

What are your choices?

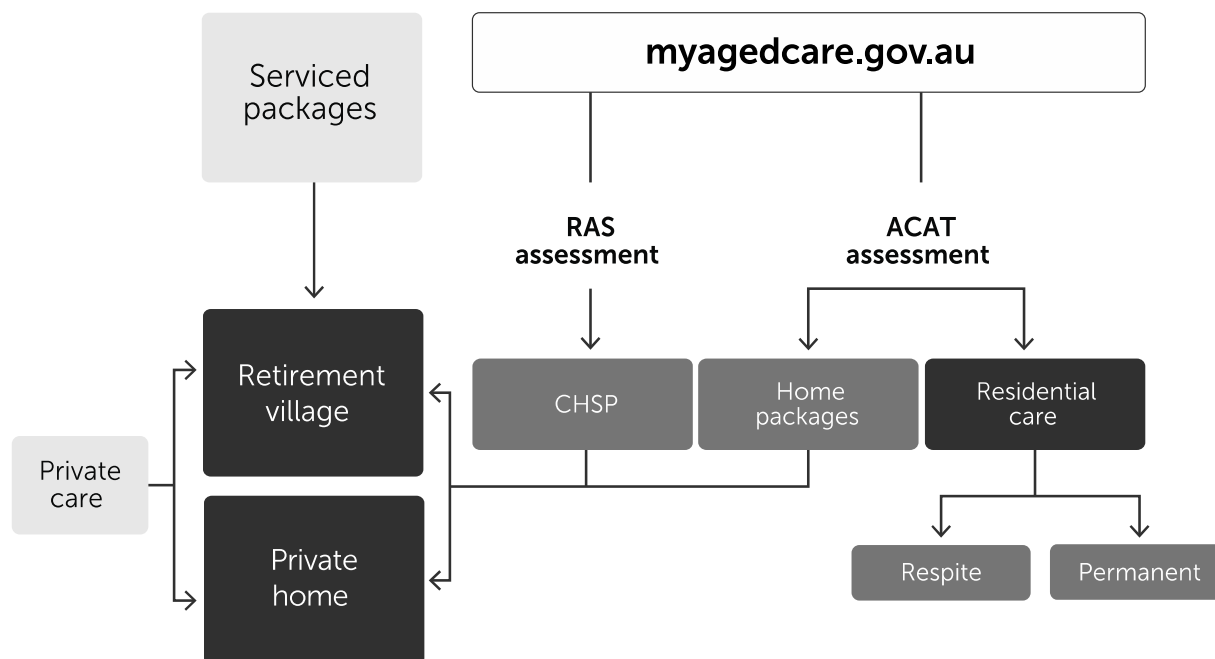


Choosing where to live as your care needs change

Your living arrangements may need to change as you age. You may need a lower maintenance home, more help to stay in your home or care provided in a residential service. These decisions should not be rushed. So plan ahead to give yourself time to make the best decision. In this guide we help you consider your range of choices.



The aged care landscape



Staying in your home

Most people prefer to stay in their home for as long as their health and physical ability allow. Many people choose to downsize to a home that requires less upkeep and gardening as they get older.

If you are lucky enough to have good friends and family living nearby they may be able to help where needed. Additional help is also available through more formal channels. The government encourages and supports a range of community services run by private and charitable organisations to help older people to live well and remain independent in their homes.

Commonwealth Home Support Program

(CHSP) offers a range of basic care services in the home to people who are largely independent but need some simple help with daily living tasks. These services include:

- Assistance with housekeeping (cleaning, laundry, etc)
- Home maintenance
- Personal care (help with bathing, dressing, etc)
- Meals (help with cooking, delivered meals or centre-based meals)
- Social support (help with banking, transport etc)
- Health services (nursing, physiotherapy, podiatry etc)

Contact MyAgedCare at www.myagedcare.gov.au for information on these services and to connect with a Regional Assessment Service to evaluate your needs.

Services are subsidised by the government but you may be asked to pay a small fee which depends on your income and the services you need. The provider can discuss the fees with you.



Staying in your home

Home care packages may offer a solution for people who have more complex needs to remain living in the home rather than in a residential service.

