



Steps to enter an aged care home



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The document must be attributed as the Department of Health and Aged Care Steps to enter an aged care home.

Have your say on aged care

We invite older Australians, their families and carers, the aged care workforce and providers to help shape and reform aged care. Register your interest at agedcareengagement.health.gov.au

Contact us

Enquiries regarding the licence and any use of this document are welcome via email at: agedcarecomms@health.gov.au

You can find this product at myagedcare.gov.au

This booklet is designed to help you, your family or your friends make important decisions about your care. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, you may want to seek more specific information regarding your individual situation to make an informed decision.

Information is current as at November 2022.

The background features a green gradient that transitions from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. A large, semi-transparent circle with a dotted pattern is positioned on the right side, partially overlapping the gradient. The text is located in the bottom left corner of the page.

Steps to enter an aged care home

Is this booklet right for you?

This booklet explains how older people can access care in an aged care home, the process for moving into an aged care home and what to expect when you are there.

You should read this booklet if you have been assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) member for care in an aged care home.

Otherwise call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call) or go to **myagedcare.gov.au** for information on the assessment process and eligibility for different types of government-funded aged care

Short-term restorative care

Short-term care services in the home or residential care settings for situations such as restorative care (return to independence).

Entry-level support at home

Ongoing or short-term care and support services through the *Commonwealth Home Support Programme* including help with housework, personal care, meals and food preparation, transport, shopping, allied health, social support and planned respite (giving your carer a break).

More complex support at home

Four levels of consumer directed coordinated packages of services through the *Home Care Packages Program* including personal care, support services and nursing, allied health and clinical services.

Residential aged care

Personal and nursing care in aged care homes for older people that need help to live independently in their own homes. This also includes residential respite for short stays in an aged care home.

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Care in an aged care home

An aged care home (sometimes known as a nursing home or residential aged care facility) is for older people who can no longer live at home and need ongoing help with everyday tasks or health care.

Living or staying in an aged care home is all about making sure you receive the care you need. Aged care homes can help you with:

- day-to-day tasks (such as cleaning, cooking, laundry)
- personal care (such as bathing, dressing, grooming, going to the toilet)
- clinical care (such as wound care and medication administration) under the supervision of a registered nurse
- other care services.

Residential care in an aged care home can be provided on a permanent or short-term basis. Short-term care in an aged care home is called residential respite care (see page 10).

Aged care homes are owned and operated by people or organisations that have the approval of the Australian Government to care for you. They must meet aged care quality standards.

Privately funded housing options, such as retirement villages or independent living units, offer a range of services for independent older people. They are regulated by state and territory governments and do not require Australian Government approval to operate.

These privately funded services may also be approved to provide Australian Government funded aged care services such as home care packages in their home. If eligible, you can choose to receive aged care services from them or from another approved provider.

Eligibility

You may be eligible for care in an aged care home if you are an older person over the age of 65 (over 50 years for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples) who can no longer live independently at home.

Australia's aged care system supports older people. It is not meant for people younger than 65. Aged care should be a last resort for people younger than 65 and only in limited circumstances. Supports are available to you to assist you to find the accommodation and support services that address your goals and best meets your needs.

If you are under the age of 65 years (a 'younger person') with a permanent and significant disability, you may be eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). If you think you may be eligible for the NDIS you can visit the NDIS website at ndis.gov.au or call **1800 800 110** (free call), Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm AEST.

If you are not eligible for the NDIS, other support options are available to help you. To find out more about Ability First Australia's (AFA) national network of Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) System Coordinators contact AFA on **1800 771 663** (free call).

Care and services available

Care and services that must be provided to you, if you need them, include:

- Accommodation services such as furnishings, meals, basic toiletries and social activities in the home.
- Personal care assistance such as bathing, eating, help with taking medications and carrying out health treatments.
- Care and services according to your care needs, including:
 - › special bedding materials
 - › mobility goods such as walking frames and wheelchairs (excludes motorised wheelchairs and custom made aids)
 - › incontinence aids
 - › nursing services
 - › medication management
 - › therapy services such as speech therapy, podiatry (foot care) and physiotherapy.

This is not an exhaustive list. You should discuss your needs and preferences with your preferred aged care home.

Some aged care homes have extra service status or offer additional services meaning they offer places with a higher standard of accommodation, greater menu choice and non-care services such as daily newspapers, at an extra cost.

Contact My Aged Care and have an assessment

Before receiving care in an aged care home, including residential respite, you need an assessment to find out if you're eligible. You can apply for an assessment in three ways:

Online The online application form is quick and easy – and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The website also has an easy-to-use eligibility checker which you can use before applying.

To apply online visit: **myagedcare.gov.au/apply-online**

By telephone You can call the My Aged Care Contact Centre to discuss your needs and complete the application over the phone. The Contact Centre is open 8am to 8pm weekdays and 10am to 2pm Saturdays.

