THE VOICE of Pensioners and Superannuants online

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COVID Check-in cards make signing in without a smartphone easier

AS of August 13, Service NSW has made COVID-19 check-in cards available. The check-in cards can be used to sign into businesses instead of using a smartphone or a pen and paper.

Check-in cards are available to print out from the Service NSW website or you may request a plastic card be posted to you. Such requests can be made by clicking here or by calling Service NSW on 13 77 88.

On your card there will be your first name and a QR code. When you enter a business, you present your card to an employee who scans it: you're signed in.

Your card will have your first name printed in letters as it would normally. Your phone number and last name are in the form of a QR code, which is a type of barcode that can only be read by a QR code scanner. This means your information cannot be read by another person.

Keep in mind the NSW Government has not made it mandatory for all businesses to have the technology to scan these cards. In some businesses you will still have to sign in using paper and pen.

The stored contact information is only accessed by contact tracers if they need to inform people that they were at the same venue as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

QR codes enable this information to be stored electronically. This is a much faster process than sifting through paper forms.

There have been calls to get rid of paper forms and only use QR codes to sign in so that contact tracers can track down people as fast as possible but this was rejected by the NSW Government.

Take this brief survey

Bored with the lockdown? Anxious? Frustrated? Let us know how this lockdown is affecting you.

If you have the time, please complete this short, anonymous survey so we can gain some insight into how older people are faring during this round of COVID-19 restrictions.

Click here to fill out a survey.

Your home care is changing soon, here's what we know

From July 2023, less than two years from now, things are going to change in a big way for anyone getting home care. The question is: is it going to be an improvement?

The Government accepted a number of recommendations about home care from the Aged Care Royal Commission. One of those was for a single aged care program for support at home.

A lot of people receiving home care now might be surprised to learn that at the moment there are no less than four home care programs.

One of the two main ones is the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). This is all the previous state and territory home care programs put together and now managed by the federal Department of Health. It looks after 840,000 people.

Then there's the Home Care Packages Program (HCPP), known by most people for its outrageous waiting list of about 80,000 at last count. It looks after 140,000 people.

Little is known about what the new program will look like. Even its official name is not yet known.

What we do know is that the CHSP looks after far more people than the HCPP, and that it works well. We also know, the HCPP has major problems, quite apart from its waiting list.

This is what the explanatory text in the aged care provider survey says: "The new system is likely to have more classifications than the existing four levels of Home Care Packages".

That sounds like care received under CHSP will become a Home Care Package.

The survey also suggests that there could be a Home Care Package at a level above the current level 4 Home Care Package.

All points to a program working well, the CHSP, being restructured to become part of the HCP program, which does not work so well.

And there's a sure sign that the federal Department of Health still doesn't get who the people receiving home care are. It doesn't get the limitations of probably a majority of them. The survey information says it "is exploring options for a digital solution that would allow consumers to search for and

connect with providers and care workers, schedule service appointments with their providers and contribute to the cost of their care and services".

As if MyAgedCare.gov.au isn't bad enough.

Why your super fund will short-change you in your retirement and how it could be different

THERE's only one Australian superannuation pension fund that pays a pension the way pensions are paid elsewhere in the developed world.

That would be a pension that continues no matter how long you live. It would also be a pension that doesn't lose its value.

Pension funds are called superannuation funds in Australia, which hides that they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing: pay a lifetime, inflation-proof pension.

Instead, most superannuation funds offer to pay you an 'account-based pension', which is no more than a bank account: you decide how much you withdraw and when.

Your fund refuses to worry about whether your super money will last you a lifetime and as to inflation, you work it out!

It obviously suits superannuation funds to run their business in this way.

What tends to happen now is that retirees take out of their super savings as little as possible because they're worried about running out of money.

This suits superannuation funds just fine.

So, Australian super funds are not going to offer a lifetime, inflation-proof pension unless they are made to.

Enter the Australian Government and its Retirement Income Covenant.

Consultation has been ongoing for five years to "encourage" superannuation funds to provide genuine retirement income products to their members.

But the best the Retirement Income Covenant could come up with was to require funds to have a Retirement Income Strategy. No requirement to offer a lifetime, inflation-proof pension.

This Retirement Income Strategy is to guide retiring superannuation fund members how to go about formulating and executing their retirement income plan.

Most people have been disengaged from superannuation during their working lives.

Magically, these intending retirees will gain from this Strategy the ability to decide on how they are going to use their super savings and maximise their income.

It's like asking an airline passenger, who has been having drinks and nibblies since take-off, to step up to the flight desk and land the jet they are travelling on.

The one superannuation fund in Australia to offer a lifetime, inflation-proof pension to its members is QSuper.

This is not an endorsement of their product, and this is not financial advice to buy their product, but here's more or less how it works.

It is designed to ensure you, or your estate, get back what you put in regardless of how long you live.

The money is pooled and invested in a low-risk way.

The money-back death benefit is funded by QSuper taking out insurance.

Every year, the pension payment for the next year is either increased or reduced based on the investment return. If the return is more than 5 per cent, expect a pay rise next year. If less than 5 per cent, expect a cut.

Incomes are expected generally to rise over time, ‘inflation-proofing’ your pension.

Once you buy in, you can’t cash out.

After you have received your nominal purchase price as income, no death benefit is payable.

Unlike a fixed-income-for-life annuity available outside regulated super funds, this is variable-income-for-life.

Obviously, if the Government forced other superannuation funds to offer retirement income products that ensured inflation-proofed retirement income for life, there would be healthy competition among funds.

That would benefit you, not your fund.