



# Aged Care Resources

A guide for carers and families



ST VINCENT'S  
HOSPITAL  
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA



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# Introduction

This booklet has been made for carers and family members of someone that has had a recent hospital stay.

Sometimes after significant illness you may find yourself looking after a relative or friend. You may have been providing care to someone before their hospital stay because of their poor health and/or physical ability and you will continue to provide care when they return home. However you may need more assistance to manage their care following the hospital stay. As a carer, you can discuss these new needs with the treating team so you understand what this means in practical terms.

It is important to acknowledge the role carers and family members play in the lives of those they care for and the contribution this has to the community. Carers often experience high levels of stress and financial hardship. Carers and families need help and support to provide care for someone at home but often don't know where to go for help.

This booklet has been made as a place to start and to guide you to the services and supports that may be available to you.

## Carer recognition

In 2012 the State Government of Victoria developed the Carers Recognition Act. The Act describes a carer as someone in an unpaid care relationship who is providing care to an older person, a person with mental illness or a medical condition. Under the Act it is a core principle that carers be recognised, respected, and supported in their role and recognised that their wellbeing needs to be supported.

To get a copy of the Act go to [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)

For information on the Act and factsheets go to [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersact](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/carersact)

## Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria provides advice, information and support for carers to improve their health, wellbeing, capacity, financial security and resilience. They also work closely with government and other support organisations to improve the lives of caring families throughout Victoria.

The following is helpful information provided on the Carers Victoria website:

Carers of aged people are often family or friends who provide support to a person who may have a cognitive impairment or are too frail to provide care for themselves. Carers may give care for a few hours a week or all day every day, depending on the level of support needed.

Sometimes becoming a carer happens so gradually that many people don't consider themselves as carers. Sometimes it happens suddenly after illness. Many carers feel that it is what they should do and it is not uncommon for carers to feel that they don't really have

a choice. Even in large families the responsibility of providing care is often left to one person rather than being shared.

Carers don't only provide physical and practical help they also provide support, encouragement and reassurance to the person they care for, oversee their health and wellbeing, and monitor their safety therefore contributing to a good quality of life.

People who care for a family member or friend say there are many rewards:

- the opportunity for personal growth and the development of new skills
- proving to yourself that you can meet new challenges
- the satisfaction of knowing you have helped someone who needs you and done the best you could to improve their quality of life
- strengthening the relationship with the person you care for and knowing how much they appreciate your help
- receiving the acknowledgment of your family and friends.

However, caring can be very demanding and often the following can be major issues for a carer.

### *Financial hardship*

50% of primary carers are on a low income and many find it hard to cover living expenses, save money or build up superannuation. Also, the extra costs of caring can be enormous.

### *Health and wellbeing*

Caring can be emotionally taxing and physically draining. Carers often ignore their own health and are 40% more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition. Some health problems, like back problems, anxiety and depression, can be directly linked to caring.

### *Social isolation and relationships*

Many carers feel isolated, missing the social opportunities associated with work, recreation and leisure activities as the demands of caring can leave little time for other family members or friends.

### *Disadvantage*

Many carers miss out on important life opportunities, particularly for paid work, a career and education as caring can take the freedom and spontaneity out of life.

### *The physical and emotional demands of caring*

Some carers provide 24 hour nursing aid to a family member with high care needs. Others care for people who are fairly independent but may need help occasionally. The greater the physical and emotional demands of your caring role, the more likely you are to feel stress.

### *Lack of choice*

Many carers feel they had little or no choice in taking on caring. You may sometimes feel trapped and resentful.

### *Conflict and frustration*

Relationships can change under the pressures of illness and adversity. There might be greater levels of conflict and frustration in your family. You may even be caring for someone you have always had a difficult relationship with.

### *Lack of support*

Many carers feel alone and unsupported. You may find it hard to access services and supports that meet the needs of your family. You may also wish that friends and family members could help out more.