Call our knowledgeable team on **1800 200 422** (free call).

In person You can also apply in person with an Aged Care Specialist Officer (where one is available in your location) at a Services Australia service centre.

To book an appointment, call **1800 227 475** (free call), weekdays from 8am to 5pm.

What to expect when applying

When you apply, we will ask you a few questions to find out if you are eligible for an assessment. If you are, you'll provide some personal information including your Medicare number and contact details.

If you are under 65 years of age, ACAT assessors must first test with the National Disability Insurance Agency whether you can be assisted by the NDIS. This is required before approval of any younger person for aged care.

During the application, you can also appoint a family member or friend as your My Aged Care representative. This means they can speak to My Aged Care on your behalf. You can change your representative at any time.

Learn more at: **myagedcare.gov.au/my-aged-care-representatives**

We will also ask you for permission to create a personalised client record. This will hold up-to-date information on your needs, the results of any assessments and any services that you receive. The client record will reduce the need for you to retell your story.

You can access your client record through your My Aged Care Online account. This account is a free and secure way to manage your services, representatives and personal details. You can access your Online Account by linking it to your myGov account. For more information visit: **myagedcare.gov.au/access-your-online-account**

The assessment process

If you are eligible you will be referred for a free assessment with a member of your local Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) (or Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) in Victoria).

Your local ACAT member (usually a nurse, social worker or other health care professional) will contact you within 2-6 weeks of your application. They will make a time to visit your home to talk to you about your situation and assess your eligibility for government-funded aged care services.

If an in-person assessment is not possible, your assessor may arrange a telephone, video meeting or telehealth assessment. This may happen if, for example, you are in a remote area, there is flooding or during a pandemic.

You may feel nervous, remember your assessor is trained to talk to people in your situation and will understand how you are feeling. Tell them honestly about your situation and any concerns you or your family may have.

We encourage you to have a friend, family member or carer with you for your assessment.



Outcome of your assessment

After your assessment, an assessor will make a formal decision about your care needs. If you are assessed as eligible for entry into an aged care home, you will receive an approval letter and support plan from your ACAT that sets out the care you are approved to receive. The support plan will include a unique referral code that you give to your chosen provider if and when you choose to go into an aged care home. Decisions about entering an aged care home must be made with your agreement.

If you are not approved for entry into an aged care home, you will receive a letter stating why and who to contact for more help. You may be eligible for other care and services and if so, this information will be included with your letter.

If your care needs change at any time, you can ask for a new assessment by calling My Aged Care.

If you don't receive an approval letter explaining your assessment decision, you should first contact your ACAT or call My Aged Care and ask for a copy.



Concerns about the outcome of your assessment

The letter you receive from the ACAT will include further information about how you can make a complaint or appeal the decision.

If you do not agree with the assessment outcome in your letter or want to discuss any concerns about the decision, you should first contact your ACAT.

If you do not know the ACAT organisation's details, the My Aged Care contact centre can give you this information.

If, after you have spoken to your assessor, you still do not agree with your assessment outcome, you can ask for a review of the decision by writing to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Aged Care outlining why you think it should be changed.

You should write to the following address:

The Secretary
Department of Health and Aged Care
Attn: Aged Care Assessment Program Reconsiderations
GPO Box 9848
Adelaide SA 5001

You must write to the Secretary within 28 days of receiving your letter.

There is no charge to ask for a review of an ACAT decision. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this review, you can go to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. There is a charge for this. Find out more on their website at aat.gov.au or call **1800 228 333** (free call). If you require assistance, such as with translating and interpreting, please see page 29.

Residential respite care (short stays in aged care homes)

If your carers at home are unable to care for you for some reason, or you would like a break from caring for yourself, you may be able to have a short stay in an aged care home. This is called 'residential respite care', and can be sought on a planned or emergency basis.

Care available

An aged care home may provide a range of care and services, depending on your needs. These should be the same as what you would receive if you moved into the home permanently.

You can access residential respite for up to 63 days each financial year. You or your provider can ask to extend this time in lots of 21 days by contacting your local ACAT.

Access to residential respite care

You will need an ACAT assessment for respite in an aged care home. The availability of services varies from region to region, and the assessment will determine your needs in line with what help is available in your area.

If you need emergency respite care, or additional support, contact the Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** (free call) Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm. You can also go to **carergateway.gov.au** to find out more about services to support carers.

See also **residential respite care costs** on page 18.

Pathway to accessing care in an aged care home

This booklet outlines the usual pathway after you have had an assessment and received a letter to say that you are approved for residential care, so you can enter an aged care home and manage your services:

- 1 Work out the costs**
- 2 Find an aged care home**
- 3 Apply to an aged care home and accept an offer**
- 4 Enter into agreements with your aged care home**
- 5 Manage your care and services**

Help accessing aged care services

If you need extra assistance or want help to raise your concern, you can have an aged care advocate work with you to resolve the matter. The Older Advocacy Network (OPAN) helps people access and interact with Commonwealth-funded aged care services. OPAN is funded by the Australian Government. It is free and confidential.

