

Draft  
Northern Territory Seniors Policy  
2021-2025

# Purpose of the Draft

This paper provides proposed content for the refreshed Northern Territory Seniors Policy for your review and consideration. Territory Families, Housing and Communities welcomes your comments and suggestions on the draft content.

## Introduction

The Northern Territory (NT) will experience the fastest growing ageing population in Australia over the life of this Policy. The demand for services for senior Territorians will continue to expand and over the next 5 years, four priority areas and a range of actions have been outlined to provide future directions to address these targets for our ageing population.

Staying as healthy and as active as possible for as long as possible and having the financial and social resources to maintain our connections to our family, our friends and our community is what we all seek as we age and this is strongly supported by the Northern Territory Government through the targeted policy directions and through a whole-of government response.

The policy is grounded in acknowledging active ageing and age-friendly communities that support senior Territorians in their independence and well-being. Communities where all Territorians recognise and respond proactively to our growing senior population.

## Seniors in the Territory

Seniors are valued and honoured members of the Northern Territory community that come from a range of backgrounds including Aboriginal nations and people who have decided to make the Northern Territory their home, including new migrants. As a population group, senior Territorians are significant driver and contributors to the economy, society and communities. Aboriginal elders play an important role to keeping Aboriginal lore alive for future generations of Aboriginal people to increase an awareness and understanding of their cultural heritage and traditional customs.

The Northern Territory Seniors Policy informally recognises seniors from age 50 years for future policy and planning for an ageing population.

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

- To be eligible for an Age Pension you must be 66 years or older.
- NT Seniors Recognition Scheme is for eligible NT residents aged 65 years and over
- NT Seniors Concession Scheme is eligible NT residents aged 65 years and over
- NT Seniors Card holders are eligible to register at 60 years or older.

A key finding of Charles Darwin University and the Northern Institute research report titled *Territory seniors population trends and futures* is that the Northern Territory is now Australia's fastest ageing population. This report included data from the COTA NT survey with senior Territorians in 2018 and their responses to remain as residents of the NT.

Seniors play key and respected roles in their culture, family and community and whilst the majority of seniors reside in suburbs in the major urban centres of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy there are also 76 remote communities across the NT where seniors live.

- Northern Territory population data on ageing (pre-retirement 50 - 59 years) and seniors populations (60+ years) numbers include: At 31 March 2020 the estimated Northern Territory population was 245,353.[ABS 3101.0 National, state and territory population Table 4]
- The Department of Treasury and Finance Population Projections 2019 release estimated the Territory's total population is to grow from 245,678 in 2016 to 351,607 in 2046.
- ABS June 2018 figures showed that seniors aged 60 years and over totalled 29,831 of the estimated NT resident population of 247,327.
- Latest ABS 2018 population data [ABS 1410.0 Data by Region 2014-19 released in July 2020] shows:

Age	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	Totals
Males	4935	4668	3590	2851	1904	1071	465	322	19806
Females	4395	4101	3107	2384	1538	942	502	400	17369

- In the 2016 Census, there were 228,833 people in the Northern Territory. Of these 51.8% were male and 48.2% were female. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people made up 25.5% of the population.
- NT had the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in its population, with 32% of the NT population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. (InfoNET 2020)
- In 2019-20, a total of 18,667 Territorians accessed concessions and payments under the Northern Territory Concession Scheme and Seniors Recognition Scheme.
- As at 30 June 2020, there were 17,424 members registered for Northern Territory Concession Scheme and 13,204 members of the Northern Territory Seniors Recognition Scheme.

## Vision and Principles

Senior Territorians are valued members of the community and can make decisions that support their independence and health. 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.
- The rights and dignity of seniors are valued and protected.
- Seniors are supported and provided the opportunity to participate and contribute to the community.
- The diversity of seniors is recognised, respected and celebrated.

# Proposed Priority Areas and Actions

The NT Seniors Policy 2021 - 2025 provides outcomes and actions for four key priority areas, and a whole of government policy direction for senior Territorians wherever they live.

## 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**
  - 1.1.1 Work in partnership with key organisations to identify programs that can support employment opportunities for senior Territorians, including vocational education and training.
  - 1.1.2 Implement the Government's Human Services Industry Plan led by a coalition of NGO's to maximise employment of seniors and as part of the NT Skilled Occupation Priority list for growing demand in the disability and aged care sector.
- 1.2. More workforce, training and education choices and opportunities are available for Senior Territorians**
  - 1.2.1 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.
  - 1.2.2 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 and programs for people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and including Aboriginal Territorians.
- 1.3. Seniors are well informed about their financial options with a focus on financial security in later years.**
  - 1.3.1 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. To assist with making the information easy to understand for all senior Territorians it will be necessary for Aboriginal Territorians to have access to the information translated in Aboriginal languages or to have access to Aboriginal interpreter services.
  - 1.3.2 Encourage and support the use of interpreters when providing financial planning information and services.
- 1.4. Seniors are supported with the costs of living in the Northern Territory.**
  - 1.4.1 Promote access to the NT Concessions Scheme and NT Seniors Recognition Scheme for eligible members.
  - 1.4.2 Promote access to services and support for advanced personal plans and financial planning, including financial counselling services.
  - 1.4.3 Continue to out-source the administration of the Seniors Card, including; encouraging the participation of more Territory businesses to offer discounts to seniors and producing and distributing the annual Seniors Card Business Directory.

## Priority 2: Safety and Security

### Focussed Outcomes and Actions

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

- 2.1.1 Focus on community safety through community justice initiatives and preventative community safety initiatives to reduce crime and reoffending for all Territorians including Aboriginal people.

