

# Where to Start? Information for Seniors



English



**Resthaven**  
Incorporated





# Where to start?

Information for seniors

Aged Care Services Directory  
for the Bulgarian Community  
in South Australia

## **Where to start? Information for seniors**

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ABN 79 976 580 833

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Published by Resthaven Incorporated  
PO Box 327  
Unley, South Australia 5061  
www.resthaven.asn.au

ISBN 978-1-925155-05-1

1st Edition  
March 2014

### ***Acknowledgements***

The information presented in this booklet was compiled from publicly available promotional material of the following agencies/organisations:

Department of Health and Ageing  
Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing  
Seniors Information Service  
Ethnic Link Services  
Active Ageing Australia  
Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres  
Meals on Wheels  
Alzheimer's Australia  
COTA Australia  
Aged Rights and Advocacy Service  
MALSSA Inc

Centrelink  
Carers Australia  
Office of Public Transport  
Uniting Communities  
Australian Red Cross  
Independent Living Centre  
South Australia Police  
Multicultural Aged Care  
SA Metropolitan Fire Service  
SA Country Fire Service

This resource has been produced by Resthaven Incorporated as part of the project: 'Aged Care Discussions'. This project 'Aged Care Discussions' is supported by the Australian Government.

Acknowledgement and thanks go to the advisory group and members of the Bulgarian community.

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## ***Introduction***

From experience we know how confusing and overwhelming the Australian aged care system can be and as a result, many people do not know where to start when they need information about services for older people.

There is no doubt that a variety of information about the services available for older people already exists in the form of pamphlets, directories, internet pages, fact sheets etc. It is also widely recognised by both service providers and consumers, that this information is often inaccessible to those who need it, for a variety of reasons, such as the complexity and fragmentation of programs, unclear entry processes, use of formal terminology, lack of personalised advice etc.

Whilst this is true for many older people in general, for older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds this problem is compounded by language barriers and different cultural attitudes to ageing and aged care.

This directory puts together information from many sources to assist in understanding and accessing the complex and often confusing system of aged care services. Its intention is to firstly explain the essential concepts and definitions of various services, and secondly, to provide various contacts for relevant services and referral information on how to access them.

# Practical Help

## ***Home Care***

The majority of people choose to remain in their home as they age, for as long as possible. They may require some assistance to be able to do that. The term Home Care means a range of aged care services designed to assist older people to live independently in their home. The level of assistance is determined by and matched to a person's individual needs.

It is very important to consider one's future care needs, to find out about services available and to plan ahead, as there are often significant waiting lists for services.

Fees apply to every level of home care. The amount you pay will vary according to which program or package of care you receive. Client contribution is calculated according to the fee structure set out by the Government and takes your individual circumstances into consideration. Special consideration is given to people who are financially disadvantaged. All clients receive the same quality of care regardless of the level of fees paid.

### **Commonwealth Home and Community Care program**

Home and Community Care (HACC) provides basic support services to those older people who are largely independent but require some assistance. Services may include:

- individual support in your home, such as cleaning, home maintenance, meal preparation, shopping, transport, administering medication, personal care (assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming etc). These may be offered on a long or short term basis.

- social support in or outside of the home, such as group programs held in community centres, outings, bus trips etc.

- one off services such as home modification, maintenance, gardening etc.

Services are provided by local councils, community health centres and aged care organisations. You can either refer yourself, or be referred by family, friends or a professional. You do not need to be assessed by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

When more assistance is needed to remain living independently, services can be provided through Home Care Packages.

### **Home Care Packages**

The term 'Package' means that a person receives a number of different services, put together according to individual needs and coordinated by an approved aged care provider.



Packages are designed to suit individual needs, ranging from low level care to high level care services at home. The level of care is determined by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

Services may include: meal preparation, home cleaning, gardening, transport, social support and personal care (assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming etc), managing medication, wound care, nursing care and other allied health services.

You can refer yourself, or be referred by family, friends or a professional. To be eligible for Home Care Packages, you must undergo an assessment by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

### **Support to Access Home Care**

Ethnic Link Services help older people, people with a disability and their carers of culturally and diverse background to overcome language and cultural barriers in accessing home support services.

Ethnic Link Services employ bilingual workers who work with clients to link them to a range of services to enable them to remain living at home in the community.

Ethnic Link services involve:

- providing information about services to clients
- linking clients to services and support they need
- helping with language barriers in accessing the services
- helping with paperwork, such as letters, documents, forms etc
- arranging appointments.

You can contact Ethnic Link Services yourself, or be referred by family, friends or a professional.

All Government subsidised aged care service providers have a responsibility to ensure that they meet the cultural and language needs of their clients. Some services may have a worker who speaks your language, others will arrange an interpreter for you.