OPAN helps older people get the information they need to make decisions, understand their aged care rights, and resolve problems and confusion. OPAN can be contacted on **1800 700 600** (free call) from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays.

1 Work out the costs



The Australian Government subsidises aged care homes to keep costs reasonable and affordable. Subsidies based on your care needs are paid directly to the home.

On average, the Australian Government contributes about \$85,000 yearly for each permanent aged care home resident. This amount increases each year.

If you are eligible, you are expected to contribute to the cost of your accommodation and care if you can afford to do so.

To get an estimate of your fees, use the fee estimator on the My Aged Care website at myagedcare.gov.au/how-much-will-i-pay

Costs you may need to pay

There are various fees you may be asked to pay including:

- **basic daily fee**

This covers daily living costs such as meals, power and laundry. Everyone pays this fee and for some people, this is the only fee they need to pay.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will pay the basic daily fee for eligible former Prisoners Of War (POW) and Victoria Cross (VC) recipients.

- **means tested care fee**

If your income and assets are over a certain amount, you can be asked to contribute towards the cost of your care. Services Australia or DVA will tell you if you need to pay this fee and the amount will be based on your means assessment.

Eligible former POWs and VC recipients are exempt from paying a means tested care fee.

- **accommodation costs**

This is for your accommodation in the home. Some people will have their accommodation costs paid in full or in part by the Australian Government, while others will need to pay the accommodation price agreed with the aged care home. Services Australia will tell you which applies to you based on your means assessment.

- **extra service fees**

Some homes have extra service status which allows them to offer a higher standard of accommodation, food and services, at an additional cost. If you agree to an extra service room, extra service fees will apply.

You should ask your provider if they have extra service status and if they charge this fee. Extra service fees are set by the aged care home and can only be charged if you have agreed to them. They are **not** subsidised by the government.

- **additional service fees**

You may also choose to pay for additional services, which go beyond the care and services which your aged care home must provide.

Some homes allow you to choose what additional services you would like, so you only pay for what you use. Others provide a package of additional services, and some of them must be agreed to as a condition of living in the home. Fees for additional services are set by the provider and are **not** subsidised by the government.

You and your provider must agree on a fee for additional services before you start receiving them, but you can only be charged for additional services that you can make use of or benefit from.

Additional services and additional service fees vary from home to home so check with your aged care home for details of these services and the fees that apply.

Fees are payable for every day you are in an aged care home. These are calculated daily but generally paid fortnightly or monthly to the aged care home.

Arrange your financial assessment

You will need a means assessment to work out if you are eligible for government assistance with your accommodation costs and if you need to pay a means tested care fee. How much you pay depends on the result of this means assessment.

You should arrange for a means assessment as soon as possible as this process may take time.

Assessments are undertaken by Services Australia, except for eligible members of the veteran community whose assessment may be undertaken by DVA.

If you receive a means tested payment from Centrelink or DVA and you don't own your home, you do not need to fill in a means assessment form. Services Australia already have enough information to complete your means assessment.

You can use the Income and means assessments tool on the My Aged Care website to confirm if you should complete a means assessment for aged care: **myagedcare.gov.au/income-and-means-assessments**

For everyone else, you can complete your means assessment online by using the *Aged Care Calculation of your cost of care (SA486)* form.

This form will present different questions based on the answers you give. You can find it on the Services Australia website at **servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/forms/sa486**

If you prefer to complete a hardcopy form, you are still able to do so:

- If you receive a means tested payment from Centrelink or DVA and you own or part own your home, complete the *Residential Aged Care Property details for Centrelink and DVA customers (SA485)* form.
- If you do not receive a means tested payment from Centrelink or DVA, complete the *Residential Aged Care Calculation of your cost of care (SA457)* form.

You can get these forms by requesting a copy from Services Australia on **1800 227 475**, or downloading them from the Services Australia website at **servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/forms/sa486**

Further details about these forms and when to use them are provided on the forms themselves.

If you do not complete a means assessment, you won't be eligible for government assistance with your accommodation and care costs. The aged care home can then ask you to pay the maximum means tested care fee and an accommodation payment (up to their published maximum room price).

To check the status of your means assessment you can call Services Australia on **1800 227 375** (free call) or DVA on **1800 555 254** (free call).

Fee advice letter

If you get a means assessment before moving into an aged care home, you will receive a letter about the maximum means tested care fees you can be asked to pay. The advice will be valid for 120 days – unless there is a significant change in your circumstances. If there is a change in your circumstances, you will need to notify Services Australia or DVA who will reissue your fee advice letter.

