



# Your guide to Commonwealth Home Support Programme services

Supporting you to live at home



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*Your guide to Commonwealth Home Support Programme services.*

### **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](https://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](mailto:agedcarecomms@health.gov.au)

You can find this product at [myagedcare.gov.au](https://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 August 2023.



# **Your guide to Commonwealth Home Support Programme services**

Supporting you to live at home

## Is this booklet right for you?

This booklet explains how older people can receive support in their home and daily life through the **Commonwealth Home Support Programme**.

You should read this booklet if you have been assessed by a Regional Assessment Service (RAS) for Commonwealth Home Support Programme services.

Otherwise call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call), go to **myagedcare.gov.au** or visit any Services Australia service centre 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 unable to live independently in their own homes. This also includes residential respite for short stays in an aged care home.

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Is this booklet right for you? .....                                 | 2  |
| What is the Commonwealth Home Support Programme? .....               | 4  |
| Pathway to accessing Commonwealth Home Support Programme services .. | 6  |
| Contact My Aged Care .....   | 7  |
| Have a home support assessment .....                                 | 9  |
| Agree on a home support plan .....                                   | 10 |
| Select service providers and work out your fees .....                | 11 |
| Manage your services .....   | 14 |
| Further assistance .....   | 17 |

# What is the Commonwealth Home Support Programme?

Funded by the Australian Government, the Commonwealth Home Support Programme provides a range of entry-level aged care services for older people who need assistance to keep living independently at home and in their community.

Over the past decade, emerging research has demonstrated the benefits of focussing on your independence. If you are generally able to manage but just need some help with daily tasks to continue living at home, Commonwealth Home Support Programme services may be right for you.

These services might also be suitable if you have had a setback and need support for just a short period of time to help you get back on your feet.

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme funds a large variety of organisations (called service providers) across Australia to deliver the care and services to you.

The aim of the program is to help older people live as independently as possible — with a focus on working with you to continue to perform daily tasks independently for as long as possible, rather than doing for you.

It is about building on your strengths and abilities to help you remain living independently and safely at home.

The program is for people aged 65 years and over (50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

The program also includes support services for prematurely aged people on a low income who are 50 years or over (45 years or over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) and are living with hoarding behaviour or in a squalid environment as well as people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## Examples of Commonwealth Home Support Programme services

There are different services to help you manage your day-to-day activities. Depending on your needs, you may be eligible to receive:

- transport to appointments and activities
- domestic help (e.g. house cleaning, washing clothes)
- personal care (e.g. help with showering or dressing)
- home maintenance (e.g. changing light bulbs, gardening)
- minor home modifications (e.g. getting a grab rail installed)
- aids and equipment (e.g. bath seat, raised toilet seat, mobility aids)
- meals, help with food preparation and cooking skills, nutrition advice
- nursing (e.g. wound care)
- allied health (e.g. podiatry, physiotherapy, occupational therapy)
- social support (e.g. accompanied activities, group excursions)
- respite (care for you while your carer takes a break)
- specialised support (to provide you with advice on clinical conditions like hearing loss or incontinence).



Contact My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 (free call), go to [myagedcare.gov.au](http://myagedcare.gov.au) or visit any Services Australia service centre

# Pathway to accessing Commonwealth Home Support Programme services

This booklet outlines the usual pathway for people to access Commonwealth Home Support Programme services. It includes information on what to expect at each stage, as well as information for special circumstances and further assistance.

**1** Contact My Aged Care

**2** Have a home support assessment

**3** Agree on a home support plan

**4** Select service providers and work out your fees

**5** Manage your services





# 1 Contact My Aged Care

My Aged Care has a website ([myagedcare.gov.au](http://myagedcare.gov.au)) and contact centre to give you information about aged care and to help you access the services that are right for you.