It is your right to ask for professional language assistance, so you can make an informed decision about your future.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, **[www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)**
- Domiciliary Care SA: 8193 1234
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, **[www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)**
- Your doctor
- Your local council
- Ethnic Link: 8241 0201
- Multicultural Home Support Program – Uniting Communities: 8375 1193

## ***Aged Care Assessment Team***

The first step in accessing most government-subsidised aged care services is to receive an assessment by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

You must have a current ACAT assessment to obtain the following services:

- Home Care Packages
- Residential Respite
- Residential Care.

You do not need an ACAT assessment to obtain services through the Commonwealth Home and Community Care program.

The first step is to telephone ACAT. You can ask your doctor, a family member or a community worker to help you with making this call. When you first contact ACAT, a worker will ask for information such as your date of birth, language, family contacts. Your name will be put on a waiting list and it may take a few weeks before an ACAT worker calls you back to arrange a time. You will then be visited at home by an ACAT professional who will ask you questions and discuss your situation to assess your needs. After the appointment, the information will be discussed with other team members and within a few days you will receive a letter describing the services you are eligible for. You may decide yourself which service provider to choose, or you can ask ACAT to do it for you.

ACAT assessments are a free and confidential service. You may wish to have a relative or a friend with you during the assessment. It is essential that you fully understand everything that is discussed at your assessment. Let ACAT know when you make an appointment if you would like an interpreter. During your assessment, don't be afraid to ask as many questions as you like and if you are not sure, ask for things to be explained to you.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT): 1300 130 551
- Your doctor
- Ethnic Link Services: 8241 0201

## ***Respite Care and Support for Carers***

The terms 'carer', 'support for carers' and 'respite care' are frequently used terms in health and aged care services.

Carers are people who provide regular unpaid care at home for someone who is frail aged, has a disability, a chronic illness or dementia. Carers are usually family members, but it can be a friend as well. Some carers live with the person they provide continuous care for. Other carers live away, have their own family and work commitments, and provide care several times a week or whenever they can.

Providing regular care for another person can be physically and emotionally demanding. It is very important for carers to look after their own health and to take regular breaks to relax and recharge to be able to continue the caring.

In many cultures, caring for a family member is a natural part of life. In Australia, the special role of carers is highly recognised by the Government. Many carers do not see themselves as 'carers' and may miss out on support services available to them, like financial assistance from Centrelink, such as Carer Allowance or Carer Payment and support and information from Carer Support Organisations.

Respite care offers carers an opportunity to take a break from their caring role, while the person they care for has an opportunity to go out and meet others.

If you are a carer yourself, or if someone else is caring for you, it is important to know and understand which types of respite care are available.

Respite Care offers a range of options, depending on your needs:

**In the person's home**

Respite worker comes to your home, the service varies in hours and frequency. It can be pre-arranged and regular, or used in an emergency.

**Day respite centres**

Programs offered over 5-6 hours a day, transport and meals may be provided. A trained respite worker is on site.

**Overnight respite centres**

Overnight respite in a home style secure environment. Length of stay varies from one to a few nights per week.

**Respite care in a residential aged care facility**

Lengths of stay vary from few days to several weeks. An ACAT assessment is necessary to obtain residential respite. Arranging a short period of residential respite can be an excellent way of 'trying out' an aged care home and can help overcome some of the anxiety associated with making a decision to move into residential care.

**❖ For more information contact**

- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre: 1800 052 222
- Carer Advisory and Counselling Service: 1800 242 636,  
**[www.carers-sa.sa.asn.au](http://www.carers-sa.sa.asn.au)**
- Centrelink Carer Payment and Allowance: 132 717

## ***Care and Support after a Hospital Stay***

Sometimes people need to stay at the hospital, due to a surgery or illness. During a recovery following a hospital stay, an older person may not quite be able to live independently and may require some care and support.

Most hospitals have a social worker or discharge officer with whom you can discuss your support needs following a discharge. You need to consider what limitations you

are likely to experience following your illness/surgery and for how long. This will determine the types of support you may need, for example:

personal care – assistance with showering and dressing	home modification, e.g. hand rails, ramps
assistance with meal preparation	cleaning and laundry
shopping and bill paying	equipment to assist with daily tasks
transport	nursing care.
rehabilitation	

Depending on your circumstances, there are different types of post hospitalisation recovery care, including short term support in your home or a stay in a rehabilitation hospital. These types of services are also known as transitional care.

You can discuss your options with a social worker or discharge officer at the hospital prior to going home. They will be able to link you to appropriate support services.

Let them know if you require language support – it is the hospital's responsibility to arrange for a professional interpreter at no cost to you.