If you do not need to complete a means assessment because Services Australia already have your financial information, you will receive a fee advice letter once you enter your aged care home. If you require the letter before you enter care, you can request one by calling Services Australia on **1800 227 375** (free call) or DVA on **1800 555 254** (free call).

Take your fee advice letter with you to any discussions that you have with potential aged care homes to help you understand the cost of living in their home.

Once you have moved in, Services Australia will send you and your aged care home a letter outlining the maximum fees you may be asked to pay.

Services Australia will send you and your aged care home a letter each time there is a significant change to your means tested care fee or accommodation contribution.

Accommodation costs

The amount you can be asked to pay for your accommodation is based on your means assessment and will be one of the following:

- No accommodation costs: for some people, the Australian Government will pay all of your accommodation costs.
- An **accommodation contribution**: if you need to pay for part of your accommodation, the Australian Government will pay the rest.
- An **accommodation payment**: if you need to pay for the full cost of your accommodation, you will need to negotiate a room price with your provider.

Services Australia will advise which applies to you.

Whether you have to pay towards your accommodation or not, everyone entering an aged care home needs to agree a room price in writing with their aged care home (up to the published maximum room price on My Aged Care). The room price you agree to must be included in the accommodation agreement given to you before you move in.

All aged care homes that charge an accommodation payment are required to publish their accommodation costs on the My Aged Care website in the aged care homes 'Find a provider' tool: **myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider**

The advertised room price is the maximum price the aged care home can ask you to pay. However, you may be able to negotiate a lower price directly with the aged care home.

Payment options

If you are required to pay an accommodation contribution or an accommodation payment, you have 28 days from the day you move into the home to decide on your payment method. You can choose to pay your accommodation costs by:

- a lump-sum refundable accommodation deposit (RAD) or refundable accommodation contribution (RAC)
- rental-style payments called a daily accommodation payment (DAP) or daily accommodation contribution (DAC)
- a combination of both lump-sum and rental-style payments.

You must pay your accommodation costs by the rental-style payment method until you decide how you want to pay for your accommodation.

If you choose to pay an amount as a lump sum, the balance is refunded when you leave the home.

If you choose a combination payment, you can choose to draw your daily payment from your paid lump sum. Over time, this will increase your daily payment unless you top up the lump sum. Your provider may also agree to draw other aged care fees from the lump sum, like the basic daily fee.

If you have been asked to make an accommodation contribution, the maximum amount you can be asked to pay will be advised by Services Australia.

More information about accommodation costs is available on the My Aged Care website: **myagedcare.gov.au/understanding-aged-care-home-accommodation-costs**

Residential respite care costs

You do not have to complete a means assessment to access residential respite care. If you receive residential respite care through an aged care home, you won't have to pay any accommodation costs or means tested care fees.

You can expect to pay a basic daily fee and perhaps a booking fee.

DVA may pay the basic daily fee for eligible veterans and war widows/widowers. Contact Veterans' Home Care for an assessment by calling **1300 550 450**.

The booking fee is a pre-payment of residential respite care fees and cannot be more than either a full week's fees, or 25% of the fees for the entire stay, depending on which amount is the lowest.

Your provider must refund your booking fee if you cancel your respite care booking more than 7 days before your entry date.

You may also be asked to pay for additional care and services if you agree to receive these, or be charged an extra service fee if you agree to stay in an extra service room.

Once your Government-funded days of respite care have been exhausted, and if you remain in care, your provider may charge you an additional amount. This needs to be agreed to beforehand and outlined in your resident agreement.

Financial hardship assistance

Help is available if you are having difficulty paying your care and accommodation costs for reasons beyond your control. Financial hardship assistance is available to help you with these costs. Depending on your personal situation, you may apply for financial assistance with your basic daily fee, means tested care fee and/or accommodation costs.

More information about financial hardship assistance is available on the My Aged Care website, including how you can apply. Or you can call Services Australia on **1800 227 475** (free call).

Financial information and education

It is a good idea to seek independent financial advice before deciding how to pay for your aged care. Some payment methods may affect your pension and aged care fees. Also, if both you and your partner need access to aged care, each of your payment methods may impact the other's aged care fees.

You can get basic information about managing your finances from the Services Australia Financial Information Service. This free confidential service can help you make informed decisions about investment and financial issues for your current and future needs.

For more information about the Financial Information Service, call Services Australia on **132 300** and say 'financial information service' when asked why you are calling.



2 Find an aged care home

When deciding on an aged care home, it is important to find out if the home has the care and services you need, now and into the future. The best way to find a place that suits you is to visit a few different homes to check:

- what the accommodation is like
- what types of care, services and activities they offer
- how they can best meet your individual needs
- the fees you may need to pay for care and services
- accommodation prices
- any additional services they offer.

From 1 October 2022, aged care homes are funded by the Government to provide more care time, called care minutes, to people living at the home. This is to ensure that people get the right amount of care from a mix of qualified nurses and personal care workers to meet their individual care needs.

