



# SNIPPETS

September 2016 Edition 175

Seniors Enquiry Line

Linking Seniors with  
Community Information

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## Quote of the Month

When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.

~ Dalai Lama XIV

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Seniors Enquiry Line is an information and referral service for Queensland seniors, proudly sponsored by the Queensland Government Department of Communities and operated by UnitingCare Community.

## Win \$1000 - Media Awards

Older People Speak Out organises annual media awards for media items with positive coverage of seniors and their issues.

Members of the public can nominate items published or broadcast between 15 September 2015 and 14 September 2016. The items may be print or online articles or TV items or photographs illustrating positive ageing.



You can win \$1000 for nominating the best item, or for explaining in 50 words or less why you believe a particular media item is an excellent example of positive ageing. Entries close on 30th September 2016.

For more information, visit the [website](#) or phone 1300 677 960.

## Changes to Smoke Alarm Laws

The Queensland Government passed new smoke alarm legislation that specifies that every Queensland residence will need to be fitted with photoelectric, interconnected smoke alarms in all bedrooms and hallways. These photoelectric smoke alarms can be hardwired by an electrician or there is an option to install alarms that can be interconnected wirelessly and contain a 10-year lithium battery.



There will be a 10 year phased rollout of the legislation, but any significantly renovated or new houses completed after January 1, 2017 will need to comply. All houses leased or sold will also need to meet compliance after 5 years and all owner-occupied private dwellings will need to be compliant within 10 years.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services have information sheets on photoelectric alarms, selecting, placing and maintaining smoke alarms. These information sheets can be obtained from their [website](#) or by phoning Seniors Enquiry Line on 1300 135 500.

## What's On

### Lifeline Bookfest - Bundaberg

24th - 25th September 8am - 4pm

Hunt for a bargain amongst the thousands of quality pre-loved books.

**Venue:** Lifeline, 70 Princess Street, Bundaberg

**Phone:** 4153 8441

### Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers

16th - 25th September

This award winning carnival has spectacular gardens, live music, local food & wine and more.

**Venue:** Various locations throughout Toowoomba

**Phone:** 4688 6661

**Web:** [www.tcof.com.au](http://www.tcof.com.au)

### Other events on Seniors Enquiry Line's 'Events'

**pages include:** Gold Coast Seniors Health and Lifestyle Expo; Lifeline Bookfest - Bokarina; Retirement Living Options Information Session - Townsville; Brisbane Festival and many more.

## Guest Speaker

Would you like to have a guest speaker visit your group? If your group meets in or near Brisbane, Seniors Enquiry Line has guest speakers who can visit explain how our service works and discuss the range of topics that we can assist with, including various government booklets and brochures that are available.

To request a speaker to visit your group, or for more information, phone **1300 135 500** or go to our [website](#).

## Credit and Debit Surcharges

A ban to stop large businesses from charging excessive payment surcharges when people pay via credit, debit and prepaid card payments came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2016. The ban will also apply to other businesses from September next year.

Large businesses who are charging payment surcharges are now only allowed to pass on the actual costs that they were charged for accepting the particular payment type. However, taxi services are excluded from this. The ban applies to transactions paid for by: EFTPOS (debit and prepaid); MasterCard; Visa and American Express "companion cards" (not issued directly through American Express but through an Australian financial service provider). Typically, MasterCard and Visa credit transactions cost businesses up to 1-1.5%.

For more information about this ban visit the ACCC [website](#) or phone **1300 302 502**.

## Pension Changes

The assets thresholds for pensions will change from January 1, 2017. The amount of assets you can own and qualify for a full pension will increase and more people will be eligible for a full pension. However, some current part pensioners will lose eligibility due to changes in taper rates.

Currently, for every \$1,000 of assets over the threshold, the fortnightly payment is reduced by \$1.50. From January, this will change to \$3.00. The following tables set out the current assets thresholds and those that will apply from January 1.

### Asset Thresholds for Full Pensions (\$)

|                   | Homeowners |         | Non-Homeowners |         |
|-------------------|------------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                   | Current    | 2017    | Current        | 2017    |
| Single            | 209,000    | 250,000 | 360,500        | 450,000 |
| Couple (Combined) | 296,500    | 375,000 | 448,000        | 575,000 |

### Asset Thresholds for Part Pensions (\$)

|                   | Homeowners |         | Non-Homeowners |           |
|-------------------|------------|---------|----------------|-----------|
|                   | Current    | 2017    | Current        | 2017      |
| Single            | 791,750    | 541,250 | 943,250        | 741,250   |
| Couple (Combined) | 1,175,000  | 814,250 | 1,326,500      | 1,014,250 |

The first table shows the amount of assets that you can own and still receive a full pension. The second table shows the amount of assets beyond which you would not receive a part pension. However, these part pension figures may change if the pension rate changes on 20 September 2016.

All pensioners who lose their part pension as a result of the changes will automatically get a Health Care Card.

Centrelink's Financial Information Service can provide information about how these changes will affect you. You can contact them by phoning **132 300**. Additional information is also available on the Centrelink [website](#).

## Footpath Gardens

Brisbane City Council recently changed the rules to allow residents to plant gardens on the verges/footpaths outside their homes.

Residents are required to follow guidelines such as: allowing space for a footpath, checking for underground cables and complying with requirements about the materials used. More information about verge gardens can be found on the council [website](#) or by phoning **3403 8888**.