#### ❖ For more information contact

- Social worker or discharge officer at your hospital
- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)

## ***Wellbeing and Physical Activity***

These days, people are living longer than ever before. We all want to remain active and independent for as long as possible. Even though getting older can bring some age related conditions and some loss of function, there are simple and easy things we can incorporate in our lifestyle that will help maintain physical and mental well being, prevent or delay diseases and promote independence.

Regardless of your age, you can get health benefits from being physically active. Research shows that moderate physical activity can maintain a person's mobility, flexibility, strength and balance. It can improve the following conditions: high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, depression and circulation problems.

This does not mean you have to participate in strenuous exercise. You can be active in many ways, suitable to your interests and abilities, for example:

gardening	swimming or water exercise
walking	using stairs instead of a lift.
participating in a group exercise class for older people	

If you think you would benefit from becoming more active, ask your doctor what could be the best type of exercise/activity for you, especially if you have any chronic conditions. Physical activity programs for older people are available through local councils, community health centres and clubs. The fees vary but are usually low. In addition to health benefits, these programs also offer an opportunity to get out of the house to meet other people and socialise.

There is another very important reason to keep strong and fit. Many older people are vulnerable to falling over, due to impaired strength and balance. A fall can result in serious injuries and a loss of mobility. Regular exercise will strengthen your muscles and improve your balance, therefore reducing the risk of falls.

If walking, moving or doing your usual tasks is becoming difficult, you may need to see a therapist such as an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or podiatrist. Therapy services offer a range of services supporting older people in maintaining or recovering their physical wellbeing, functioning, mobility and independence.

#### ❖ **For more information contact**

- Your local council
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)
- Strength for Life - COTA 8232 0422, [www.cotasa.org.au](http://www.cotasa.org.au)
- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

## ***Therapy and Rehabilitation Services***

Therapy centres offer a range of professional services supporting older people in maintaining or recovering their physical wellbeing, functioning, mobility and independence. These programs address a range of needs, from promoting healthy lifestyles, through preventative programs, to specialised rehabilitation programs.

Therapy services are available on an individual or small group basis. These include:

physiotherapy	falls prevention
occupational therapy	other specialised services such as stroke rehabilitation, dietetic services, Parkinson's disease rehabilitation, memory disorders etc.
podiatry	
speech therapy	
social work	
continence management	

Therapy Services are provided by organisations that often have links with aged care providers. Access to these services can be through referral by a health professional or by ringing the organisation directly.

The Government subsidises some of the cost of these services, however a small contribution from the user is generally required. This charge varies from service to service.

### ❖ For more information contact

- Your local doctor
- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)

## ***Home Delivered Meals***

### **Meals on Wheels**

Meals on Wheels can provide freshly cooked and very affordable meals delivered directly to your home. The meals are nutritionally balanced and suitable even for people with diabetes. They consist of soup, main course and desert. This service is available 5 days a week, except public holidays.

The service is available for frail older people and younger people with a disability. Referrals can be made directly by you, or by a doctor, family member or a community worker. Following the initial referral, a Meals on Wheels worker will visit you to explain how the service works and complete the paperwork, including payment details.

Meals can be arranged on a long or short term basis, depending on your needs. They can be cancelled at any time.

### **Other meal services**

In addition to Meals on Wheels, home delivered fresh or frozen meals are also available from a number of commercial companies, community groups and ethnic organisations. These services vary greatly in their prices and eligibility criteria.

### **Culturally specific food**

Food is an important part of our lives. It provides a way of continuing our traditions and expressing our cultural identity. If you are receiving a home care package, tell the workers about your special cultural food preferences and they will try to meet your needs.

### ❖ For more information contact

- Meals on Wheels on 8271 8700, [www.mealsonwheelssa.org.au](http://www.mealsonwheelssa.org.au)
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)
- Your local council
- Yellow Pages directory (under 'Catering' or 'Frozen Foods')

## ***Transport***

Getting around often becomes a problem for older people. Some may have never learnt to drive the car, while others may no longer be able to do so, due to their declining health. Transport is important, as it means independence.

There are some other options, such as:

**Powered wheelchairs and scooters** – registration or license is not required if the scooter meets specific weight and performance criteria. If considering purchasing such an item, a visit to the Independent Living Centre may help. Staff can assist with professional advice and there is a wide display of equipment, including scooters.

**Public transport.** For information on all metropolitan and country bus, train and tram services including timetables, ticket sales, route details and taxi connections, contact the Adelaide InfoLine. All trains, trams and most buses are wheelchair accessible.

If you are a holder of a concession card, you may be entitled to various concessions including for public transport.

