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## Residential aged care homes

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### Summary

- The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the provision of residential aged care services.
  - Residential aged care services are delivered by a range of providers including not-for-profit, private and public sector organisations.
  - Residential aged care homes provide health and support services. This includes regulation for quality of care standards and funding under the Aged Care Act 1997.
  - Many residential aged care homes have palliative care services while others have partnerships with dedicated palliative care units.
  - Residential aged care homes provide continuous supported care ranging from help with daily tasks and personal care to 24-hour nursing care, respite care and palliative care services.
  - Contact the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) to apply for a place in a residential aged care home.
  - Before you decide on a residential aged care home, talk to the staff about how they control the quality of their services and deal with different situations that may affect you in the future.
  - To make a complaint about a residential aged care home, call the Aged Care Complaints Scheme 1800 550 552 or write to GPO Box 9848, Melbourne Victoria 3001.
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As you get older, you might find it hard to do household tasks or have health problems that make it hard to live in your own home. Sometimes, getting help at home can be enough to continue living on your own, however, if you can no longer manage, you may want to consider moving into a residential aged care home (also known as nursing homes or residential aged care services). Residential aged care homes provide safe and comfortable accommodation as well as ongoing healthcare, support and social interaction that can adapt to your changing needs.

All residential aged care homes are different. Some are large and some are small, while others may have a religious or cultural focus. It is a good idea to evaluate different residential aged care homes to help you decide on a place that meets your needs, is near family and feels right for you.

### Types of care in residential aged care homes

Victorian residential aged care homes provide a wide range of health and support services that cater to people with different health and lifestyle needs. Services range from help with daily tasks and personal care to 24-hour nursing, respite care and palliative care services.

Most people choose to live at home for as long as possible and only move into a residential aged care home if their care needs increase. Other people may want to move into a residential aged care home earlier to be close to a partner or prepare for the future, for example, if they have health problems that may get worse such as Parkinson's disease or dementia. Talk to your doctor about what you want for the future so you can discuss it when you apply for a place in a residential aged care home.

### Respite care

If you or your carer needs a break, it is worth thinking about a short-term stay through a respite care program. Respite care can be a great way to get a change of scenery, give your carer a break and still get all the day-to-day help you need. Short-term stays are also a good way of 'testing out' a residential aged care home if you are considering moving in permanently.

### Palliative care

People receiving palliative care have a life-limiting condition. Palliative care focuses on quality of life, pain management and family support. Many aged care or nursing homes have palliative care services while others have partnerships with dedicated palliative care units.

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A palliative care team provides pain relief and treats any symptoms that cause discomfort, however, they do not provide assistance that might delay or hasten death. They offer support to a person who is dying as well as to their loved ones, and consider the social, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the family during treatment.

For more information read [\*\*Palliative care explained\*\*](#)

### **Services residential aged care homes provide**

Residential aged care homes provide accommodation services, personal care, and complex care and services.

Accommodation services include:

- bedding
- food and drinks
- washing and cleaning
- gardening
- building maintenance
- heating and cooling
- garbage services
- laundry services
- basic toiletries
- social activities
- emergency assistance.

Personal care includes help with:

- eating and drinking
- dressing, bathing and personal hygiene
- maintaining continence
- moving around
- emotional support
- taking medicines
- talking and communicating
- ongoing medical treatment or rehabilitation programs
- access to healthcare professionals
- the effects of cognitive impairment.

Complex care and services include:

- allied health services such as physiotherapy, podiatry and speech therapy
- incontinence aids
- custom bedding
- mobility aids such as walkers and wheelchairs
- palliative care
- nursing services.

### **Getting assessed for a place in an aged care home**

To receive a place in an aged care home, you first need to contact the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). The ACAS will send a nurse, doctor or other healthcare professional to assess your needs, determine your eligibility and then provide approval for your place. During the application process, they will talk to you about what you are looking for in a residential aged care home and also give you information about homes in your local area.

Once the ACAS approves your application, you can start contacting residential aged care homes and putting

together a list of those you would like to apply for.

### **Standards of care in an aged care home**

Every residential aged care home will do things slightly differently, but they are all required by law to provide a certain standard of care. Before you decide on which residential aged care home to move into, it is a good idea to talk to the staff about their services and how they deal with different situations.

Questions to ask a potential aged care facility include:

- What kinds of care and services are included? What is not included?
- How do you minimise risks, such as pressure injuries or falls?
- How do you measure the quality of your care and conduct continuous quality improvements?
- What are your client privacy arrangements?
- What is your client restraint policy?
- How do you decide which social activities will be organised? Do I get a say in these activities?
- What are the eating arrangements and can I choose what I eat?

### **Making a complaint to the Aged Care Complaints Scheme**

To make a complaint about a residential aged care home, call the Aged Care Complaints Scheme on 1800 550 552 or write to GPO Box 9848, Melbourne Victoria 3001. For more information refer to the **Aged Care Complaints Scheme** website.

### **Where to get help**

- Your local doctor
- Aged Care Assessment Services
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre, call 1800 052 222
- **Seniors Rights Victoria**, call 1300 368 821
- **Council on the Ageing Victoria**, call (03) 9654 4443
- **Aged Care Complaints Scheme**, call 1800 550 552

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

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