For more information about care minutes, visit: the Department of Health and Aged Care website at:

health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/an-acc/residents

The information guide for residents at: **health.gov.au/resources/publications/an-acc-assessments-care-minutes-and-access-to-allied-health**

Find providers in your local area with help from your assessor, by using the aged care homes 'Find a provider' tool myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider, or calling My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call). You can then contact them to arrange a time to visit.

You can also research the performance of individual aged care homes through the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. You can access audit reports, sanction notices and other historical performance information at **agedcarequality.gov.au/reports**

Meet providers

Before you visit any aged care homes, it's a good idea to make a list of the things that are important to you. You may want to take your:

- letter and referral code details from the ACAT assessor, as some homes will want to know that you have been approved to receive residential care and what services you need

- fee advice letter from Services Australia, if you already have the outcome of a financial assessment.

As you visit each home, you may also want to make notes about what you like, what you don't like and if you feel comfortable there. Your impressions of the staff and the environment will help you make a decision about which home is right for you.

Use the checklist at the back of this booklet to help you research and find providers that best meet your needs.

Questions you can ask providers:

- What type of care services are and are not provided? What services will I need to pay for?
- Can you help me with my medical needs such as help with taking medication or wound care?
- Can you meet my individual needs? These may include language and culture, religious beliefs, sexuality or gender identity, pets and access to medical visits.
- What are the meal arrangements? These include seating, times, menus, visitors, meals in your room and special diets.
- How do you ensure my privacy and safety?
- How are social and cultural activities decided? How are my interests taken into account?
- What transport can I access for visiting shops, family and friends or medical appointments? How much will this cost?
- What training do the care staff have? Will I have access to qualified nurses and personal care workers to meet my care needs?
- How many staff provide care overnight?
- How can my partner, family and friends be involved in my care? Can they stay overnight if needed? What if I want to stay with family members overnight?
- Can you arrange appointments and access to health services? Can I continue to see my own GP and other health practitioners?
- What checks are in place to ensure quality services?

- How did the home perform in its accreditation audit?
- What are you doing to improve the quality of care and services?
- Do you have the right mix of qualified nurses and personal care workers to meet the home's care minutes targets set by the Government?
- What areas are you working on improving and what results have you seen?
- How do you involve older people, their families and carers in decisions or making quality improvements?
- Will I ever be asked to leave the aged care home or change rooms?

3 Apply to an aged care home and accept an offer

As you find aged care homes that meet your needs, you can start applying for a place. You can apply to as many homes as you like. It is a good idea to apply to a number of homes as your preferred home may not have a place available when you are looking. When a place becomes available, the aged care home will contact you or your nominated contact person.

Fill in an application form

All aged care homes have their own application process and may ask you to fill in a form. Talk to the homes you are interested in and find out what process they have and what information they need.

You will need to give the unique referral code you received from your ACAT to your chosen provider/s. This will allow them to view your client record and consider your care needs to help you enter an aged care home.

Accept an offer

When a place becomes available, the aged care home will contact you or your nominated contact person. Once you have accepted an offer of a place in an aged care home, the home will offer you formal agreements that cover things like services, accommodation costs, and your rights and responsibilities as a consumer of Australian Government funded aged care services.

Use the checklist at the back of this booklet to prepare for your move. This includes organising your medical and financial matters, and who you'll need to tell about your move.

4 Enter into agreements with your aged care home

After accepting a place and before moving in, your aged care home must offer you a **resident agreement**.

You will also be offered an **accommodation agreement** with the home before you enter care and it may be included as part of your resident agreement or it may be a separate document.

The resident agreement and accommodation agreement are legally binding documents between you and your aged care home. They set out:

- the care and services available
- what fees and accommodation costs you will have to pay
- how fees and accommodation costs can be paid
- your rights and responsibilities.

It's important that you understand everything in these agreements before you agree to them. If you have any questions, you should ask your new aged care home. It is their responsibility to make sure the agreements offered to you are clear.

The proposed agreements may not include all the things that you think are important, so it is a good idea to check before you agree. You can also ask:

- your provider for extra information, such as the home's meal and visitor policy, diversity inclusion plan, and other details about living in the home
- your family, friends, carer, financial advisor or a legal professional to help you understand the terms of your agreements
- to get help from an advocate. Call OPAN on **1800 700 600** (free call).

Use the checklist at the back of the booklet to help you negotiate your agreements with your preferred provider.

Help negotiating your care and accommodation costs

You can ask someone to negotiate with the aged care provider about your fees and agreed room price on your behalf.

You or the person helping you will need to discuss and formally agree to the room price and fees with your aged care home before you enter. Once you are in care, you or the person helping you will decide how you want to pay your accommodation costs.

Signing the agreements

There is no time limit or requirement for you to agree to the resident agreement. It is, however, in your best interest to agree to the arrangement that covers your rights and responsibilities as soon as you can.