**Pension concession card:** holders using Adelaide metropolitan public transport, provincial cities and country bus services, around 50% concession.

**Seniors card:** free travel on weekdays 9.01am -3pm, all day on weekends and public holidays with 50% concession at all other times.

Also concessions travelling interstate on public transport and government subsidised transport.

Great Southern Rail (GSR) offers 25% off all fares.

Some private transport and taxi companies may also offer discounts for seniors. Conditions may apply.

In addition to the transport benefits of concession cards, the government has developed a range of transport schemes to provide assistance to people in specific circumstances.

**Repatriation Transport Scheme** may pay some travelling expenses for eligible veterans to attend the closest practicable health care provider (including transport, accommodation, meals and accompanying carers). Contact Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) for more information.

**Patience Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS)** provides financial help to those in rural areas who need to travel 100 km or more from their homes to receive specialist medical treatment in SA. Contact: 8226 7215.

**Australian Disability Parking Scheme** enables people to use car parks reserved for people with a disability. A doctor's assessment is required. Contact Transport SA: 131 084.

**SA Transport Subsidy Scheme (SATSS)** provides taxi vouchers for people whose disability prevents them from using public transport safely. Subsidies cover 50% (or 75% for wheelchair users) of a taxi fare. The companion of the person eligible for taxi subsidy is entitled to a free travel card (Plus One Free companion card).

In Adelaide the service is run by Adelaide Access Taxis. All Australian states and territories have similar taxi subsidy schemes and SATSS vouchers can be used.

People with visual impairment are entitled to a free travel pass on public transport. Contact: Adelaide InfoLine.

Local councils usually provide some transport assistance for seniors and residents with a disability. These may include:

A community bus which may offer door to door pick up and drop off. There are also scheduled bus trips to take people to the shopping centre or some group activities organised within the council.

Trained volunteers who will transport people to medical appointments or shopping. This service may also be available through the local church, Australian Red Cross and community organisations.

#### ❖ **For more information contact**

- Your local council
- Adelaide Infoline: 1300 311 108 (metro), 1800 182 160 (country)
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)
- Seniors Card: 1800 819 961, [www.seniorcard.com.au](http://www.seniorcard.com.au)
- Pensioner Concession Card: 132 300, [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)
- Department of Veterans' Affairs: 133 254 (metro), 1800 555 254
- SA Transport Subsidy Scheme: 1300 360 840
- Public Transport: 8303 0822
- Australian Red Cross: 8100 4500, 1800 246 850
- Independent Living Centre: 8266 5260, [www.ilcaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilcaustralia.org.au)

## ***Home and Personal Safety***

Everybody should feel safe in their home. Older people who live on their own or who are limited in mobility may at times feel vulnerable. This section is about being more at ease about living independently at home.

To make sure you have a safe, secure and comfortable living environment, here are some things to consider:

Home security

Aids and equipment

Safety within the home

Home modifications.

Keeping safe in a heatwave

Bushfire safety

### **Home security**

The South Australian Police 'Home Assist Scheme' can help elderly people, people with a disability and their carers to improve their home and personal safety and reduce the risk of becoming a victim of a crime.

The Home Assist coordinator can visit you at home and discuss with you a number of security issues that you may need to improve. The Home Assist worker from your local council will then assist you to make these improvements.



## **Aids and equipment**

Different kinds of aids or equipment can help you maintain your independence and safety. They can:

- assist your walking and moving about
- help with personal care, including showering and going to the toilet, and
- make it easier for you to be socially active.

There is a huge range of equipment available. Some are listed below.

**Mobility aids:** walking sticks or frames, wheelie walkers, manual and motorised wheelchairs, scooters – even car accessories and modifications. Mobility aids can help prevent falls.

**Personal care:** shower stools or chairs, shower hoses, bath seats and boards, over-toilet frames, commodes, continence pads and supplies, aids to assist with dressing, and aids to manage medications.

**Personal safety:** Personal alarm-call systems provide 24-hour monitoring. You can wear an alarm discreetly on a neck chain or like a watch. In an emergency, family or an ambulance can be notified immediately. Identification bracelets are also a good idea for people with dementia who may wander, who are at high risk of ill effects of medications or whose chronic diseases are difficult to manage.

The Australian Red Cross has a service called 'Telecross'. Telecross provides the elderly and housebound with a reassuring daily phone call to ensure that they are safe and well. If the call goes unanswered an agreed emergency procedure will be activated and help arranged if necessary.

**Home safety:** handrails, ramps, tap turners, non-slip mats, easy-grip utensils and easy-pour kettles – just about anything to do with day-to-day activities in and around the home.

At the Independent Living Centre you can try out various products and equipment and discuss which will be suitable for your situation.

