

### 2.3 A growing and ageing population:

- **Healthy ageing**
  - **Increased population living with chronic disease and disability**
  - **Demand for health services and workforce shortages**
  - **Availability of carers and volunteers**
- Life expectancy in Australia is continually increasing
  - **Australia's population is growing and ageing.** The ageing population is the consequence of sustained low fertility levels and increased life expectancy at birth
  - With our ageing population, come numerous health challenges to our community. An increase in people living with chronic diseases and disabilities, places a higher demand for health services and workforce shortages, as well as the financial strain to provide these services
  - Government priority is to encourage healthy ageing so as to enable people to contribute for as long as possible and to reduce the burden on our health care system
  - It is projected that there will be little growth in the number of available carers, compared with the anticipated rise in demand for home-based support, which is likely to result in a shortage of carers in the future
  - Better training regarding specific needs for all areas of health care and support are needed

#### Healthy Ageing:

- **Healthy ageing** describes the ongoing activities and behaviours an individual undertakes to reduce the risk of illness and disease and increase their physical, emotion and mental health
- **Healthy ageing** is concerned with the quality of life, not just the years of life, enjoyed by an individual
- **Health expenditure** increases with age and thus, health care professional focus on health needs of the ageing population
- It is the **governments priority** to provide the ageing population with services and support depending on their needs
- The government is also responsible for promoting healthy ageing throughout life, as well as disease prevention rather than treatments

Healthy Ageing Benefits	
Individual	Australian Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Live longer</li> <li>- Better quality of life</li> <li>- Not as sick as often</li> <li>- Spend more time with family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less money spent on childcare</li> <li>- Less pressure put on females</li> <li>- Society is generally more happier, with better morale</li> </ul>

### Increased Population Living with Chronic Disease & Disability:

- **Disability;** Population ageing results in increased disability prevalence because the risk of disability is greater in older age groups
- **Chronic Disease;** Prevalence of chronic disease will significantly increase with the ageing of the population. WHO predicts that by 2020, chronic disease will account for nearly 75% of all deaths in Australia
- Our ageing population has led to an increase in the number of Australians with a chronic disease or disability (prevalence of chronic disease increases with age)
- The future levels of chronic diseases could be reduced if young people control their risk factors for chronic diseases (e.g. smoking, obesity, binge drinking and physical inactivity)

### Demand for Health Services & Workforce Shortages:

- Due to the increase in the amount of Australians living with a chronic disease or disability, the demand for health and aged care services has drastically risen
- The Australian health system is complex, with many types of service providers and a variety of funding and regulatory mechanisms. Those who provide services include a range of medical practitioners, other health professionals, hospitals, clinics, and other government and non-government agencies
- The elderly also not just subject to one illness, but many as a result of the weakening of their immune system (elderly people are more prone to a more diverse range of illnesses)
- To meet the needs of Australians in relation to **health services**, the government has proposed these **initiatives**;
  - The provision of more nurses to cater for the demand in emergency departments and other high-demand areas
  - The expansion of the roles of nurses
  - An increase in community care e.g. home-help services and meals-on-wheels
- In addition, there has been a concern that many people suffering from poor health are unable to contribute to the **workforce**, thus leading to general shortages of labour
- **The government has taken action** in response to this concern by improving Australia's retirement income system in the following ways;
  - ❖ A means-test aged pension is available to provide income for people after retirement
  - ❖ All Australian employers are required to provide compulsory superannuation cover for all eligible employees
  - ❖ Voluntary, private superannuation contributions and other forms of private savings, made by employees are also encouraged

#### Impact of a Growing & Ageing Population on the Health System & Services

- Increase in treatment costs
- Increase government expenditure
- Increased demand for health services

**Availability of Carers & Volunteers:**

- A **carer** is a person, who through family relationship or friendship, looks after an older person or someone with a disability or chronic disease
- A **volunteer** is a person who offers to perform a service for the community on a voluntary basis
- **As Australia's population ages, the number of people requiring informal care, at home and in their community is expected to rise drastically, while the number of available carers and volunteers declines**
- Australia's workforce consists not only of paid workers, but also carers and volunteers, who are ageing with the rest of the population
- The paid and unpaid work of older Australians is essential to a well-functioning and caring society, which ultimately enhances the quality of life for all Australians
- It is predicted that there will be a 22% decrease in the number of carers from 2001 to 2031

Impact of a Growing & Ageing Population on Carers of the Elderly	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in number of volunteer carers as more people retire</li> <li>- Current carers becoming older; more experience and wisdom</li> <li>- More jobs available → boosts economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased number of formal/qualified carers required to care for the elderly</li> <li>- Increased burden on family and friends to provide care</li> <li>- Current carers becoming older</li> <li>- Government and private providers needed to provide diverse care e.g. at home and community centre/care</li> </ul>

Impact of a Growing & Ageing Population on Volunteer Organisations	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased number of volunteers (retirees)</li> <li>- Skilled volunteers</li> <li>- Best practise standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elderly restraints</li> <li>- Increased demands</li> <li>- Regional areas</li> <li>- Sporting organisations</li> </ul>