You have 28 days after moving into your aged care home to decide how you want to pay your accommodation costs and enter into an accommodation agreement. You must pay for your accommodation by the rental-style payment until you have made this decision.

If you choose not to sign this agreement, the aged care home still needs to talk to you about your needs and document your reasons for not signing. You can still move in, but this conversation is a verbal agreement of the type of care and services you will get and what fees will apply. You will still need to pay your daily fees and any relevant accommodation costs when you move in.

Your rights

The Charter of Aged Care Rights sets out your rights as a person living in an aged care home. Your provider must comply with the Charter and respect your rights.

Your provider must help you to understand your rights under the Charter and give you a copy of it before or when you start receiving aged care. Your provider must sign the Charter and also give you (or your representative) the option of signing it. This is in addition to your aged care agreement. By signing the Charter, you acknowledge you have received it, been assisted to understand it and understand your rights. You don't have to sign the Charter; you can begin to receive care and services even if you do not sign it. More information about the Charter is available on the My Aged Care website at **myagedcare.gov.au**.

5 Manage your care and services

Assessment of your care needs

After you move into the aged care home, your provider will arrange for you to do an assessment with an independent assessor. During your assessment, the independent assessor will ask you a few questions about the things that you can or cannot do by yourself. This is to help work out how much subsidy the provider will get from the Government to meet your care costs.

Visiting your doctor, dentist or specialist

You can keep your own doctor, dentist or specialist. Your aged care home must help you make appointments and access doctors or specialists of your choice if needed. You do not have to pay the home for arranging these appointments. You will, however, generally need to pay the consultation fee. Your aged care home can also help you arrange transport to and from your medical appointments. You may have to pay for the transport and for a staff member to accompany you.

Accessing allied health services

Your aged care home must help you get access to allied health services (such as physiotherapy, podiatry and speech therapy), if you need them. This is to help you restore your ability or continue to do daily tasks and things independently.

There are a range of allied health services that you may be able to access. You should discuss your needs with aged care home.

Social activities

Your aged care home will organise social and other activities. Let them know about your hobbies and interests so they can help you continue with them while you are in the home. They might also be able to suggest other things to try.

Community visitors

If you are feeling alone and don't have regular contact with family or friends, the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) can provide opportunities for social contact.

If you would like a community visitor, you can let your aged care home know. Your family and friends can also let the home know if they think you would benefit from the CVS. Your aged care home may also approach the CVS directly.

Visit the Department of Health website (health.gov.au) and search for “CVS Network Members” for contact details in your state or territory or call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call). There is also a CVS that specialises in matching LGBTIQ+ visitors and elders.

Taking leave

Can I go on holiday?

If you want to go on a holiday or visit family and friends you can use up to 52 nights of social leave from your aged care home in a financial year. You will still have to pay your usual fees and accommodation costs.

If you stay away for more than 52 nights in a financial year, the Australian Government will stop paying subsidies and your aged care home might ask you to make up the amount.

What if I need to go to hospital?

If you need to go to hospital, the time away won't count towards your social leave, but you'll still have to pay your usual fees and accommodation costs. The fees may reduce with an extended hospital stay.

Changing rooms

If you are satisfied with your aged care home but want to change rooms, you can ask the manager of your home. They must consider your request, even if it isn't possible to offer you another room straight away.

You may need to negotiate a new accommodation agreement and accommodation price if you change rooms, for example, if you choose to move from a shared room to a single room. You may also be asked to pay extra service fees associated with the new room.

Can the home make me change rooms?

There are circumstances where you could be moved to another room without you asking for the change. If you have any concerns about being asked to change rooms or how your move is being handled, talk to the manager at your aged care home.

Raising your concerns

If you are unhappy about the care or services you receive, you have the right to raise your concerns. It is important that you ask for what you need.

- It is often best to talk to your service provider about your complaint first to see if they can help as it may be something that can be easily resolved.
- If you like, you can have a family member, friend, carer or an aged care advocate with you when you meet with your aged care service provider.

If the complaint can't be resolved by the service provider, or you don't feel comfortable raising your concern with them, you can raise your concern with the **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission**.

This is a free service and you can contact them by:

Phone – 1800 951 822

Email – info@agedcarequality.gov.au

Online – agedcarequality.gov.au

In writing – address your written complaint to:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819
(Your capital city and state/territory)

Getting help from an advocate

You have the right to an advocate to help you make a complaint.

Are you concerned about, or do you need assistance in, any of the following areas?

- Aged care provider services or fees
- Assistance with visits or services
- Accessing or getting the most from your services
- Guardianship advice
- Concern that you may not be treated respectfully, fairly, or appropriately.

Advocacy services can give you information about your rights and responsibilities when accessing aged care services. Advocacy services are free, confidential and independent. Call the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) on **1800 700 600** (free call) between 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays to find out more.

