



Australian Government

# Government Response to the Final Report of the Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians

April 2012

THE HONOURABLE WAYNE SWAN MP  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND TREASURER

THE HON MARK BUTLER MP  
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING

EPSA PANEL  
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Rec. No.	Recommendations from the final report of the Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians	First Stage Government Response
<b>AN AGEING AGENDA</b>		
1	<p>The federal government appoint a Cabinet Minister, supported by a national Office for Active Ageing, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead a strategic whole-of-government approach to maximising the potential of an ageing population</li> <li>• develop a national framework to recognise the life course approach to Active Ageing, based on World Health Organisation (WHO) Active Ageing principles and including wellness, age-friendly environments, availability and accessibility of effective health care, and active participation in all aspects of community life (recommendation 24)</li> <li>• work within government and with community organisations to recognise the diversity of senior Australians, including challenges faced by seniors in rural and regional areas, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous Australians and women.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government has appointed the Hon Mark Butler MP as Minister for Mental Health and Ageing.</p> <p>A 10 year action plan will be developed that incorporates a Positive Ageing website and integrated information services.</p>
2	<p>The federal government establish an independent Advisory Panel on Active Ageing for 2 years to advise on ways to embed the Active Ageing agenda.</p>	<p>A new Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will be established for two years to consult with communities and senior Australians on a range of policy issues and help drive the Government's ageing agenda in the medium term, building on many existing policies within Government.</p> <p>The Panel will engage with the Office for an Ageing Australia in the continued work they undertake.</p>

3	The federal, state and territory governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, agree to an intergovernmental agreement to implement the Active Ageing principles of health, participation and security.	<p>The Council of Australian Government's five strategic themes enable collaborative work on positive ageing issues. In addition the states and territories have their own positive/active ageing strategies which are informed by the World Health Organisation's principles or similar principles.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will examine opportunities to encourage greater cooperation in design and implementation of positive ageing policies.</p>
4	The federal government establish an ongoing process for developing and maintaining the currency of a broad based national ageing research agenda and for targeting funding to identified priorities	A wide-ranging Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia is currently in progress. The NHMRC is also working with the Australian Association of Gerontology to develop research agenda on ageing well.
5	The federal, state, territory and local governments work together to establish a seniors information service to provide coordinated information for seniors including on health, housing, care, and other support services.	A dedicated website which provides information of the range of services available to Senior Australians will be developed as part of the National Positive Ageing Strategy 10 year action plan.

## HOUSING

6	<p>The federal government appoint a housing minister with sole responsibility for all aspects of housing policy, including housing supply and demand.</p>	<p>The Government appointed Minister Brendan O'Connor as Minister for Housing and Homelessness. Minister O'Connor is a Cabinet Minister with responsibility for all aspects of housing policy, including supply and demand.</p>
7	<p>The federal, state, territory and local governments urgently increase housing supply and encourage more efficient use of housing stock, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• state and territory governments removing stamp duty with revenues replaced by more efficient taxes, such as annual land tax</li> <li>• state and territory governments removing regulatory impediments which inhibit the development of smaller housing and other innovative approaches</li> <li>• state, territory and local governments reviewing planning regulations to foster age-friendly housing and communities</li> <li>• the federal government reviewing how income support payments, such as the Age Pension, affect seniors' housing decisions.</li> </ul>	<p>The bulk of this recommendation is addressed to State and Territory Governments –the Minister for Housing will further engage with States and Territories on these issues following the release of the COAG report on Housing Supply and Affordability Review.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will engage with the Minister for Housing on these issues and work towards meaningful change with states and territories on housing issues facing older Australians.</p>
8	<p>The federal, state and territory governments pursue a national agenda with the housing industry to address the challenges associated with housing an ageing nation, focusing on affordability and appropriateness.</p>	<p>The Government has established the Liveable Housing Design Initiative in partnership with all levels of government and the ageing, disability, community, building and construction sectors. This initiative aims to ensure homes are easy to enter, move in and around while allowing for cost effective adaptation to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of home occupants. Central to the initiative is an aspirational target that all new homes will meet national liveable housing design standards by 2020.</p> <p>As part of this initiative, the Australian Government has provided \$1 million over</p>