If you have not already been assessed for aged care services you can apply for an assessment in two 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](http://myagedcare.gov.au/apply-online)**

**By telephone** You can call the My Aged Care Contact Centre on **1800 200 422** (free call) to discuss your needs and complete the application over the phone. The Contact Centre is open 8am to 8pm weekdays and 10am to 2pm Saturday.

**In person** Visit any Services Australia service centre for help to apply online or to call My Aged Care. In some locations you can book a free, in-depth appointment with an Aged Care Specialist Officer. Freecall **1800 227 475** 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, Aged Care Assessment Team (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](https://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](https://myagedcare.gov.au/access-your-online-account)**.

## 2

# Have a home support assessment

If the My Aged Care contact centre refers you for a home support assessment, a Regional Assessment Service (RAS) assessor will contact you within 2–6 weeks to arrange an assessment, usually in your home.

You may wish to have a family member, friend or carer at the assessment to support you, or to speak on your behalf.

Where face-to-face contact is not possible (e.g. if you are in a remote area or due to exceptional circumstances such as a seasonal weather event or pandemic), a teleconference, video conference or telehealth assessment may be undertaken.

This assessment is provided free of charge.

During your home support assessment, the RAS assessor will ask you about your day-to-day activities, your needs and your preferences — what you can do well, what you need some help doing, and what you want to be able to do.

If your assessment shows you are eligible for services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, you can work with the RAS assessor to decide which service provider(s) you want to receive services from.

If you have concerns about your home support assessment, try to speak to your RAS assessor in the first instance — it might be possible to get a resolution that way. The RAS organisations have complaint procedures in place and will work with you to address your concerns. If you and the RAS assessor cannot resolve the issue or you feel uncomfortable approaching them directly, you can call My Aged Care.

### 3 Agree on a home support plan

The RAS assessor will work with you to develop a personalised home support plan.

Your home support plan will be tailored to your needs, and will be developed to maximise your independence and quality of life.

Your RAS assessor might also suggest options for you that are not part of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (e.g. local community services, groups and activities).

For example, your home support plan might include advice or referrals about:

- assistive devices or equipment to help you stay independent and safe in your home
- meals and food preparation
- transport to appointments, groups and activities to keep you connected with friends, services and the local community
- an exercise and/or daily activity program
- strategies to reduce falls.

Your home support plan should be reviewed by your service provider every 12 months, to ensure you are receiving services and supports that continue to be right for you.



## 4

## Select service providers and work out your fees

To find out which service providers offer what you need in your area, ask your RAS assessor or call My Aged Care. You can also use the My Aged Care website to search for providers at **[myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider](http://myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider)**.

If you would like to talk to someone face-to-face you can book an appointment with an Aged Care Specialist Officer (where one is available in your location) at a Services Australia service centre. Call Services Australia on **1800 227 475** (free call) weekdays from 8am to 5pm.

Your RAS assessor can arrange to have a 'referral for service' sent to the relevant provider(s) in your local area. A referral for service notifies providers there is a new client wanting a service, and prompts them to contact you to make arrangements.

If you first want to visit or call a service provider to decide if their services are right for you, ask your RAS assessor to give you a 'referral code'. You can pass this to the service provider when you speak with them. This allows them to view your client record, accept the referral and start organising services for you, if you choose to accept their services.

If there are no services available, you may be placed on a waitlist. Once services become available, people on the waitlist with the highest level of need will be offered services first.

### Work out your fees

It is expected that you will contribute towards the cost of the services you receive, if you can afford to do so.

You will not be asked to cover the full cost of services — the Australian Government subsidises Commonwealth Home Support Programme service providers so that client fees can be kept to a reasonable and affordable level.

Any fees you are asked to pay will be agreed between you and the service provider before you start receiving services.

## How are your fees worked out?

Each service provider is required to have their own client contribution policy and will use it to determine your fees. Service providers are expected to make their client contribution policy publicly available. You can ask your service provider to give you a copy of theirs.

To work out your fees, your service provider will consider the information you supplied during your home support assessment (with the RAS assessor) and may ask you questions about your financial situation. They will take into account your ability to pay and the number and type of services you are seeking.