## **Safety within the home**

There are many small things that you can do around the house to increase your level of safety. This can range from re-arranging the furniture to allow easier movement, to removing loose rugs and installing grab rails and ramps to reduce your risk of falling.

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) can advise you on your smoke alarms and keeping it in good working order. They also provide information on safety at your home including facts sheet in other languages.

## **Home modifications**

You may need some changes or additions to the house or the environment that allow you to manage everyday tasks. Your local council or aged care service provider can provide assistance for basic home maintenance and security at a subsidised cost. Payments can be negotiated for people in difficult financial circumstances.

### **Keeping safe in a heatwave**

A heatwave can be a threat to your health and safety. It is important for you to be ready for a heatwave, and to discuss your plan with your family. Some precautions you can take to keep safe during a heat wave:

- drink plenty of water (even if you do not feel thirsty) and avoid alcoholic and caffeinated drinks.
- keep homes cool by closing blinds and curtains during the day and making good use of fans or air conditioners (which are on the cool setting)
- stay indoors and open up homes at night if it cools down
- limit outdoor activities to mornings and evenings
- when outdoors wear light loose fitting clothing, as well as a broad brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen
- where possible, maintain contact with a family member or friend during the day to let them know you are alright
- if you have an ongoing mental health condition you should continue to take your medication, stay in touch with family or friends and seek medical help if you start to feel unwell
- make use of air conditioned public facilities such as shopping centres, cinemas and libraries
- be aware of the symptoms of heat stress and if they develop take cool baths or showers and use cool packs or wet towels to cool down
- remember that cordless landline telephones do not work during power outages. Make sure you have alternative means of communication
- consider the safety of your pets and animals. Wet them down and ensure they have adequate shade and water.

Symptoms of heat stress may include headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting, weakness, confusion, and in extreme cases, collapse, loss of urine output and stopping of sweating. If you are feeling unwell, seek medical help immediately.

### **Bushfire safety**

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself, your family and your home for the threat of bush fires. Do not rely on direct help from emergency services like Metropolitan or Country Fire Services, ambulance and police during the threat or in the event of an actual bushfire. The Fire Services can advise you on how to prepare your Bushfire survival plan and about bushfire safety.

#### **❖ For more information contact**

- SAPOL Home Assist Coordinator: 8204 2817
- Independent Living Centre 8266 5260, [www.ilcaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilcaustralia.org.au)
- Australian Red Cross – Telecross service: 1300 885 698
- Call Direct SA Ambulance Service: 1300 136 272
- Healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222
- Your local council
- Metropolitan Fire Service (MSF) - information: 8204 3611, [www.mfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.mfs.sa.gov.au)
- Country Fire Service (CFS) Bushfire information hotline: 1300 362 361, [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au)

# Accommodation

## ***Residential Care***

The time may come when an older person is no longer able to manage living at home, even with the in-home support, and moving into an aged care home may need to be considered. Aged care homes are also known as 'Residential Care'.

Residential care facilities provide accommodation, basic furnishings, laundry, cleaning, meals and refreshments, staff to help at all times, personal care (assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming, eating etc), nursing care, and social activities.

Facilities can vary in style, size, admission procedure, services offered and standard of care provided. Some give priority to certain groups, such as war veterans, Aboriginal people or those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The aged care homes which cater for a particular ethnic group are able to offer bilingual workers, culturally specific food and other cultural features. Most aged care homes however provide care to residents from many different backgrounds and are required to meet their cultural needs. This can be done by offering cultural meals, supporting residents in observing their traditions, organising culturally meaningful activities, finding volunteer visitors who speak the resident's language etc.

There are two levels of care provided in aged care facilities:

- low level care (formerly known as hostels) and
- high level care (formerly known as nursing homes).

Many aged care homes provide both levels of care, enabling people to remain in the same facility even if their care needs change. This is often referred to as 'Ageing in Place'. Whether a person qualifies for 'low' or 'high' care is determined by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

Residential care facilities may be privately owned or run by church organisations, local councils and not-for-profit organisations. The Australian Government monitors the standard of care, regulates and subsidises residential aged care facilities. When choosing an aged care home you have the right to find out how a particular aged care home meets these requirements. This information is available to the public. Do not be afraid to ask.

Moving into an aged care home represents a significant change in life. It is very important when considering residential care that an older person and their family are well informed and fully understand the process involved and the changes this decision will bring to their lives.