		three years (commencing 2011-12) to support the establishment of a non-government organisation, Liveable Housing Australia, which is responsible for promoting the voluntary uptake of the Liveable Housing Design Initiative across Australia.
9	The federal, state and territory governments urgently evaluate existing low-income housing policies, including the National Rental Affordability Scheme and Commonwealth Rent Assistance, with a view to increasing the supply, affordability and appropriateness of age-friendly housing.	<p>The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is delivering affordable rental housing across the nation for low and moderate income households.</p> <p>The Government has already delivered homes to senior Australians through this successful program. This is in addition to nearly 6,000 new homes that have already been delivered for older Australians through the Government's Social Housing Initiative.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will help inform future policy development in this area.</p>
10	The Council of Australian Governments renegotiate the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) with a view to increasing the supply of affordable, appropriate housing for senior Australians and set timeframes and targets for achieving the provision of appropriate age-friendly housing.	The Minister for Housing will work with the states and territories to ensure the NAHA is appropriately focused to the provision of affordable housing that is age-friendly with links where appropriate to the Liveable Housing Design Initiative.
11	The federal, state and territory governments task the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute to measure the demand for, and supply of, age-friendly housing for seniors to 2050, with the National Housing Supply Council to continue this work annually as part of the 'State of Supply' report.	<p>The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) produces policy-relevant research to inform the development of better outcome in Australia's housing sector, including the demand for age-specific housing.</p> <p>The Government will ensure any work done by the AHURI will inform work being done by the Panel on Positive Ageing on housing initiatives.</p>

12	<p>The federal, state and territory governments improve service provision under the Home and Community Care program as recommended by the Productivity Commission.</p>	<p>The Productivity Commission recommended a coordinated and integrated national policy approach to the provision of home maintenance and modification services.</p> <p>Home and Community Care (HACC) program funds home modifications providing structural changes to a person's home so that they can continue to live and move safely about the house. Some states and territories have their own home modification programs. Equivalent services are available from builders.</p> <p>The Government has progressed reforms to the HACC program, with the Commonwealth taking over the provision of HACC services for older Australians in all states and territories except Western Australia and Victoria.</p> <p>To the extent that HACC provides home modifications services, improvement to service provision is being considered through the HACC reforms.</p>
13	<p>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.</p>	<p>The Corporate Champions initiative will be expanded in this package, which will include a running a series of national seminars and educational materials on workforce diversity and mature age workers to key employers, industry groups and stakeholders. In addition, the program will also provide guidance and support to employers who wish to diversify their workforce through employing skilled and experienced mature-aged workers.</p> <p>The Government will also provide a \$1,000 jobs bonus to employers who employ and retain a mature aged worker 50 years or more for over 3 months.</p>

## PARTICIPATION

14	<p>The federal, state, and territory governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• embed age diversity within their workforces and model best practice on attracting, developing, and retaining older workers</li> <li>• report annually on age diversity in each agency and successful initiatives put in place.</li> </ul>	<p>In relation to the federal government, the 'Workability and Ageing in the APS' project is currently underway. The project, led by Comcare in partnership with DEEWR and the APSC, is developing a framework and tools to tap into the opportunities presented by a better managed ageing workforce.</p> <p>The reporting of age diversity is currently partly addressed through the APS Statistical Bulletin which includes a table that shows the age profile of agencies. Additionally, the APSC's State of Service Report includes comparisons made across the generations in terms of employee engagement.</p> <p>Also, some APS agencies have developed mature age initiatives and that many may also contain mature age friendly elements in their enterprise agreements.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will monitor developments in this area, and consider opportunities to share learnings with state and territory governments.</p>
15	<p>The federal government work with industry to extend flexible work arrangements to people aged 55 and over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by amending the National Employment Standards to include the right to request flexible work for this age group or</li> <li>• through best practice industry standards.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is currently consulting with stakeholders regarding the right to request flexible working arrangements as part of the National Carer Strategy (the Strategy). The consultations relate to expanding the right to request flexible working arrangements under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Fair Work Act) to eligible employees with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• elder care responsibilities and care responsibilities for those with a serious long-term illness or disability; and</li> <li>• care responsibilities for children under 16.</li> </ul> <p>Eligible employees aged 55 and over would be eligible to request flexible working arrangements on the basis of the above criteria if the right to request is expanded.</p> <p>The Government also commits to developing model clauses for Enterprise Bargaining Agreements to assist employers who wish to offer more flexible</p>