## When do you find out what you're expected to pay?

Service providers should discuss and agree contribution amounts with you before you start receiving services.

## What if you can't afford the fees?

Talk to your service provider about the services you will receive and how much you'll be asked to contribute for each of them. Arrangements for clients who are unable to pay the requested contribution will be discussed before any services begin.

You will not be denied services if you are unable to contribute to the cost. Service providers will have their own arrangements for protecting those least able to contribute towards the cost of their care.

You have a right to appeal the amount you have been asked to pay. If you wish to question your fees, you should first discuss this with your service provider.

## Will your contribution affect your age pension?

Your age pension will not be affected by the contributions you make towards the cost of your services.

## Where can you get financial information and education?

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 your finances 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 prompted or visit any Services Australia service centre for support. For more in-depth information, you can book an appointment with an Aged Care Specialist Officer (where one is available in your location). Freecall **1800 227 475** weekdays from 8am to 5pm.

## 5 Manage your services

### What can you expect from service providers?

Commonwealth Home Support Programme service providers should support you to do as much as you can and help improve your quality of life.

They will help you to live as independently as possible by focusing on your needs and preferences and building on your strengths.

They should provide services tailored to your unique circumstances, working in partnership with you, your family, friends and carers.

Service providers should review your services every 12 months to make sure they continue to meet your needs.

### What happens if your care needs change?

If your needs change over time, you can discuss this with your service provider. They may refer you to My Aged Care for another assessment.

You can also call My Aged Care directly to discuss your changing care needs.

If your care needs increase or become more complex, you may need new services or a different type of aged care, such as a Home Care Package. Call My Aged Care to arrange an appropriate assessment, either with a Regional Assessment Service (RAS) or with an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). Once there's a clear picture of what your new needs are, you will be given options about the care and services best suited to you.

### Can you change providers? What if you move to another location?

You should talk to your service provider(s) in the first instance, who will refer you back to My Aged Care. You can also choose to contact My Aged Care directly to talk about your needs. Depending on your circumstances, you may be required to have another assessment.



## What happens if you go into hospital?

Speak to your Commonwealth Home Support Programme service provider(s) to let them know, so your services can be suspended while you're away from home.

You may be able to receive additional Commonwealth Home Support Programme services for a short period of time to help you get back on your feet after you return home. Speak to your service provider(s) in the first instance.

If your needs have changed significantly, your services might need to change as well. Or perhaps another type of aged care might now be more appropriate. You might need another assessment to find out what is best for you and to make sure all your needs are being met. Your Commonwealth Home Support Programme service provider might request an assessment for you or you can call My Aged Care directly to find out more.

You might also be eligible for *transition care*, which is short-term support for older people after a hospital stay. To access transition care services, you must be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) **while you are still in hospital**. The ACAT will work out if you will benefit from transition care and explain your options to you. To arrange an assessment, talk to the hospital staff or call My Aged Care.

## What are your legal rights and responsibilities?

The *Charter of Aged Care Rights* sets out your rights as a client receiving Commonwealth-funded aged care services.

Your Commonwealth Home Support Programme service provider should give you a copy of the charter.

For help understanding your rights and responsibilities, speak to your service provider in the first instance. You can also find information about your rights at **[myagedcare.gov.au/your-right-quality-care](https://myagedcare.gov.au/your-right-quality-care)**.

## Raising your concerns

### Concerns about the services you are receiving

If you have a problem with a service, try to talk with your service provider first. It may be something that can be resolved easily.

Your service provider should tell you about their internal complaints handling process and how to make a complaint. You have the right to make a complaint without it affecting your care and services.

Sometimes complaints cannot be resolved by the service provider, or you might not feel comfortable raising your concern with them.