#### **2.2 Raise awareness of prevention strategies and respond to elder abuse through specialist and mainstream services and community awareness initiatives.**

- 2.2.1 Contribute to cross jurisdictional work on elder abuse through working groups, including Aboriginal representation, associated with the implementation of the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians.
- 2.2.2 Continue to fund services and initiatives to support all people affected by elder abuse.
- 2.2.3 Continue to run the 1800ElderHelp phone line through Territory Families FaCES service including offering Aboriginal interpreter services to answer calls from Aboriginal elders in their Aboriginal language/s.
- 2.2.4 Improve coordination across Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and non-government agencies in responding to elder abuse 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.**

- 2.3.1 Develop and stimulate provision for private and public and affordable housing for senior Territorians across urban, regional and remote locations.
- 2.3.2 Increase options for affordable housing, retirement villages, ageing in the home that includes public transport options for senior Territorians to remain living in the Territory.
- 2.3.3 The Northern Territory Government to continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to index medium house and rental prices in each regional areas of the NT.
- 2.3.4 The Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth Governments in conjunction with non-government sectors work in partnership to increase housing options for senior Territorians, including those residing in Aboriginal communities.

## 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.**

- 3.1.1 Increase the capacity and accessibility of medical facilities and services in proportion with population growth and changing need.
- 3.1.2 Focus on preventative health, screening and early intervention to reduce the impacts of age-related illnesses, chronic disease and injury.
- 3.1.3 Provide accessible and easy to understand information about Aged-Care options available to Senior Territorians, and translated versions in Aboriginal languages for access by Aboriginal Territorian elders.
- 3.1.4 Improve mental health services for seniors and older persons and including residential care options for those with significant challenging behaviors as per the Northern Territory Mental Health Strategic Plan 2019-24 and the National Health Reform Agreement 2020.

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

- 3.2.1 Continue to work closely with the Australian Government to influence the development of a long-term strategy for Aged-Care services in the Territory.
- 3.2.2 Improve regional health systems and support those that are eligible to access the current National Disability Insurance Scheme (or equivalent).
- 3.2.3 Ensure disability supports are provided to those that are not eligible for access to the current National Disability Insurance Scheme (or equivalent).
- 3.2.4 Continue to provide Advanced Personal Planning under the Advanced Personal Planning Act 2013 to put in place plans in advance of loss of capacity and end of life.
- 3.2.5 Provide access to culturally secure palliative care and respite services like the dedicated hospice in Darwin and palliative care centre in Alice Springs. Investigate options to allow for the culturally appropriate choice of facilitating death “on country”.

## Priority 4: Social Inclusion and Diversity

A culturally responsible policy is needed that engages all senior Territorians and enables older people from diverse backgrounds to develop, maintain and enjoy active, connected and productive senior years.

### Focussed Outcomes and Actions

- 4.1 An inclusive society that values, respects and contributes to the positive role that seniors and Aboriginal elders bring to living in the NT.**
  - 4.1.1 Continue to support social participation through grant funding for community groups to celebrate and recognise Seniors Month.
  - 4.1.2 Continue to fund Seniors Month events and production and distribution of a Seniors Month events calendar to support social participation.
- 4.2 All senior Territorians have access to activities, recreation and events that encourage social participation.**
  - 4.2.1 Provide opportunities for senior Territorians to be recognised and acknowledged for their positive differences.
  - 4.2.2 Promote and support volunteering opportunities for senior Territorians in partnership with community organisations.
  - 4.2.3 Promote appropriate gendered healthy lifestyles, social connection and physical activity for older people through relevant public health and community led initiatives.
- 4.3 Physical environments are safe, accessible and appropriate for seniors – including buildings, recreation spaces, roads and footpaths.**
  - 4.3.1 Develop a Seniors Active Recreation Plan mapped to existing NT Active Recreation Strategy 2020-2024 in the NT supported by grant funding.
- 4.4 Information is accessible and useful for seniors including tackling the “digital divide”.**
  - 4.4.1 Identify opportunities for mature aged workers to access vocational training programs as part of the NT digital economy.
  - 4.4.2 Identify programs that support digital literacy skills for seniors, 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.**
  - 4.5.1 Maintain public transport safety through Transit Safety Officers and CCTV monitoring.
  - 4.5.2 Continue concessions through the NT Seniors Concessions Scheme to provide for motor vehicle registration, free drivers licence renewals and concessional fares for public transport and through the NT Seniors Recognition Scheme, purchase travel fares and fuel.
  - 4.5.3 Continue to provide concessions for interstate / overseas travel through the NT Concessions Scheme and NT Seniors Recognition Scheme.

- 4.5.4 Support access for senior Territorians to public and community based key destinations such as hospitals, health clinics and shopping centres through Patient Assistance Transfer Service and other planning for transport services.
- 4.5.5 Promote active transport options for senior Territorians through integrated land use and transport planning and the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure.
- 4.6 Territorians from diverse backgrounds are engaged to enjoy active and productive senior years and provide Aboriginal elders with opportunities to maintain connections with their cultural traditions and lore targeting future generations of Aboriginal people.**
- 4.6.1 Support, encourage, promote intergenerational and grandparents activities.
- 4.6.2 Promote and develop opportunities that link younger and older Territorians to enable them to share experiences, debate issues and foster positive attitudes between generations.
- 4.6.3 Provide a range of activities promoting cultural diversity during Seniors Month and throughout the year, including creating opportunities for Aboriginal elders to continue to pass their lore, cultural knowledge and traditions from generation to generation.

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