

# Residential Care

## Finding and choosing an aged care home



### Discussing your needs

Requiring accommodation in an aged care home can become apparent following a sudden health crisis or after a long period of decline where it has become increasingly difficult to manage at your own home. It is a good idea to discuss concerns about declining health with your family, your doctor or health workers involved in your care.

### Assessment by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT)

The ACAT assesses eligibility for entry to residential aged care. To organise an assessment ring **My Aged Care Contact Centre, tel. 1800 200 422**

A member of the ACAT will visit you at home or in hospital and will ask you questions about your health, care needs and lifestyle. With your approval they may ask your doctor about your medical history. You may want your carer, a family member or a friend to be there with you.

After the assessment a letter will be posted to you. It will include the assessment approval decision, services you are eligible to receive including referral codes and your support plan. You need to keep this letter as the information will be required when you apply at aged care homes. You may be approved for permanent and/or respite care.

### Review of assessment outcome

If you have concerns about your assessment, you should first talk to your ACAT assessor or their organisation. Assessment organisations have their own complaints procedures in place to work with you to address your concerns. If you do not know the organisation's details, you can call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 to find out.

If you cannot resolve the issue with your assessor or organisation, you have the right to seek a review of the decision by writing to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care stating why you think the decision should be changed. You or your representative must send your review request within 28 days of receiving the assessment letter from ACAT. Address it to:

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

### Finding residential aged care homes

The My Aged Care website features the searching tool *Find a provider*: [www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider). By selecting a given suburb or locality

and the type of care required you can search for aged care homes in the local area. **Catalyst Foundation** (including Seniors Information Service) can assist you with navigating the My Aged Care website and locating aged care homes.

**Catalyst Foundation** keeps a register of residential aged care vacancies (permanent and respite). Anyone can contact the Foundation to obtain information about vacancies. Vacancies are also published on the website [www.catalystfoundation.com.au](http://www.catalystfoundation.com.au).

### Choosing an aged care home

The following checklist is a guide to what you might look for and the questions you might ask.

- 1. Location** - Is the home in a familiar area and conveniently located for family visits? Is there access to public or other transport?
- 2. First impressions** - Is it clean, bright and welcoming? Does the home have a pleasant smell? Is the room temperature comfortable? Do the residents appear happy and well cared for? Do members of the staff seem caring and attentive? Are the communal indoor and outdoor areas safe, comfortable and attractive?
- 3. Buildings** - Are the buildings well-maintained? Is the building layout suitable for older people, wheelchairs or walking frames? Is there good wheelchair access inside and outside? Is there suitable lighting?
- 4. Safety and security** - Are there fire safety and security measures in place? Are smoke detectors in evidence and well maintained? Are there adequate locking systems, accessible emergency call systems, secure windows and doors?
- 5. Costs** - If you are required to pay a Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) or Daily Accommodation Payment (DAP) how much will it be? Is there an extra services fee you will be required to pay? Are there any optional extra services you may wish to consider?  
See our fact sheet *Care Fees and Accommodation Payments*
- 6. Accommodation** - Are there single rooms or shared rooms? What arrangements are made to ensure privacy, particularly when sharing rooms? Are there ensuites or are bathrooms shared? Can new residents bring their own furniture and belongings? What furniture is supplied? Can belongings be stored securely? Can residents change to a preferred room if one becomes available? Are there provisions for couples?

7. **Special needs** – Is there a need to consider any of the following: specific cultural needs, special diets, religious observances, sexuality, war service, needs of care leavers or any other individual needs?
8. **Daily living** - What 'house rules' and arrangements are in place - e.g. cleaning rooms, bed times, etc.? Are the meals varied and appetising? Are meal arrangements flexible i.e. can food be provided in your own room or at different times? What activities and outings are organised? Are residents' interests taken into account? What arrangements are made for visitors? What access is there to TV and the internet (e.g. Wi-Fi available)? Does a hairdresser visit the home?
9. **Privacy and dignity** – Is the privacy of all residents considered at all times? Do members of the staff wait for permission before entering rooms, except in emergencies? Are residents addressed courteously at all times?
10. **Consultation** – How are residents and their families consulted and informed about events, issues and changes? Do residents or their families/carers have input into the way the home caters for their needs? Are residents able to make choices about their daily living activities?
11. **Feedback/Complaints** - How do residents raise issues? How are complaints handled? Is a copy of the *Charter of Aged Rights* provided to residents?
12. **Health care** - What health care procedures are available in place, e.g. podiatry? Are rehabilitation programs and therapies readily available? How do residents attend medical appointments? How can family/friends be involved in care?
13. **Accreditation and quality standard** - From December 2022 a *Star Rating* has been gradually introduced, which combines the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's compliance rating, quality measures, staffing, and customers' experience. When you use the *Find a provider* tool on My Aged Care you can view the aged care home's overall *Star Rating*, which ranges between 1 and 5 stars. The rating allows consumers to compare the quality of residential aged care services, supporting more informed decision-making. [www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider-choice](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider-choice)  
It is also possible to check audit reports at [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/reports](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/reports)
14. **Staff** - How many staff are on duty? What qualifications do the staff have? What staffing is provided at night? What training is provided for staff? How do residents contact the staff for assistance?

15. **Palliative Care** – What palliative care training do staff receive? Are the wishes of residents sought and respected? What special arrangements are made for families at this time?

### Apply to aged care homes

Contact various homes in your preferred areas to make an appointment to visit. Most homes offer regular tours or appointments for prospective residents or their families to be shown through.

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

Once you are offered and accept a place in an aged care home, the aged care home should then offer you a *Resident Agreement* outlining the terms and conditions of your accommodation and care, including services, fees, rights and responsibilities.

Make sure you read and understand the agreement. Ask for additional information you feel should be included. Seek financial and/or legal advice if necessary.

Also consider making arrangements for *Enduring Power of Attorney* and *Advance Care Directive*, so that your instructions are known should you become incapacitated and unable to make decisions for yourself.

### Further information

The **My Aged Care** website features useful resources including the booklet *Steps to enter an aged care home* and the information sheet *Questions to ask aged care homes*. [www.myagedcare.gov.au/](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/)

**Care finders** is a free service supporting vulnerable older people who have no one else who can assist them to access aged care services. The care finder will assist eligible people with navigating the aged care system, including identifying aged care homes with vacancies. Information and contact details for such organisations are available at [www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-care-finder](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-care-finder)

**Ageing SA** is a full-fee aged care placement service provided by Catalyst Foundation. Ageing SA provides assistance in the selection of and placement in an aged care home to suit your needs. **Tel. 0429 998 704** or contact Catalyst Foundation.

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