### Another way to raise your concerns or make a complaint

You are also able to make a complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (a free service) in the following ways:

- website — **agedcarequality.gov.au**
- telephone — call **1800 951 822** (free call)
- in writing — address your written complaint to:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission  
GPO Box 9819  
[Your capital city] [Your state/territory]

### Getting help from an advocate (someone who can help you raise your concerns)

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

### What if you need assistance with interpreting?

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 them to call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.

You can also book an appointment with an Aged Care Specialist Officer in some locations and ask for a face-to-face interpreter.

Call **1800 227 475** (free call) weekdays from 8am to 5pm.

### What if you need assistance due to 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 call 1800 200 422.

### What help is available to track and maintain healthy ageing?

You, or a loved one, can check your health and find personalised suggestions for products and services that promote healthy ageing on the LiveUp website.

Healthy ageing means staying well, being connected, and maintaining your independence at every age – by making choices that prioritise your physical, mental, and emotional health.

LiveUp can suggest low-cost assistive products and equipment to help you with everyday living, as well as personalised exercises and services, to help you or a loved one with age-related wellbeing. At the LiveUp website you can download the free LifeCurve™ App that can track your health, giving you easy to understand long term advice tailored to your needs.

To learn more about LiveUp, and the products and services that are available in your area, visit **liveup.org.au** or call **1800 951 971** (free call).

## What help is available 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](http://dementia.org.au) or call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** (free call).

Or, the Australian Government-funded **Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS)** and Severe Behaviour Response Teams (SBRT) provide both telehealth and in-person support in caring for people experiencing behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

Aged care providers, family members, primary care and acute care services can request support from Dementia Support Australia online at **[dementia.com.au](http://dementia.com.au)** or via the 24/7 phonenumber on **1800 699 799** (free call).

## What help is available for older people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

Help is available to support those who are living with hoarding behaviour or in a squalid environment who are at risk of homelessness or unable to receive the aged care supports they need. Supports include:

- care planning
- links to specialist support services
- one-off clean-ups

If you are receiving assistance through the care finder program because you are homeless or at risk of homelessness, you may also be eligible to access Commonwealth Home Support Programme services targeted at avoiding homelessness or reducing the impact of homelessness.

## What help is available for people with diverse needs?

The Australian Government recognises that our society is diverse and people have a wide range of life experiences.

Many programs and services are available to support people with diverse needs to access the help they need. Specialised services may exist in your area that cater specifically to special needs groups. You can find out more through My Aged Care or by asking your RAS assessor.

Service providers should consider, respect and support specific and diverse needs when delivering care and services. No service provider should discriminate against anyone, including:

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

For more information call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** (free call) or go to **[myagedcare.gov.au/accessible-all](https://myagedcare.gov.au/accessible-all)** or visit any Services Australia service centre.

## What help is available for 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.

## What assistance is available for your carer?

If your carer needs additional support, the Carer Gateway provides in-person, phone, and online services and support nationally to help your carer in their caring role.

- Your carer can call **1800 422 737** (free call), Monday to Friday, between 8am and 5pm, and select option 1 to speak to your local Carer Gateway service provider. They will talk with your carer to understand their needs and provide the support and services to assist them in their caring role.
- For access to practical information, advice, resources and online support services, visit the Carer Gateway website at **carergateway.gov.au**
- You and your carer can also visit the My Aged Care website for more resources, services and support groups at **myagedcare.gov.au/caring-someone**

## Call costs

**Phone numbers beginning with 13 or 1300** – Calls to numbers beginning with 13 or 1300 are charged at the cost of a local call when using a fixed landline. If using a mobile phone, call charges may be higher – check with your mobile phone provider.

**Phone numbers beginning with 1800** – Calls to 1800 numbers are free from fixed landlines. Most Australian mobile phone providers offer free calls to 1800 numbers – check with your mobile phone provider.





For help visit [myagedcare.gov.au](https://myagedcare.gov.au) or,  
call **1800 200 422** (free call)  
or visit any Services Australia service centre

All information in this publication is correct as at August 2023