## **Entry into residential care can be briefly outlined in the following 5 steps:**

- 1. Arranging an ACAT assessment.** It will determine if you are eligible for residential care and at which level (low or high). You can ask your relative, a friend, your GP or a community worker to help you contact ACAT.
- 2. Selecting an aged care home.** Consider the location - you may wish to remain in your neighbourhood, or choose a home closer to your children. Contact the homes you are considering to arrange a visit and once there ask questions. You can visit as many facilities as you wish. Most aged care homes have waiting lists in place. Seniors Information Service maintains a regularly updated list of current residential care vacancies across Metropolitan Adelaide.
- 3. Working out the cost.** While the Australian Government subsidises residential care, aged care homes charge a number of fees. The fees are calculated individually, according to your income and assets. These calculations can be quite complex. It is advisable to seek some advice on how the move to an aged care home will affect your financial situation. Centrelink Financial Information Service can assist with these calculations.
- 4. Completing and submitting an application form.** You will need to submit a completed application form for residential care (including residential respite). Call the aged care homes of your choice and ask for the forms to be sent to you, so you can put your name on their waiting lists. Once the aged care home receives your completed application, they will contact you if they have a place. You can submit applications to as many aged care homes as you wish. You may be able to get some help with completing paperwork.
- 5. Moving into an aged care home.** Residential facilities provide basic furnishings but you will be able to bring some of your personal possessions with you, depending on the space available. It is a good idea to discuss this with the Manager prior to moving in. The staff of the aged care home will support you during the transition period to help you cope with the changes.

Living in an aged care home can offer good quality of life with appropriate care, social contacts, good nutrition and activities. For some people residential care will be the best option or a necessity later in life. The more you know about it now, the better decision you or your family will be able to make in the future.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT): 1300 130 551
- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres: 1800 052 222,
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)
- The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency: 1800 288 025, [www.accreditation.org.au](http://www.accreditation.org.au)
- Centrelink Financial Information Service: 132 300
- Multicultural Aged Care (MAC): 8241 9900, [www.mac.org.au](http://www.mac.org.au)

## ***Retirement Living***

In addition to the government subsidised residential care there are other forms of accommodation for older people who are still largely independent but no longer wish to remain in their own homes.

The types of retirement accommodation vary in size and structure. They include:

- independent living units
- serviced apartments
- retirement villages.

Independent living units can be run by not-for-profit organisations such as church and charitable organisations. The serviced apartments and retirement villages are often run by commercial operators. Some councils operate their own retirement villages.

Retirement accommodation is regulated by the State and Federal laws and may be purchased under a licence to occupy or in some cases may be rented. The cost for this type of housing varies according to the provider, and may involve complex legal and financial considerations. It may be worthwhile seeking legal advice if you are unclear about the commitment involved.

Seniors Information Service offers comprehensive information about these accommodation options.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- My Aged Care National Contact Centre: 1800 200 422, ***[www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)***
- Seniors Information Service: 8168 8776, ***[www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)***
- Your local council
- Centrelink Financial Information Service: 132 300

# Legal

## ***Your Rights***

Whether you are receiving Residential Care, Community Care or any other aged care service, it is important to be aware that you have the right to:

- be informed about your rights
- be involved and informed about all decisions related to your care
- be in charge of your life, your money and your possessions
- be treated with dignity and respect
- continue your cultural or religious practices and retain your native language
- receive quality care that meets your needs, regardless of the fee you pay
- complain and take steps to sort out any problems
- retain your privacy.

Many people believe it is inappropriate to complain about a service that they are receiving. If you have any concerns or complaints about the service you receive you may wish to discuss this with the manager of the service. In many cases problems can be resolved at this level and your feedback can be used to improve services to other clients or residents.

If, however, you do not feel comfortable doing so, you can call the *Aged Care Complaints Scheme* who investigates complaints and concerns about Australian Government subsidised aged care including residential and community care. This is a free and confidential service and you can remain anonymous.

Another option is to contact an advocacy service for older people. These promote the interests and protect the rights of those who may not know how to, or are unable to speak for themselves.

**Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS)** promotes and supports the rights of older people and their carers. The ARAS will advocate on your behalf and will provide information about your rights, listen to your concerns and help resolve the problem. You can arrange for the ARAS worker to come to you or to meet them in their office. The ARAS worker will help you consider options to make the right decision. This service is free and confidential.

**MALSSA Inc.** advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and their carers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Advocates provide assistance to ensure people receive equal access to and outcomes from services; assist clients with decision making on issues such as guardianship, social security matters, service plans and agreements. This service is free and confidential.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- Aged Care Complaints Scheme: 1800 550 552
- Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS): 8232 5377,  
**[www.agedrights.asn.au](http://www.agedrights.asn.au)**
- MALSSA: 8351 9500, **[www.malssa.org.au](http://www.malssa.org.au)**

## ***Mistreatment***

As people age, they often experience some loss of independence which may be due to declining health, loss of mobility or dementia. This can make older people more dependent on others but at the same time more vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment.