		working arrangements for mature-aged workers.
16	<p>The federal government address skills development and training of older workers by tasking the National Skills Standards Council, and the soon to start National Workforce and Productivity Agency, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investigating issues relating to mature age jobseekers and workers, especially in regard to the skills mismatch between workers' skills and industry demands</li> <li>working with other governments and educational institutions, in consultation with employer and employee peak bodies, to develop training packages tailored for older workers that incorporate recognition of prior learning and can lead to the attainment of a qualification.</li> </ul>	<p>In this package, the Government is expanding the scope of the More Help for Mature Age Workers initiative, to be known as the 'Investing in Experience - Skills Recognition and Training' program, to provide more mature age workers with opportunities to gain qualifications.</p> <p>The Government will also use opportunities provided by the Skills Connect program to talk to industry about their mature age workforce and skills issues and facilitate access to the National Workforce Development Fund.</p>
17	<p>The federal government commission a review of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>income support framework for people aged between 50 and age pension age (including income thresholds)</li> <li>employment programs for mature age workers</li> </ul> <p>to ensure individuals have appropriate incentives and assistance to work to their fullest capacity.</p>	<p>In response to the Harmer Review, the Government delivered the single largest increase in the pension in Australia's history. The maximum rate of pension has now increased by about \$154 a fortnight for singles and \$156 a fortnight for couples combined since September 2009.</p> <p>The Government has also conducted a comprehensive review of Australia's tax system, through the Australia's Future Tax System (AFTS) in 2009.</p> <p>The recommendations from these reviews are subject to ongoing analysis and consideration.</p> <p>In relation to the second point, the Government has expanded the Corporate Champions project which provides advice and support to help individual employers realise the value of a diverse, flexible and loyal workforce. As part of this initiative the Government will make available a new Jobs Bonus of \$1,000 for employers who place and retain an unemployed mature age job seeker for over 3 months. This builds on already existing initiatives such as the 'Investing</p>

		<p>in Experience' toolkit for employers to employ, attract and retain mature age workers. The document has been released and is titled 'Investing in Experience'.</p> <p>In this package, the Government is also extending the Experience+ Career Advice Service for an additional two years based on the success of the program to date, to allow mature age workers to continue access by telephone to free professional, informed career advice by a qualified Career Advisor.</p>
18	<p>The federal government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with state and territory governments to amend workers' compensation regimes (including incapacity payments) to ensure older workers are not disadvantaged</li> <li>• convene a roundtable with the insurance industry to examine the availability and affordability of income protection insurance for workers over age 60, and to identify ways of encouraging the private insurance market to offer income protection insurance to workers regardless of their age.</li> </ul>	<p>As part of the National Worker's Compensation Action Plan 2010-2013 (the Action Plan), Safe Work Australia is currently working with all jurisdictions and employer and worker groups to review the application of age based limits in workers' compensation legislation across Australia.</p> <p>The aim of this work is to investigate and report on options to remove disincentives and age discrimination for older workers that may exist in workers' compensation legislation. A proposal to address these issues is due to be considered by Safe Work Australia in late 2012.</p> <p>Safe Work Australia will consider recommendation 18 (a) as part of their work under the Action Plan to remove disincentives and age discrimination for older workers in workers' compensation legislation.</p>

19	The federal government conduct a review of how the retirement income system interacts with mature age workforce participation, for completion by the end of 2013.	<p>The Government has conducted comprehensive reviews of Australia's tax and transfer systems, through the 2008 review of Australia's pension system (the Harmer Review) and the broader review of Australia's Future Tax System (the Henry Review) in 2009.</p> <p>The recommendations from these reviews are subject to ongoing analysis and consideration.</p>
20	The federal, state, territory and local governments invest in the expansion of community based education for older people.	In this package, the Government is establishing the Productive Ageing through Community Education grants program to support adult education providers to tailor training offerings to the needs and interests of senior Australians (aged 60 and over).

