

Housing Options

‘To move or not to move’ – Lifestyle housing choices

Are you considering moving from your present home into a retirement village or other housing? It is important to take the time to consider carefully your reasons for moving and weigh up the available options before making a decision. Some of the more common reasons that people give for wanting to move into retirement housing include:

- House size and maintenance/garden upkeep
- Home environment and changing needs
- Loneliness
- Death of a partner
- Health
- Financial
- Security and safety
- Transport

Retirement housing may be ideal for your situation and desired lifestyle. However, staying put may be preferable if you can find ways to address your reasons for moving.

What can I do to stay at home?

If you would prefer to stay at home, there may be ways that you can achieve the lifestyle you want without moving. Consider the following suggestions for addressing the various reasons for moving.

House size and related maintenance/garden upkeep - Have you considered sharing your home with another person or perhaps closing off some rooms? For maintenance you could consider a handyperson/garden services.

Your local council or other organisations may assist with minor home maintenance that is aimed at improving safety. For older Australians some basic services are funded by the Australian Government; specific eligibility criteria apply and a referral from **My Aged Care (tel. 1800 200 422)** is required.

Home environment and changing needs

Could changes to your present home make it possible to stay where you are? You could consider modifying your home to suit your changing needs. See our checklist *Staying longer in your home*. It may assist you with checking what modifications may be required to make sure your house will continue to suit you if you become frail or acquire a disability, and may also be used when considering a new place to live.

If you need advice on choosing grab rails or hints on kitchen and bathroom design, contact the Independent Living Centre on **1800 445 272**, email information@ilcsa.com.au, or visit www.ilcsa.com.au.

Loneliness – Contact your local council or community information service to find out about clubs or activities of interest in your area. If transport is a problem the council may have a community bus or other transport service.

Death of a partner - If you are recently bereaved ask yourself whether your desire to move is a carefully reasoned decision based on your long term needs, or whether it is a reaction to your changed circumstances. It is usually advisable that you do not make major financial or lifestyle decisions immediately after a major event or loss.

Health - There is a range of subsidised services which provide support in the home and therapy services. These services are usually funded by the Australian Government; specific eligibility criteria apply and approval is required: by **My Aged Care (tel. 1800 200 422)** for older people or by the **National Disability Insurance Scheme (tel. 1800 800 110)** for people under 65 year of age. People with complex health needs may be eligible for a comprehensive care plan from their GP and for some therapy services not usually covered under Medicare.

Also consider the impact of the moving process. Moving is physically and emotionally demanding, which could further affect your health. Have you discussed with your doctor how your health might affect your lifestyle in the future? If you are likely to need residential aged care in a year or two, moving into a retirement village unit or other independent living option may not be a financially wise choice, as full time care services are not usually provided (or, if they are, you will be charged extra). You may be faced with another move to a government-subsidised aged care home within a short space of time.

Financial - It can be costly to maintain your own home but will you be better off moving into a retirement village unit or downsizing? You will need to take into account the sale price of your current home, costs associated with selling and moving, possible new furnishings for the unit. If the option considered is a retirement village residence, it is important to weigh the ongoing maintenance or service fees against what you would pay in other housing options. See our fact sheets on retirement villages, including financial and contractual arrangements.

Make sure you are currently receiving all your entitlements from Services Australia (Centrelink) or Veterans' Affairs, and that you are aware of the

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various concessions to which you are entitled. See our fact sheet *Concessions for seniors*. To make sure you are receiving the applicable benefits, make an appointment to see a **Centrelink Financial Information Service** officer (tel. 13 23 00).

Security and safety – The South Australia Police publishes a Home Security Checklist and other resources covering topics such as personal safety and vehicle security. www.police.sa.gov.au/your-safety/crime-prevention-and-security/safety-and-security-tips

A personal alarm system may help you feel safer in case you have a fall or are likely to require urgent assistance. Contact the **Independent Living Centre** for free information about systems and providers. **Tel. 1800 445 272**.

Transport - If you are no longer able to drive a car safely you may be feeling distressed and isolated. If unable to use public transport, consider subsidised transport to attend medical appointments and community services and/or taxi vouchers.

Contact Catalyst Foundation for information on the options. See also our fact sheet *Transport*.

Possible financial implications of selling your home and downsizing

The Australian Government encourages downsizing by allowing people aged 55 years and over to contribute up to \$300,000 from the proceeds of the sale (or part sale) of their home into their superannuation fund.

Further information can be found on the website of the **Australian Taxation Office** (www.ato.gov.au) and **Moneysmart** (<https://moneysmart.gov.au/retirement-income/downsizing-in-retirement>).

When a person sells their principal home with the intention of buying another one, the proceeds of the sale are exempt from the Age Pension assets test for 24 months. However Centrelink will deem the exempt amount as generating income, which will be included in the pension income test.

Depending on the amount paid to move into a retirement village the person may be treated as a home owner or non-home owner for pension eligibility assessment purposes. The threshold is called the extra allowable amount and its dollar figures may change when the pension assets test limits are reviewed. If you are a pensioner and pay less than the extra allowable amount you are treated

as a non-home owner and may be eligible for Rent Assistance.

For further information contact **Centrelink's Financial Information Service**, tel. 13 23 00.

What types of retirement housing are there?

After considering the suggestions above, you may decide to simply downsize (moving to a smaller, lower maintenance place) within the general real estate market or to move into retirement housing. See our fact sheets on the various options available and the terminology used. Basically they range from independent living options to serviced units/apartments (assisted living). Affordability may be a major consideration if your only income is a Government pension, which may limit the options available. Retirement villages and residential parks are not funded by the Government.

Further information

Catalyst Foundation (including Seniors Information Service) maintains an online housing directory, publishes a Rental and Community Housing Directory and a list of residential parks in South Australia. Its staff can also assist with information on the various housing options available. **Tel. (08) 8168 8776**.

See also our fact sheet *Packing up and moving*.

The **South Australia Government** publishes useful information on selling and buying a house at www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing.

Catalyst Foundation is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Visit the website www.health.gov.au for more information. Although funding for this publication has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.

Updated August 2023