

QLD 2020: A State for All Ages by Genevieve Grey

Acknowledge traditional owners

(SHOW SLIDE 1 – heading)

My topic today is QLD 2020: A State for All Ages which is a project being conducted by the Department of Families on behalf of the Queensland Government. The project examines how the government might respond to ageing of the population and aims to put this important issue on the agenda.

Before I talk about that project there are a few contextual comments I would like to make. These relate to why we would do this project and consequently what are some of the likely issues confronting us as a society.

Australia, and the majority of countries around the world are currently experiencing structural ageing - that is a reduction in the proportion of children in the population at the same time as increasing life expectancy. Indeed the United Nations now predicts that every second girl born in the first world today can expect to live to be over 100.

In Queensland the over 65 year olds account for 11.4% of the population today. This percentage is expected to grow to 17.1% by the year 2020. Despite this, Queensland's future age profile overall is slightly younger than that of Australia as a whole. This is mainly due to migration from interstate and slightly higher fertility levels in Queensland.

However, Queensland's Indigenous community, which currently forms about 3.5% of our total population, is comparatively youthful with approximately 50% of Indigenous Queenslanders being under the age of 20 and less than 3% of Indigenous Queenslanders aged over 65.

There are also regional differences in Queensland's population structure. While all regions are projected to experience ageing of their populations, this will have a greater impact in some areas than in others. With many teenagers and young adults moving away from areas beyond the South East corner, the

issues for regional Queensland will become more salient in developing intergenerational approaches that encourage young people to remain in, or return to their communities.

I don't want to bore you too much with the statistics of this – even so, there are some very interesting trends emerging, and our common sense tells us that change is looming, as the big hump of baby boomers born from 1946 to 1965 get older at the same time as families are getting smaller and people are choosing to have children later in life.

(SHOW SLIDE 2 – pop by age & sex 1971, 2001, 2031)

This ageing of the population is graphically represented in this Australian Bureau of Statistics diagram. It shows how the shape of the Queensland's population age structure, divided here by sex, has changed over the last 30 years and how it is expected to change over the next 30 years. This change continues on to peak mid century

1971 section – blue

Since the post war period, were the policies of the government of the day led to the creating of the nuclear family living in suburbia, we have had what is referred to as a population pyramid, where children were the largest population group, gradually tapering up to older people, being the smallest group.

2001 section - green

As these baby boom children age, and fertility rates fall below replacement levels, this pyramid begins to invert,

2031 section - purple

The inversion continues to grow, and in 2031 we see the largest proportions are in the 40 – 65 age groups, and the over 65 age groups are matching the under 25 age groups.

Not shown on this diagram - but

The trend is generally expected to peak around the year 2050, with older people being the greater proportion of the population, gradually declining to generally balanced proportions across age groups by the end of the century.

Statistically the ageing of the population is viewed as a one off event in history, as in industrialised countries there are no anticipated increases in fertility rates or declines in life expectancy. Aside from unpredictable world wide catastrophic events, it is unlikely that the predicted changes will not eventuate.

So why are we focussing on the year 2020?

(SHOW SLIDE 3 - population by age group, Queensland 2001 and 2021.)

Given the range of statistical information available on this issue, and the long time frame in which it is presented, we have identified the year 2020 as when we as a society will begin to feel the impacts of the change, when it will become noticeable when walking down the street.

Identifying such a long timeframe for a government project, and this would also be an issue for business and community organisations, is that governments are in the business of responding to the need of the community and individuals, generally over a time frame of 3-5 years. There are always exceptions to this, but in the main we are directed by the current needs and expectations of the community, influenced by lobby groups and peak organisations, media and the election cycle.

But with ageing of the population, we have the opportunity to start to consider the issues that may arise, and establish planning and policy processes that will prepare us for the anticipated change. It represents an opportunity to shift away from planning for problems, to planning for changing aspirations of all of society - working backward from the preferred outcomes we want to achieve for the society, rather than planning for problems or just for a particular target group.

So how do we respond to this change? Well the first point I'd like to make about this is that this is by no means the first time in history we have been confronted by significant change in the population structure.

An example provided in a stimulus paper commissioned for this project, written by Professor Ian Siggins and Dr Mel Miller, takes us to the late 14th century, which was a disastrous time for Europe. Successive waves of the Black Death – the bubonic plague – wiped out between a third and a half of the population, across all the generations. In northern Germany, freehold farmers abandoned the tradition of leaving the family farm to the oldest son, and instead made the youngest son the successor.