Further assistance

Translation and interpreting services

If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) for the cost of a local call on 131 450. TIS National covers more than 100 languages. Call and tell the operator the language you speak and ask for My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call).

Help for people with hearing or speech difficulties

If you are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing, you can contact My Aged Care via Deaf Connect - deafconnect.org.au. They can provide in-person sign language interpreting and Video Remote Interpreting services.

The National Relay Service can also assist if you find it hard to hear or speak using a phone. Choose your preferred access option at **communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs** and ask for a relay to **1800 200 422** (free call).

Help for people with dementia

The Australian Government expects all aged care providers to offer services that meet the needs of people with dementia. It funds Dementia Australia to provide advisory services, education and training, support programs and other services for people with dementia, their families and carers.

For more information visit the Dementia Australia website at dementia.org.au or call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** (free call), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Help for people with diverse needs

There are programs, information and support for older Australians of all backgrounds including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s)
- people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people who live in a rural and remote area
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- veterans, their dependants and widows or widowers
- people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex
- people who are Care Leavers (an adult who spent time in institutional or foster care as a child)
- parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal.

Knowing about your individual needs helps your provider deliver care and support that is appropriate and respectful of your diversity.

Help for people about elder abuse

If you witness, suspect, or experience elder abuse, call the National Elder Abuse phone line for free and confidential information, support, and referrals. Call **1800 353 374** (free call).

Elder abuse may involve physical harm, misuse of your money, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

You can also visit the COMPASS website at compass.info for information, a support directory and resources about elder abuse.

Help for carers

If you have a carer, let them know they can access carer specific support through Carer Gateway. Carer Gateway provides carers with in-person, phone, and online services and support nationally to assist them in their caring role.

Your carer can contact Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** (free call) or go to the website at carergateway.gov.au to find out more.

- Carer Gateway staff will talk with your carer to understand their needs and help find local services and support.
- The Carer Gateway website provides practical information, advice, resources and access to online support services.
- The My Aged Care website also has information on services and support groups for carers at **myagedcare.gov.au/caring-someone**.

More information

Visit the My Aged Care website at **myagedcare.gov.au** for more detailed information including additional information on costs.

Call costs

13/1300 numbers – Charges for calls to 13/1300 numbers from landline and mobile phones are different. Calls to 13/1300 numbers from a fixed landline are charged at a cost similar to a local call. Calls from mobile phones may incur a higher charge.

1800 numbers – Calls to 1800 numbers are free from fixed landlines and most Australian mobile phone providers now offer free calls to 1800 numbers – check with your mobile phone provider.

Checklist - Work out the costs and find an aged care home

Use this checklist to help work out what you may need to pay towards the cost of your care and accommodation and find a provider that meets your needs.

Following your assessment

- receive approval letter and support plan from your ACAT.

Estimate costs

- estimate costs using the fee estimator for aged care homes on the My Aged Care website: myagedcare.gov.au/how-much-will-i-pay

Arrange a financial assessment early

- use the Income and means assessments tool on the My Aged Care website to confirm if you should complete a means assessment for aged care: myagedcare.gov.au/income-and-means-assessments
- if you receive a means tested payment from Centrelink or DVA and you don't own your home, you do not need to fill in a means assessment form. If you need a fee advice letter before you enter the aged care home, you can request one by calling Services Australia on **1800 227 475** (free call) or DVA on **1800 555 254** (free call).
- everyone else should complete the online *Aged Care Calculation of your cost of care (SA486)* form on the Services Australia website: servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/forms/, or
- you can use a hardcopy form by downloading one from the link above or by calling Services Australia or DVA to request one:
 - › *Residential Aged Care Property details for Centrelink and DVA customers (SA485) form*
 - › *Residential Aged Care Calculation of your cost of care (SA457) form*
- submit the means assessment form to Services Australia or DVA
- let Services Australia or DVA know if there is a change to your financial situation and they will reissue your fee advice letter

Supports

- you can appoint someone to act on your behalf with Services Australia at the same time as you complete your means assessment. If you have chosen not to complete a means assessment you can complete an *Authorising a person or organisation to enquire or act on your behalf (SS313)* form instead. DVA customers should use the *Aged Care Request for a nominee for DVA customers (AC019)* form.
- you may wish to seek financial advice before deciding how to pay your fees and accommodation costs. You can contact Services Australia's free Financial Information Service on **132 300** and say 'financial information service' when asked why you are calling.

Short-list the aged care homes you are interested in

- use the 'Find a provider' tool on the My Aged Care website myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider
- call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call) to find aged care homes in your area
- use the 'fee estimator' on the My Aged Care website to give you an idea of accommodation costs.