It is a difficult topic, but the reality is that older people do get abused or mistreated, and often it is by family members or friends. It can happen to both men and women.

Abuse can take many forms such as

- being pushed around, hit or restrained
- being called derogatory names, put down
- being threatened
- any physical contact that is uncomfortable and unwelcome by you
- being intimidated to give money on a regular basis, having someone control your finances against your will, forgery or stealing
- have someone control and restrict your lifestyle and activities, for example stopping you from social contacts and activities
- being neglected or not being provided with essentials of life such as medication, food, warm clothing, heating
- being forced to sign documents against your will or threatened if you say no.

Older people experiencing abuse or mistreatment may find it very hard to tell someone about it and may not know how to seek help. This may be due to the belief that family issues need to stay in the family and outsiders should not be involved. An older person may also fear the consequences of complaining.

As hard as it is to confront this issue, older people have a right to be in charge of their lives and finances, to be treated with dignity and respect and to feel safe. There are people who are trained to listen and help you if you are experiencing any kind of mistreatment or abuse. This can be your doctor, trusted friend, a community worker or a worker from ARAS.

There are things older people can do to prevent abuse. These include:

- develop a good understanding of important issues relevant to older people so you can make your own choices and decisions
- know how to get information and support – there are many organisations that can help you
- when planning for the future seek independent advice before signing any documents
- let other people know about your wishes and preferences for the future
- maintain your friendships and social contacts outside your immediate family.

### **❖ For more information contact**

- Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS): 8232 5377

## ***Legal Documents – Advance Directives***

Most people understand the importance of having a will. A will is a document which states who will receive your property and possessions when you die. Having a will makes it easier for the family to deal with your property and help avoid lengthy legal processes.

It is equally important for anyone, and especially for an older person, to consider what will happen to them and their property when an accident, an illness or a disability results in their not being able to make decisions, manage their affairs and communicate their wishes.

It is possible to plan ahead and make formal instructions about your medical treatment, finances and any other relevant matters. These arrangements are called 'Advance Directives' and must be made when a person is still mentally competent to do so.

There are four Advance Directives that can be applied in South Australia and it is best to seek legal advice in preparing them. Each directive serves a different purpose. It is not necessary to have all four in place but it will make planning and decision making about your affairs clear should something happen.

The four directives cover specific areas of decision making:

### **Enduring Power of Attorney**

This allows you to appoint a person or people to make decisions about financial, property and related legal matters on your behalf. You may choose for the powers to come into effect if you lose capacity to make your own decisions.

### **Enduring Power of Guardianship**

Allows you to appoint a person or people to make personal decisions on your behalf such as where you should live and what medical care you should receive.

### **Medical Power of Attorney**

Allows you to appoint a person or people to make medical decisions related to your care in case you are not able to make them yourself. You would nominate a person who you trust and who knows what your wishes are.

### **Anticipatory Direction**

Allows you to record your wishes about the kind of treatment you want, or do not want, in certain circumstances. For example, you may not want extraordinary measures to be taken to keep you alive if you were to be in a persistent unconscious state. It does not involve the appointment of another person and must be followed by those responsible for your medical care.

A good place to start is to talk to your wife or husband, partner, children and friends about what your wishes are should something happen. How many times do we hear



about people who regret not knowing what a loved one really wanted at the end of their life? This could include such things as where you would like to die (in a hospital or at home), whether you want to be resuscitated after a heart attack, given antibiotics for infection that may only prolong dying. It's about little things as well, like who will look after your pet or what you want to wear. Sometimes when there are a number of family members involved, everybody has different ideas and this can only add further stress.

Making plans while you can does not stop you from living life to the fullest, and there may be a very good chance that these directives will never be put into action, but should they, it will make things easier for the people around you to ensure you are cared for in the manner that you want. It will also give you peace of mind.

There are a number of government and community services that offer free legal advice about advanced directives. Remember - planning ensures that you have your say in your future.

❖ **For more information contact**

- COTA Australia: 8232 0422, [www.cota.org.au](http://www.cota.org.au)
- Legal Help Line: 1300 366 424, [www.lsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au)
- Women's Legal Service SA Inc: 8221 5553, [www.wlssa.org.au](http://www.wlssa.org.au)
- Some community centres provide free legal advice (contact your local council)
- Office of the Public Advocate: 8342 8200, [www.opa.sa.gov.au](http://www.opa.sa.gov.au)
- Private lawyers (fees apply)

# Information Services for Older People

## **General**

### **Agedcare Alternatives**

A free information service, sponsored by Resthaven. Enquiries about the aged care system and services are answered over the telephone, or face to face, by trained Options Guides.