This had a number of effects. First, it ensured that the parents had tenure of their home and livelihood for the longest possible time. Secondly, the landholding was not divided among the children into small, unviable farmlets that could not sustain them. It also presented older brothers with a forced choice: either they stayed and worked for their younger sibling as cottagers with no property of their own; or they could seize the opportunity to leave the farm and join the wider economy in the towns by learning a trade or engaging in business.

These events simply illustrate the reality that the search for intergenerational solutions to inevitable changes in population and social demography is not at all new, though the scale and structure of modern government gives it new dimensions.

We are twenty years out from this change and are already starting to think about the future – a far cry from the experience of the black death where the population was wiped out over a few short summers.

QLD 2020: A State for All Ages is a whole of government project attempting to address this issue by taking a positive, but realistic interconnected approach to the changing demographics.

The initiative aims to encourage whole-of-government and community debate on the structural ageing of the population and the interconnected needs of all generations. It focuses on government planning frameworks, looking to

generate a transformational shift in how government views the ageing of the population. The project will consider the interests of the whole population and not just be confined to that of the baby-boomers. This is a key issue for the project.

To do this the project is asking two questions:

(SHOW SLIDE 4 – key questions)

- What opportunities and challenges will arise for the Queensland Government in responding to ageing of the population,
- What are the key elements of a future policy environment that supports a confident intergenerational approach?

What I want to cover today is both the project approach and the project activities that we have conducted to assist us in answering these questions.

There are a number of significant reasons for Government to take an intergenerational approach to this issue. The ageing of the population is an issue for all ages, not just older people. Policies that include young people, and promote connections across generations are vital to achieving an age-inclusive society. In taking an intergenerational approach, including consider impacts on future generations, we are seeking effective responses that take account of all stages of the life cycle and are adaptable to our changing circumstances over the next twenty years.

Intergenerational approaches build respect between generations. This is necessary where generations have been separated by their social activities and stereotyping of different age groups. In taking an intergenerational approach we lay the foundations for developing policies and programs that create equity, well being, social cohesion and sustainability.

In fact it is virtually impossible to consider the ageing of the population without taking an intergenerational approach. For example, how do we discuss urban

planning and development without taking into account the needs of our young people access to employment or indeed the needs of future generations, while at the same time thinking about how we support older generations to age in their own communities, maintain healthy lives and continue to contribute to society.

The second key approach of this project is to take a 'futures focussed' perspective. Changing technology and changing needs and aspirations of the community mean that it is impossible to predict either program service models or individuals preferences for them. I think back twenty years to 1983. I was training as a registered nurse in a hospital based setting. We had no computers or computer based equipment, transplant surgery and heart bypass operations were cutting edge, and HIV/AIDS was a problem reported in Scientific journals.

Today, the nurse's role is significantly different – many (though certainly not all) of the day to day tasks I fulfilled as a nurse are now done by computer, drugs and drug therapy have advanced to a point where I feel pretty incompetent in the chemist when looking for a treatment for a cold. What was new and innovative surgery have now become routine practice technological advances rapidly change the face of medical intervention, for example we can expect some further dramatic changes with the advances in the human genome project.

People have different expectations of what the medical profession can do for them, and previously unimagined expectations around health issues that were once accepted as general life circumstances.

What this tells us is that community, government and business need to respond to changes as they happen and that aspirations of the community will change as well.

For this reason we have taken a futures focused approach, and set about creating a community of interest in this emerging issue.

Setting the agenda

A **search forum** was conducted in April 2003, a one-day event designed to generate a transformational shift in how the government, community and industry respond to the ageing of the population, and begin to develop collaborative government responses to this issue.

The search forum was facilitated by social commentator Phillip Adams, with a range of panel members from academia, local government, and the community. Participants included a targeted audience of academics, Queensland Government agencies and key interest groups.

(SHOW SLIDE 5 – list of papers and web site address)

Four academic stimulus papers were commissioned to inform the development of a high level, long-range framework for Government to consider policy responses to changing demographics. The topics were:

- **Futurist perspective** - Professor Sohail Inayatullah's paper focused on the concept of difference, inter-generationality, and the role of government and agency in creating desired futures.
- **Youth Perspective** - Marcus Bussey's paper tackled issues pertaining to community images and perceptions of youth, as embedded in popular media and psyche.
- **Ageing perspective** - Professor Helen Bartlett's paper offered an informed and challenging synthesis of the issues resulting from structural ageing in Queensland.
- **Planning Framework for Human Services** - Dr Mel Miller and Professor Ian Siggins focussed on planning frameworks, proposing the general theme, "Predicting the future has less value than attempting to create it".

These papers are available on the Department of Families web site, in the Future Directions / resources section.