## LIFELONG LEARNING

21	The federal government undertake a scoping study to examine ways for commercial providers to deliver an educational channel for older people, linked to universities, using existing or emerging technology.	The Government will seek further work on this recommendation from the Panel on Positive Ageing as to how this may be implemented.
22	The federal government provide financial assistance to senior Australians with limited means to facilitate access to, and effective use of, National Broadband Network services.	<p>The Government is investing in the National Broadband Network and there are a range of programs that provide services to senior Australians (including the Broadband for Seniors Program).</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will provide further advice on how the existing suite of programs can be improved.</p>
23	<p>The federal government, in conjunction with employer and employee peak bodies, examine mechanisms that support older workers to take up skilling and educational opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigating the concept of 'educational leave'</li> <li>• reviewing the availability of financial assistance and concessional taxation arrangements to assist individuals to undertake vocational study in order to re-skill or change careers.</li> </ul>	<p>As outlined above, the Government is expanding its successful Corporate Champions program to promote the employment opportunities that come from mature aged workers.</p> <p>Also as mentioned before, the Government is expanding the scope of the More Help for Mature Age Workers initiative, to be known as the Investing in Experience ('Skills Recognition and Training') program, to provide more mature age workers with opportunities to gain qualifications.</p> <p>The Government will also use opportunities provided by the Skills Connect program to talk to industry about their mature age workforce and skills issues and facilitate access to the National Workforce Development Fund.</p>
24	The federal government develop a national Framework for Active Ageing, based on the World Health Organisation's Active Ageing Principles, covering wellness, age-friendly environments, availability and accessibility of effective health care, and active participation in all aspects of community life (part of recommendation 1).	<p>A 10 year action plan will be developed to create milestones for Government on how best older Australians can stay engaged socially and economically. The 10 year action plan will provide Seniors with greater choice and control over their lives.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will provide advice on the Strategy.</p>

## ACTIVE AGEING

25	<p>The federal government, in consultation with state and territory governments, develop a national approach to age-friendly communities as part of the National Urban Policy initiative.</p>	<p>The National Urban Policy already recognises many of the challenges of an ageing population, including planning for and accommodating the needs of senior Australians.</p> <p>In particular, the policy supports better urban planning such as better pedestrian access, a greater variety of housing for older Australians and more opportunities for people to interact and enjoy the amenities provided by their cities. The principles embedded in the National Urban Policy have been incorporated into the planning systems of all State and Territory Governments.</p> <p>The Panel on Positive Ageing will monitor the progress and implementation to provide feedback to Government.</p>
26	<p>The federal, state and territory governments invest in creating a national network of Centres of Excellence in age-friendly community research.</p>	<p>There is currently an ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research, which has funding of \$12.7 million over seven years. Its work is overseen by the University of New South Wales, and FaHCSIA, Treasury and Health and Ageing are involved with the research centre. The ARC Centre of Excellence will transform thinking about population ageing, inform private and public sector policy and yield outcomes that improve the well-being of the aged and their social and economic environment.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will draw on the work of the Centre in providing advice to Government.</p>
27	<p>The Australian National Preventive Health Agency identify and promote the most effective wellness, early intervention and prevention strategies to support healthy lifestyles across the lifespan, from the early years to old age, in a range of settings including workplaces, schools, recreational facilities and communities.</p>	<p>The Agency has a number of actions in its Strategic Plan which have a focus across the lifespan, including senior Australians. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting educational, promotional and community awareness programs relating to preventive health on: the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and good nutrition; reducing tobacco use; minimising the harmful drinking of alcohol; discouraging substance abuse; and reducing the incidence of obesity amongst</li> </ul>

