

# Residential Care

## Choosing the right aged care home



If you are thinking about moving to a residential aged care home, contact various homes in your preferred area to make an appointment to visit. Most homes offer regular tours or appointments for prospective residents or their families to be shown through.

Standards of care and living conditions are monitored by the Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. All homes are required to have current accreditation. However, they will all have differences which may or may not suit individual needs and preferences.

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 bells, secure windows and doors?
  - 5. Costs** – If you are required to pay a \* Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) how much will it be? Is there an extra services cost you will be required to pay? Are there any optional extra services you may consider?
- \* The requirement to pay a RAD is dependent on a person's income and assets (see 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? Is there provision for couples?

- 7. Special needs** – Is there a need to consider any of the following - specific cultural needs, special diets, smoking, access to your own doctor, pets, 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? Is there provision for small private purchases such as toiletries or snacks? What activities and outings are organised? Does the home have its own transport for outings? Are residents' interests taken into account? What arrangements are made for visitors? What access is there to telephones, TV, and the internet? 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? Are residents appropriately dressed? Are residents who need assistance with meals and/or toileting assisted with dignity and respect? What measures are taken to ensure that intrusive residents do not inappropriately disturb others?
- 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? Is there a Residents' Committee in place?
- 11. Feedback/Complaints** - How do residents raise issues? How are complaints handled? Is the Charter of Aged Rights easily accessible?
- 12. Health care** - What health care procedures and homes are in place, e.g. dental or podiatry care? Are rehabilitation programs and therapies readily available? How do residents attend medical appointments? How can family/friends be involved in care?

- 13. Administration** - What do you know about the organisation that runs the home? Is there a recent financial report for the home? How many residents does it cater for? Does the Director of Nursing or Care Manager show potential residents around the home? Is the home management easily contacted? What insurance arrangements are in place?
- 14. Accreditation and quality standards** - Is the home accredited to meet standards relating to the quality of care and certified to meet standards relating to the quality of the accommodation? Reports are available at [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/reports](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/reports). Notices of non-compliance and sanctions applied to aged care homes are available at [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)
- 15. Staff** - How many staff are on duty? What qualifications do the staff members have? What staffing is provided at night? What training is provided for staff? How do residents contact the staff for assistance? Is there a staff member available who is able to care for you in a culturally appropriate way?
- 16. Palliative Care** – Does the home have special provision for the palliative care needs of residents? Are the wishes of residents sought and respected? What special arrangements are made for families at this time? Are the feelings of other residents considered and respected at this time? Does the home have a resource person who is responsible for describing national initiatives in palliative care and the Guidelines for a Palliative Approach in Residential Aged Care?
- 17. Legal issues** - Will the aged care home on admission ask for an Enduring Power of Attorney

or an Advance Care Directive that includes end of life decisions?

### **Useful contacts and resources**

**Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission**– The Commission’s website features accreditation reports for all aged care homes [www.agedcarequality.gov.au](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au), tel. 1800 951 822

**My Aged Care** – The website features all aged care homes across Australia. It is possible to search for the homes in a specific area and see details provided by the operators. [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au), tel. 1800 200 422

**Catalyst Foundation (including Seniors Information Service)** can assist with navigating the websites above and with sourcing other relevant information, including vacancy lists. [www.catalystfoundation.com.au](http://www.catalystfoundation.com.au), tel. 8168 8776, 1800 636 368 (SA Country, landline only).

**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. 0439 936 411 to speak with the consultant or contact Catalyst Foundation.

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