Phillip Adams' subsequently wrote an article "Greying in Black and White" that appeared in the Weekend Australian on 24th May 2003, highlighting ageing issues for indigenous Australian's that were raised at the conference. This article is also accessible on our web site through – Publications - Families News edition 50.

What we did with the information

- Policy network group
- Discussion paper for community consultation (???)

Where to from here

The Queensland Government believes that our society can address the challenges of an ageing population and reveal the new opportunities that come with the changing demographics. By planning now we can develop awareness of the potential impacts of population ageing on government, business and community sectors. In doing so, the Government hopes to help all sectors take full advantage of opportunities, improve quality of life and maximise the potential to build good understanding between generations.

The ageing of the population will present significant challenges to the Government's priorities in responding to a range of related issues. These include healthy ageing, capacity to access goods and services, employment and recreational opportunities, strengthening supportive environments within communities and mobility or access to transport within the community, as these are primary determinants of personal well-being and quality of life.

While *Queensland 2020: A State for All Ages* will provide the Government's strategic direction on these issues, there are also a range of key research and planning projects pertaining to the ageing of the population that are currently in train across the Queensland Government.

These initiatives include:

- a whole-of-government intergenerational research program addressing the long-term sustainability of the State's finances;
- education and training reforms to provide an education system that is able to respond to population ageing;
- Health 2020, a strategic framework for the State's health system;
- research into future housing needs;
- an action plan to address workforce participation strategies;
- a lifelong learning framework to address the learning needs of adults at key transition points in their life;

- an action plan for transport access and personal mobility in an ageing society;
- an analysis of future cost implications for the provision of emergency services; and
- an analysis of the range of concessions made available to older people in Queensland.

These initiatives will form the wider view of how the Government will address both the opportunities and the challenges of an ageing population. And added to this we must tackle the more difficult issue of age based perceptions – unfortunately ageism is inherent in our culture, even among older people themselves. And while ageism may mean that some younger people ignore the diversity and experience of older people, some older people also disregard the rich contribution that young people make to our communities.

The Queensland Government would like to maximise the opportunities offered by a longer life. Our society cannot do without the experience and commitment of older people. The ageing of the population provides the opportunity to celebrate and benefit from the enormous gains in longevity that have occurred over the past century. A challenge will be to change public perceptions of ageing to reflect the vitality and diversity of older people and to heighten understanding of the significant contributions that older people make to our communities.

It is predicted that future generations of older people will have little in common with preceding generations. For example, with higher education levels than previous generations, tomorrow's seniors will find it easier to remain in the labour market. Many seniors who choose to retire are likely to experience a time of life where they are free to do what interests them or to engage in projects that support their families and communities.

As a consequence the direction of social policy will need to enable seniors who are in good physical and mental health to lead an active life and play

roles that enable them to continue to develop and achieve personal and social goals.

Summary

Queensland 2020: A State for All Ages is being developed to ensure that Queensland is a good place to grow older. It will reflect the diversity of our population and continue the Government's commitment to develop policies and programs that build an age inclusive society and strengthen the social and economic success of our State.