Contact/visit your preferred aged care homes to discuss what they offer and their costs

- take your approval letter from your ACAT
- take your fee advice letter from Services Australia with you
- **Note:** If you have not already arranged for a means assessment, call Services Australia on **1800 227 475** (free call) or DVA on **1800 555 254** (free call).
- list what's important to you and questions to ask
- make notes on each home you visit e.g. what you like/don't like and impressions of the staff and the environment
- ask about fees and accommodation costs
- ask if they offer extra service rooms and ask about their costs
- ask about additional services they offer and their costs
- apply for a place in the home/s you like using the aged care home's application form.

Checklist – Enter into agreements

Once you have accepted an offer of a place in an aged care home, the home will offer you a resident agreement, an accommodation agreement, possibly additional services and an extra service agreement. These may be combined into a single agreement.

You can ask someone to negotiate with the aged care provider about your fees and accommodation costs on your behalf. You can include this nominated person in your resident agreement.

Agree on a room price in writing before you enter the home.

Check that your resident agreement includes:

- the name of your aged care home
- the care and services that the home will provide
- the policies and practices used to set your fees and accommodation costs
- the daily fee you'll be asked to pay
- the means tested care fee if applicable
- any extra or additional service fees for other optional care or services you have agreed to (in addition to those that the home must provide to you based on your care needs)
- rights and responsibilities of residents and the aged care home
- how the aged care home handles complaints
- any circumstances where you might be asked to leave and how the aged care home will help you find somewhere else to live
- any other matters agreed between you and the aged care home.

Check that your accommodation agreement includes:

- the agreed room price
- other conditions of your accommodation payment or contribution and, if applicable, the circumstances for refunding your lump sum balance if you leave or pass away
- the specific accommodation you will be provided with if you pay an accommodation payment, contribution or neither of these

- any services your accommodation cost covers
- conditions for moving rooms.

You have 28 days after moving into your aged care home to decide how you would like to pay for your accommodation.

Check that your extra or additional service agreement (if applicable) includes:

- details of the higher standard of accommodation, meals and services
- the extra or additional service fees.



Checklist - Prepare to move

Once you have been offered a place in an aged care home, use this list to check who you should let know about your move.

Family and friends

- your family and friends, carer/s and neighbours.

Health professionals

- your doctor/GP
 - › *if you need to change doctors, ask to have your medical history sent to your new doctor*
 - › *make a note of your current medical treatments and medication so you can discuss this with your new aged care home as part of your care plan*
- other health professionals you see regularly e.g. specialists, dentist, etc.
- your community nurse
- your pharmacist.



Help at home support

- your gardener or lawn mowing person
- your cleaner or home help
- Meals on Wheels and other support services
- your home care package provider.

Government departments and agencies

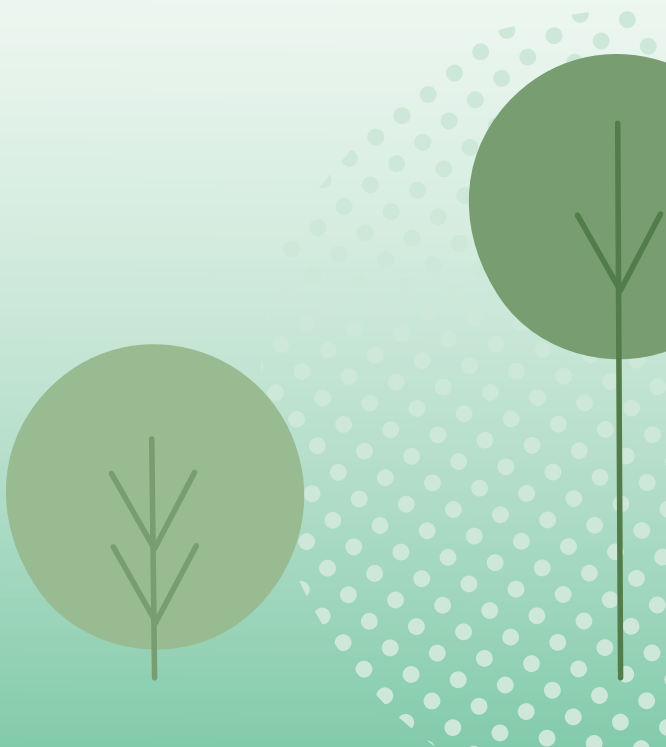
- Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) – **1800 555 254** (free call)
- Services Australia – **132 300**
- Australian Taxation Office – **132 861**
- Medicare – **132 011**
- your local office of the Australian Electoral Commission
- your local roads and transport authority (for your driver's licence)
- your local post office
- your local council.

Finances and insurance

- your health insurance company
- your superannuation company
- your bank, building society or credit union.

Other

- utilities such as phone, gas, electricity and water
- other aged care homes you've applied to, if you no longer wish to move there (although you might choose to keep your application open if you're still interested).



For help visit myagedcare.gov.au or call 1800 200 422
All information in this publication is correct as at November 2022