the NTCS for vehicle registration, free driver licence renewals and concessional fares for public transport.
- » Support seniors travel through the NTSRS.
- » Support improved transport options to increase access for senior Territorians to public and community-based key destinations such as hospitals, health clinics and shopping centres.
- » Promote active transport options for senior Territorians through integrated land use and transport planning and the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure.

4.6 All Territorians including those from diverse backgrounds are engaged to enjoy active and productive senior years and provide seniors with opportunities to maintain connections with their cultural traditions.

- » Support, encourage and promote intergenerational activities, including funding events to celebrate Grandparents Day each year.
- » Promote and develop opportunities that link younger and older Territorians to enable them to share experiences, debate issues and foster positive attitudes between generations.
- » Provide a range of activities promoting cultural diversity and inclusion during Seniors Month and throughout the year.
- » Create opportunities for Aboriginal seniors to continue to pass their lore of cultural knowledge and traditions from generation to generation, in acknowledgement of their status as cultural knowledge holders.





Implementation of the Policy

The Policy is a five-year plan to be implemented as a whole-of-government approach to address the needs and aspirations of our seniors population and plan for emerging generations of seniors.

Territory Families, Housing and Communities will lead the Policy which is intended to provide a starting point for all NT Government agencies to act on achieving the outcomes over the next five years and acknowledging future population growth in this market.

Reporting on the Policy will be included in the Implementation Plan and incorporate input from NT Government departments and relevant agencies.

The architecture of the whole-of-government approach is also included in the Implementation Plan, including the structure, reporting level, frequency, review and evaluation commitments.