Contact: 8271 3888, [www.agedcarealternatives.net.au](http://www.agedcarealternatives.net.au)

### **Centrelink**

Centrelink services offer a range of payments that older people might be eligible for. Contact Centrelink for information about the Australian age pension, pensions from overseas, concessions, carer payments and allowances, bereavement payment, income assessment for residential care etc.

Contact: 132 300 (Pension and concession cards), 132 717 (Carer payment and Carer Allowance).

It is best to call Centrelink directly to find out what payments you may be eligible for. Do not rely on information given by your friends or relatives, as Centrelink payments are calculated according to individual circumstances and may vary significantly.

Centrelink also provides a free financial information service that may be helpful to you, especially when working out the cost of residential care.

Contact: 132 300.

It is easy to speak to Centrelink officers in your own language by calling the multilingual number. Always have your Customer Reference Number handy, choose a quiet place to make a phone call and write down the information you are given. Ask as many questions as you like.

Contact: 131 202.

You can also have Centrelink's quarterly publication 'News for Seniors' delivered to your home. It is available in different languages. It contains important information about changes to payments, eligibility criteria and other relevant matters. Ask the Centrelink officer to arrange for this publication to be sent to you.

### **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres**

Offer a telephone information service for carer support and respite.

Contact: 1800 052 222

### **COTA Australia**

Protects and promotes the wellbeing of older people. Some of their services: advocacy for seniors in aged related State Government policy, Home Maintenance Service for members, legal advice, education programs on health and wellbeing and day trips.

Contact: 8232 0422, [www.cotasa.org.au](http://www.cotasa.org.au)

### **Independent Living Centre**

This information resource centre displays a wide range of products and equipment to assist with daily living activities. Everybody is welcome to visit the centre. You can try out various products and equipment and select those most suitable before you buy.

Contact: 8266 5260, [www.ilcaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilcaustralia.org.au)

### **Multicultural Aged Care (MAC)**

Contact MAC if you would like to know which aged care services have been established by ethnic communities or mainstream service providers in partnership with ethnic communities for older people from a particular cultural and linguistic background,

Contact: 8241 9900, [www.mac.org.au](http://www.mac.org.au)

### **My Aged Care**

My Aged Care provides people with information about the aged care system and how to access services.

Contact: 1800 200 422, [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

### **Seniors Information Service**

This service is dedicated to providing older people and their carers with comprehensive information on a wide range of topics. Information is available over the phone, in printed form, on the website, as well as delivered during information seminars. Printed information is available in several languages.

Contact: 8168 8776, [www.seniors.asn.au](http://www.seniors.asn.au)

## ***Health and Care Contacts***

### **Alzheimer's Australia**

Provides a range of services to support people with dementia, their families and carers throughout the illness. This includes information on every aspect of dementia, support groups for carers, counselling and telephone help line. The information is available in different languages.

Contact Alzheimer's Australia SA: 8372 2100,

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500, [www.fightdementia.org.au](http://www.fightdementia.org.au)

### **Australian Hearing**

Provides services and information about hearing loss, hearing tests and hearing devices.

Contact: Australian Hearing: 8228 9000, [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au)

### **Beyondblue – Depression and Anxiety**

Provides information about risk factors, signs and symptoms and support services.

Contact Helpline: 1300 224 363, [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

### **Low Vision Centre**

Provides information and advice about age-related eye diseases, conditions and treatment. The Low Vision Centre also displays a wide range of daily living aids.

Contact: 8417 5599, [www.rsb.org.au](http://www.rsb.org.au)

### **National Continence Helpline**

The National Continence Helpline is staffed by a team of continence nurse advisors who provide information, education and advice to callers with incontinence or who are caring for someone with incontinence.

Contact National Continence Helpline: 1800 330 066, ***[www.continence.org.au](http://www.continence.org.au)***

### **NPS Medicinewise**

Provides information about prescription, over-the-counter and complementary (herbal, 'natural', vitamin and mineral) medicines.

Contact: 1300 633 424, ***[www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)***

## ***Bulgarian Community Contacts***

### **Bulgarian Educational and Friendly Society**

443 Tapleys Hill Rd, Fulham Gardens SA 5024  
8356 3254

***[www.bulgariansinsouthaustralia.com](http://www.bulgariansinsouthaustralia.com)***

### **Bulgarian East Orthodox Church**

1 Merlin Street, Fulham Gardens SA 5024

### **Bulgarian radio program**

5EBI-FM (103.1MHz) every Sunday 4-5pm

### **SBS Bulgarian radio and news**

SBS radio 3, ***[www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/bulgarian](http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/bulgarian)***