There are four levels of packages. The services in each package are similar to CHSP services but are co-ordinated and tailored to suit your specific needs including:

- Personal care
- Support services
- Clinical care

These packages are most likely to suit someone who lives with their spouse or other family member who is able to help with daily care.

You will also need to be assessed and approved by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT or ACAS in Victoria). Once approved, a care manager can work with you to plan your package.

These packages are subsidised by the government but you will be asked to pay a basic daily fee plus an additional contribution based on your assessable income. This additional fee is capped to an annual amount and a lifetime cap.

The packages are offered as Consumer Directed Care which means you can work with your co-ordinator to decide how to spend the available budget.

Further information is available at:
www.myagedcare.gov.au

Considering a retirement village

The burden of home and garden maintenance as well as social isolation encourages many people to look for alternative living arrangements.

Retirement villages are aimed at people over age 55 who are looking for a lifestyle change. They tend to appeal to people who are still mobile and active and want to live independently but also want the comfort of knowing that additional security, support and companionship is available.

The features and amenities vary widely amongst villages. Tennis courts, swimming pools and restaurants may be available in some complexes. You will need to ask questions and carefully choose the village that best caters to your interests, needs and budget.

Accommodation can be in the form of a unit, villa or house within the complex. Some of the newer complexes also offer serviced units with fees covering meals and cleaning services (assisted living).

Residents generally don't own their dwelling but in most cases pay for the right to live in the village through a lease or licence arrangement. In some cases, you may own the dwelling but rent the land it sits on.

You can generally expect to pay an entry contribution, ongoing service charges, and exit fees, but the amounts can vary greatly so check

contracts carefully.

It may be smart to ask your lawyer to review the contracts before you commit.

The government does not subsidise retirement villages so you will need to budget for the full amount. However, you may still access the subsidised home care services.

Choosing carefully

Before deciding to live in a retirement village it is wise to consider what your needs may be in the future. If there's a risk that money may get tight down the track, you should be aware that it's unlikely you will be able to rely on a reverse mortgage to release any capital tied up in your village unit. In most retirement villages you don't legally own your dwelling and therefore it can't be used as collateral for a mortgage.

Additionally if the level of care you require is likely to increase steadily in the short term, buying into a retirement village may not be in your best interests unless it can cater for your changing needs. Family may not be able to move in with you.

If there is a strong likelihood that your needs will soon change be sure to evaluate all your care options to ensure you make the best choice.

Needing a break

Sometimes care may be needed only on a temporary basis. This care may be due to an accident or illness or if carers are going on holidays.

Whatever the reason, respite care in a residential aged care service can be arranged.

To access respite care, you will first need to be assessed and approved by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT, or ACAS in Victoria).

Once approved, you can check availability and book a place with an aged care service in your area. The cost of respite is government subsidised but you will need to pay a small daily fee.

An **Aged Care Assessment Team** is a health professional who will meet with you to ask questions about your health and physical abilities. They will let you know in writing whether you have been approved for care.

Residential aged care

Residential aged care services provide accommodation for elderly people who need substantial levels of care and are no longer able to live independently in their homes.

To access residential aged care you must be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT, or ACAS in Victoria) who will determine whether you are eligible for care.

Most aged care services are regulated by the government and must comply with required standards. Staff must be appropriately trained and a minimum range of services must be provided to all residents, including:

- Staff on-call to help at all times
- Meals
- Assistance with daily living activities including bathing, dressing, eating and medication management
- Cleaning and laundry services
- Social activities
- Nursing care and other health services.

Even though they are regulated, not all aged care services are the same. Differences in location, building amenities, staff, social programs and activities should be expected. It's important to take the time to choose a service that suits you.

The cost of care is heavily subsidised by the government but you will be asked to contribute to the cost of your care based on your assets and income. You may be asked to pay accommodation payments for your room and daily fees towards the cost of your care and living support.

Additional services may be offered by the aged care service, such as hairdressing, but these may incur a separate charge which you'll be asked to pay.

Some aged care services offer 'additional service' packages to cover a range of extras such as a choice of meals, glass of wine/beer with meals, newspapers etc. through an additional packaged fee. This may or may not be optional if you choose to live there.

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