

GETTING STARTED WITH AGED CARE

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS /
CARE LEAVERS**



ALLIANCE FOR
**FORGOTTEN
AUSTRALIANS**

You are in control.
You have choices.
Support is available.



Many Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers feel unsure or anxious about aged care.

THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE.

As children, many experienced:

- Separation from family
- Loss of belonging
- Institutional environments that involved rigid rules
- Punishment and abuse
- Loss of identity and culture

These experiences can have a lifelong impact on trust, identity and wellbeing.

This booklet is here to help you:

- Understand how aged care services can meet your needs
- Learn how the aged care system works
- Stay independent for as long as possible
- Protect yourself and know your rights
- Find safe, respectful, trauma-informed support

Plan ahead – at your pace – you don't need to make decisions all at once. Taking small steps early can give you more control later.

Why aged care can feel hard



You are not alone if you feel:

- Unsure who to trust, or worried about losing independence or control
- Concerned about rules, routines or lack of flexibility
- Anxious about telling your story
- Worried about “fitting in”
- Concerned about separation from a pet or companion

Past experiences can create barriers

- Distrust of institutions or authority
- Difficulty with written material
- Fear of losing privacy, identity or choice

These feelings are common and valid.

Good aged care should:

- Respect your choices and identity
- Protect your privacy and dignity
- Support your independence
- Understand trauma and its lifelong impact
- Keep you connected with your community



Accessing the system

STEP 1

Start with My Aged Care

This is the main entry point into aged care services in Australia.

What to do:

1. Call **1800 200 422** or visit the website **myagedcare.gov.au**
2. Ask for an assessment
3. Talk about what support you need
4. Ask for a breakdown of fees and charges potentially applicable to you

You can ask someone you trust to help you. You don't have to do this alone.

STEP 2

Get support to navigate the system

Care finder services can:

- Help you apply for services
- Explain options in plain language
- Help to fill out forms
- Find service providers
- Support you if you don't have family

They are especially helpful if:

- The system feels confusing or overwhelming
- You're unsure who to trust
- You want someone independent on your side

Call **1800 200 422** to access this service

STEP 3

Think about your needs now

Ask yourself:

- What helps me feel safe and in control?
- Can I still manage at home by myself?
- Do I remember to take my medication?
- What services do I need if I want to stay at home as long as possible?
- Do I need help with shopping, cleaning, gardening or showering?
- Who do I trust to support me?
- What support do I already have?

What helps people feel safe

Research shows people who have experienced trauma often need:

- Choice and control
- Clear information
- Time to decide
- Respect for boundaries
- A space that feels secure

*Waiting times for aged care services can apply.
Planning early helps you stay in control.*

Types of care

Help at home*

Stay in your own home with support like:

- Cleaning, meals, shopping
- Personal care and transport
- Access to allied health services

Note: Most people receive support at home and this typically leads to better outcomes.

Short-term care

Temporary support when you need it:

- After hospital or when unwell
- When extra help is needed
- Respite care
- Short breaks for you or your carer, in your home, community or an aged care home.

Advance care planning

This is the process of discussing and documenting your personal values, beliefs and preferences for future medical care.

Residential aged care

Full-time care if living at home is no longer possible.

End of life care

Specialised care, supporting comfort and dignity at home or in residential facilities.

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD)

A rigorous, multi-step process that ensures all medical and legal safeguards are met.

* The Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) helps older Australians (65+) live independently at home. It will transition to the Support at Home program in July 2027.

Choosing the right provider

You have the right to ask questions and expect clear answers.

Look for services that:

- Understand trauma and past institutional experiences
- Take time to explain their practices
- Respect privacy during personal care
- Have stable levels of personnel
- Support your independence

Things to ask about home care:

- Can I apply for home care and what services are available?
- Which providers are in my area?
- What are client contribution fees?
- Can I choose who supports me?

Things to ask about residential care:

- Has the provider been assessed to work with care leavers?
- Can I keep my belongings private?
- Can I have my own room and space?
- Can I choose when I eat and sleep?
- Will staff ask before touching me?
- Can my pet stay with me?
- When can my friends visit me?

Good care means:

- *You are listened to and feel safe*
- *You are involved in all decisions*
- *You stay in control of your daily life*



Safety, rights and support

Protecting yourself

Elder abuse can include being ignored, controlled, or not listened to, financial pressure or misuse of money, or verbal, physical or emotional harm. Trust your instincts. If something feels wrong, it matters.

What to do if you or someone you know is experiencing abuse

- **1800 353 374** is a free call phone number that automatically connects callers seeking information and advice on elder abuse with the existing phone line service in their area.
- Or call the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN): **1800 700 600**

You have the right to:

- Make your own decisions
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Feel safe and have your boundaries respected
- Have privacy (including your body and personal space)
- Complain without fear of not being believed

What respectful, trauma-informed care looks like:

Good providers will listen without judgement, be transparent and take time to build trust. They will respect your history, involve you as the decision maker in your care and offer choices (meals, routines, activities). Good providers will ask permission before touching and support your relationships – not assume family involvement.

Get help and support

— Complaints about aged care

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission: **1800 951 822**

— Find & Connect services 1800 16 11 09

- Counselling and support for Forgotten Australians
- Help finding records and reconnecting



You don't have to do this alone

Support services understand your experiences. Many are trauma-informed and will go at your pace, help you feel safe and support you to make your own choices.



The Alliance for Forgotten Australians is a national coalition of support groups and individuals working to promote the interests of Forgotten Australians.

Please visit the AFA website where information and services relevant to Forgotten Australians are available, along with details about AFA's advocacy, media coverage, newsletters, governance, reports and resources:

forgottenausustralians.org.au