		<p>Australians; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing a preventive health research fund focusing on translational research to support policy development.</li> </ul> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will liaise with the Australian National Preventive Health Agency to identify additional opportunities for policy change.</p>
28	The federal, state and territory governments establish a best practice service model to ensure a reablement component is included in care for older individuals experiencing functional difficulties.	Greater emphasis on reablement in ageing and aged care services is consistent with the Productivity Commission's recommendations in <i>Caring for Older Australians</i> . The Government is considering the issue in that context.
29	<p>The federal, state and territory governments develop and subsidise, for senior Australians with limited ability to pay, schemes to provide services and care products at low cost to the individual where such schemes do not currently exist, or are limited in their delivery including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dental services</li> <li>podiatry services</li> <li>ongoing wound management for those with complex needs.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is considering the issue of dental services in the context of the 2012-13 Budget.</p> <p>Podiatry and wound management — the HACC Aged Care Program includes provision for clinical care provided by professional allied health care services, including podiatry, and nursing care provided by a registered or enrolled nurse which can include wound management.</p> <p>The Practice Nurse Incentive Program (PNIP) provides incentive payments to support an expanded and enhanced role for nurses working in general practice. The new PNIP, which commenced on 1 January 2012, enables practice nurses to continue to undertake activities such as wound management, as well as a broad range of activities that were not supported through previous funding arrangements, including: providing preventative health programs; coordinating patient care and monitoring of chronic diseases; and supporting patient self care and self management. The PNIP includes an additional \$390.3 million over four years from 2010-11 as well as redirected funding from the Practice Incentives Program Practice Nurse Incentive and six practice nurse Medicare Benefits Schedule items.</p> <p>In addition, the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) items in the Medicare</p>

		<p>Benefit Schedule (MBS) enable GPs to plan and coordinate the health care of patients with chronic or complex medical conditions. GPs are able to choose Medicare rebateable items for GP-managed care planning and/or team-assisted care planning, depending on the health needs of their patients. Once eligible CDM items are in place, patients are able to be referred by their GP for up to five Medicare rebateable allied health services each calendar year, including podiatry.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will provide advice on any further changes that may improve the current programs that treat these issues.</p>
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## VOLUNTEERING AND PHILANTHROPY

30	The federal, state and territory governments review legislative amendments, introduced in early 2000s to limit the liability of individual volunteers, to ensure these amendments adequately protect individuals from liability.	<p>As a result of this package, the Government will be reviewing whether existing Commonwealth laws ensure adequate liability protection for volunteers who wish to give back to the community.</p> <p>The Government will also continue to engage with industry on issues surrounding the provision of travel insurance provided to senior Australians.</p>
31	The federal government convene a roundtable with the insurance industry, peak organisations and senior Australians to identify any gaps in the availability and affordability of insurance for senior Australians, including insurance for volunteers and travel insurance.	The Minister for Financial Services has established the Insurance Reform Advisory Group (IRAG) to examine insurance issues with industry and stakeholders. IRAG considered the insurance needs of older Australians at its March meeting and agreed to a range of initiatives to assist senior Australians in finding appropriate travel and income protection insurance.
32	Senior Australians provide an ongoing contribution to future generations by bequeathing money to philanthropic organisations working for the betterment of Australian society, especially in the areas of research and innovation.	<p>The Government is considering ways to better promote philanthropy and will include the role of older Australians in the course of this work.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing will provide advice on to Government on ways this can be further progressed.</p>

## AGE DISCRIMINATION

33	The federal, state and territory governments undertake an audit of laws and policies to review and remove age-based limits or disincentives.	On 8 February 2012, the Attorney-General announced an inquiry into legal barriers to mature age persons participating in the workforce. On 12 March 2012 the Australian Law Reform Commission began the review of Commonwealth legislation to identify age barriers that prevent continued participation in the workforce for people aged 45 years and over.
34	The federal government introduce a mechanism for addressing systemic age discrimination.	The Government is already working to consolidate the five anti-discrimination Acts, including the <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004</i> , into a single law as part of Australia's Human Rights Framework. On 22 September 2011, a discussion paper was released to guide public consultation. Among other issues, the discussion paper seeks views on whether, and if so what, changes to discrimination law are necessary to better address systemic discrimination.
35	The federal Age Discrimination Commissioner convene a roundtable with senior media representatives as a first step in working with the media to ensure senior Australians are portrayed in an accurate, balanced and empowering manner.	In this package, the Government will provide the Age Discrimination Commissioner with funding of \$2.1 million over four years to conduct research on age discrimination, age stereotyping and ageism more generally, to feed into a media roundtable and communication strategy.
36	The federal Age Discrimination Commissioner develop a community education and awareness campaign that identifies ageism and age discrimination and promotes positive images of ageing.	In this package, the Government will provide the Age Discrimination Commissioner with funding of \$2.1 million over four years to conduct research on age discrimination, age stereotyping and ageism more generally, to feed into a media roundtable and communication strategy.