



Residential Care. Finding a residential aged care facility

The steps to take

1. Discuss your needs (or your relative's needs) with family members
2. Organise an assessment
Ring My Aged Care 1800 200 422
3. Apply to aged care facilities
4. Look for vacancies
5. Fill in the paperwork

Discussing your needs

The realisation that you may require accommodation in an aged care facility can become apparent following a sudden health crisis such as a stroke or after a long period of decline where it has become increasingly difficult to manage at home. It is a good idea to discuss concerns about declining health with your family, your doctor or health workers involved in your care. It may be possible to receive extra help and services that make it possible for you to stay at home.

Assessment by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT)

To organise an assessment ring My Aged Care Contact Centre, tel. 1800 200 422. The ACAT assesses eligibility for entry to residential aged care. The team consists of health professionals such as doctors, nurses and social workers who have experience in aged care and health issues.

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.

If you are approved the ACAT may leave a copy of the assessment with you or post it out to you. You need to keep this copy as you will need it when you apply at residential aged care facilities. You may be approved for permanent or respite care.

Permanent Care - From 1st July 2014 the ACAT approval no longer refers to low-level or high-level permanent residential care categories.

Respite Care - After 1st July 2014 the low-level and high-level care categories will still apply for approvals for residential respite care.

The ACAT also assesses for Home Care Packages if residential care is not required.

Review of assessment outcome

If you think the assessment outcome should be changed, you or someone acting on your behalf has the right to seek a review of the decision. You can write to the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Social Services and tell them why you think the decision should be changed. You should write to the following address within 28 days of receiving your letter from ACAT.

The Secretary
Department of Social Services
C/- Director
Aged Care Branch (NSW and ACT)
GPO Box 9820
Sydney NSW 2001

Finding residential aged care facilities

The My Aged Care website www.myagedcare.gov.au features a search facility. By selecting a given suburb or locality and the type of care required you can search for aged care facilities in the local area. Catalyst Foundation can assist you with navigating the My Aged Care website.

Looking for a vacancy

Catalyst Foundation (formerly Seniors Information Service) keeps a register of residential aged care vacancies. Anyone can contact Catalyst Foundation to obtain information about vacancies. Vacancies are also published on the Catalyst Foundation's website (www.catalystfoundation.com.au).

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There may also be a shortage of vacancies so you may need to accept a vacancy that is not near where you live, or in a facility that you would not normally have considered, until such a time as a place in your preferred facility becomes available.

You may find occasionally that a facility has short-term care called respite available (63 days per person per financial year is allowed). If your ACAT assessment has given you a respite option, you may wish to use respite to allow your carer some time as a break from looking after you.

Apply to aged care facilities

Make appointments and visit as many facilities around your preferred area as you can. Put your name on the waiting list of at least 4-6 facilities that you feel could be suitable. Keep in touch with the facilities regularly. Many will try to contact you if a suitable vacancy becomes available.

The paperwork

All aged care facilities have their own application process and may require you to complete an application form. This form may be filled in by someone other than yourself, e.g. a carer, a member of your family or a friend.

You should not be required to provide any financial information to the facility.

Everyone entering an aged care facility needs to fill in and lodge the form *Permanent Residential Aged Care – Request for a Combined Assets and Income Assessment (SA547)*. This applies even if you are currently receiving an income support payment from Centrelink or the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

The result of this income and assets assessment will determine your costs in aged care.

Transferring to another facility

You have the right to move to another facility. If this is done within 28 days of leaving the first home there is no requirement to be re-assessed by an ACAT. The amount of notice you need to give to the first facility will depend on any formal agreement you have signed. You will need to fill in the paperwork required by the new facility.

Please note that although you have the right to move to another facility, in practice this may be difficult. Most facilities will consider need and urgency when they have a vacancy and because you are already in a facility you may not be given first priority.

People in care before 1st July 2014 – If you move to another home daily care fees would stay the same. If you paid an accommodation bond the balance of any accommodation bond paid to the first home would be refunded within 14 days.

On or after 1 July 2014 if a decision is made to transfer to a new aged care home, there will be the option of being assessed under the new cost arrangements or staying with the current cost arrangement.

When you find a suitable home

Once you are offered and accept a place in an aged care facility, 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.