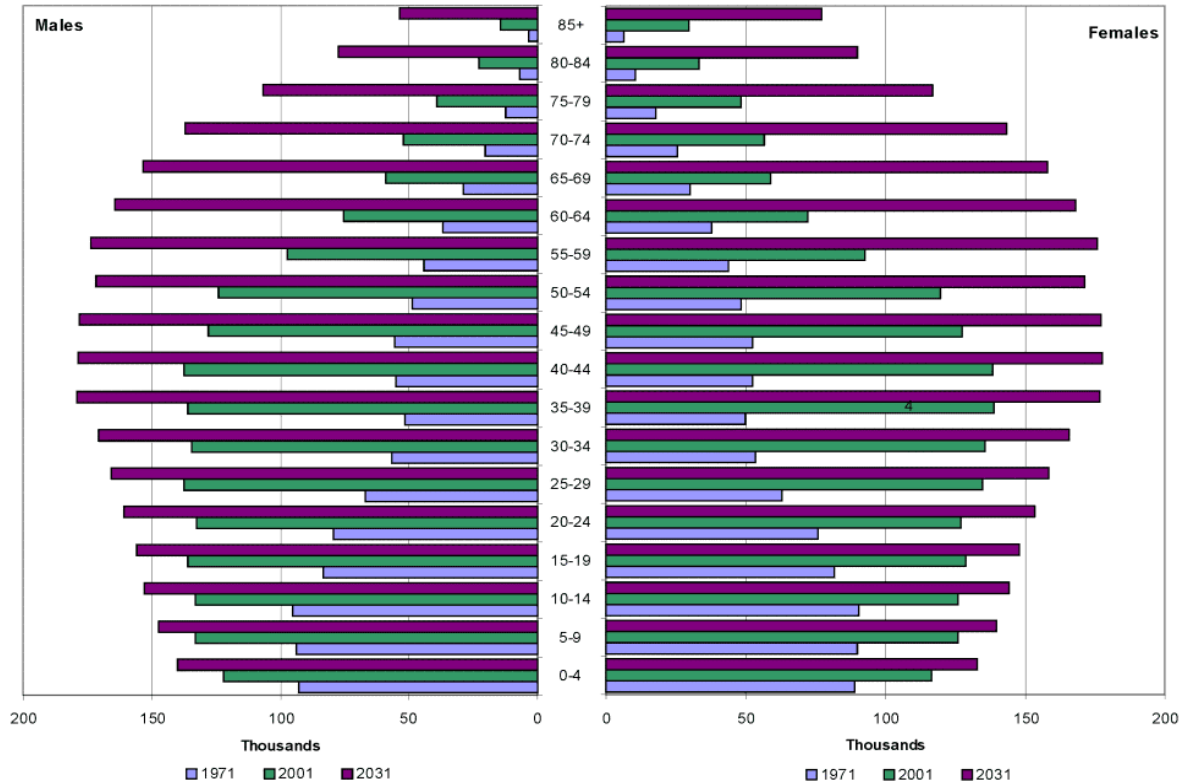
The ageing of the population is an issue that will be with us for many years to come, and today's Search Forum is a significant entry point into a dialogue that will continue for the decades to come. My hope is that we can build partnerships that will bring us closer to a society that weaves all ages into the larger community in which we thrive.

Department of Families

Queensland 2020: A State For All Ages

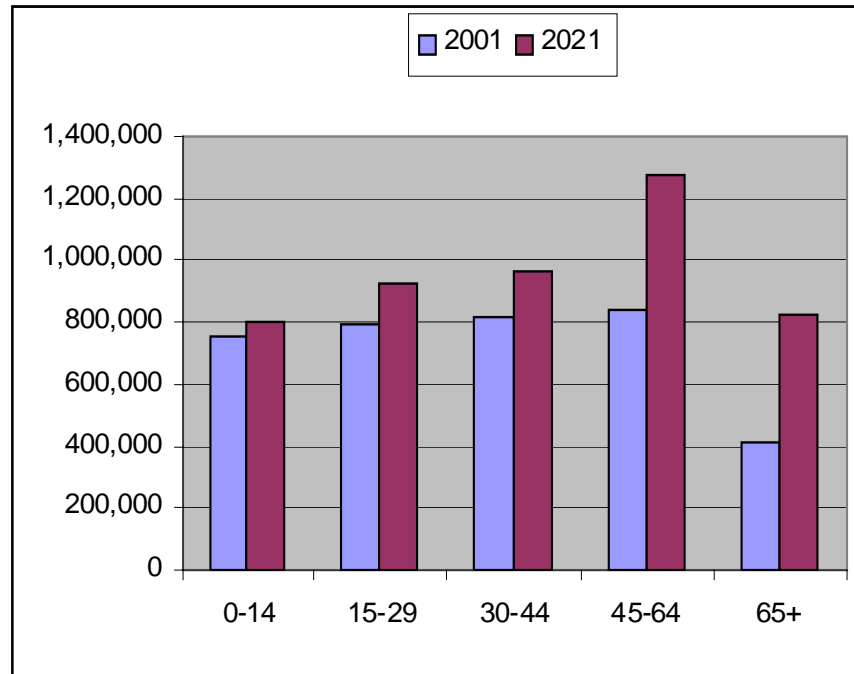


Population by Age and Sex: Past, Present and Future, Queensland, 1971, 2001 and 2031



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Australian Population Projections,

Population by age group, Queensland, 2001 and 2021



What opportunities and challenges will arise for the Queensland Government in responding to ageing of the population?

What are the key elements of a future policy environment that supports a confident intergenerational approach?



<http://www.families.qld.gov.au/futuredirections/resources.html>

Alternate futures and policy choices - Professor Sohail Inayatullah, Graduate Institute for Futures Studies, Tamkang University, Taiwan and Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia;

A framework for intergenerational planning - Mel Miller and Ian Siggins of Siggins Miller Consultants;

An ageing perspective - Professor Helen Bartlett, Australasian Centre of Ageing, The University of Queensland; and

Youth voices: Young Queenslanders' values in a time of structural ageing - Marcus Bussey.