### *Effects of stress*

When you feel stressed your body reacts the same way it does to a threat. Your heartbeat, breathing rate and blood pressure all go up. The longer you feel stressed, the greater the demands on your body. This can eventually lead to stress related illnesses.

Self-care is very important and an essential part of a successful caring relationship. This often means taking a break called respite or accessing support such as counselling or in home services to ease the burden of care.

Carer's Victoria provides a short term flexible counselling service for free. Please call them on **1800 242 636**.

[www.carersvictoria.org.au](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au)

## National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP)

The National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP) allows carers to have a break to look after their own health and wellbeing; with the comfort of knowing that the person they care for is being looked after.

NRCP fund a range of community-based and residential respite facilities including:

- Adult day care centres that provide respite for a half day or full day
- In-home respite services, including overnight, home care and personal care services providing respite and support
- Activity programs
- A break away from home, perhaps with a support worker

- Respite for carers of people with dementia and challenging behaviours
- Respite in a residential aged care home or overnight respite in a community setting
- Respite for employed carers and for carers seeking to return to work.

The NRCP can provide carers with specialised professional counselling. To find out more contact the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on **1800 200 422** for emergency respite: **1800 059 059**.

# Home Support Services

When the person you care for is ready for discharge home, there are a number of services that may be put into place to provide additional support. These services can be provided through the following pathways:

- Post-Acute Care (PAC)
- Home and Community Care (HACC) via your Local Council
- Veterans' Home & Nursing Care (VHC) (if eligible)
- private services.

To access these services you may either speak to the social worker on the ward to provide assistance or you can contact the service provider directly when you are discharged home.

## Post Acute Care (PAC)

Post-Acute Care (PAC) is a government funded service used for the initial period following discharge home. It is a short term service put in place for approximately four weeks until longer term services can be arranged. PAC works with the council to ensure that this happens. The services PAC provides often include:

- community nursing
- personal care
- home care services
- short term physiotherapy.

There is an eligibility criteria to access PAC and you cannot access this service after 28 days from the date of discharge. This is a fully government funded service.

Your PAC service is \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

## Council

Home and Community Care (HACC) services are provided by your Local Council for aged persons and those with disabilities. Once a referral has been made to your local council, they will make an appointment with you and the person you are caring for to complete an assessment at the care recipient's home to look at eligibility and what services they can offer. These services include:

- personal care assistance
- home and domestic assistance
- in-home respite for the carer
- delivered meals
- shopping assistance
- planned activity groups and adult day centre programs
- property maintenance.

There is a means tested fee that is charged for these services which will be discussed with you at the assessment.

## Veterans' Home Care (VHC)

The Veterans' Home Care (VHC) program provides practical help to eligible veterans and war widows and widowers at home. These services include domestic assistance, personal care, respite care, and safety-related home and garden maintenance. To enquire, call VHC on **1300 550 450**.

## Private services

An alternate option for providing supports for the person you care for, or for you in your role as carer is to identify a private service provider which meets your needs. To find an extensive list of service providers in your local area, the best place to start is to call the Aged Care Information Line on **1800 200 422** or website [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

# Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS)

ACAS help older people and their carers work out what kind of care will best meet their needs when they are no longer able to manage at home without assistance. ACAS provide information on suitable care options and can help arrange access or referral to appropriate residential or community care. Their primary role is to assess for eligibility for:

- home care packages
- residential respite care
- permanent residential care

Your ACAS service is \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

## Home Care Packages

For support at home there are a number community Home Care Packages available which are funded by the government. These packages are planned and coordinated packages of care to help aged persons remain living in their own homes. Packages have strict eligibility criteria, and suitability will be determined by ACAS. The aged person can only be assessed for a package when they are in the community. Through the *'Living Longer, Living Better'* aged care reforms, the Australian Government is significantly expanding home care to assist people to remain living at home for as long as possible, and to introduce more choice and flexibility for people receiving care at home through Consumer Directed Care (CDC).

A Home Care Package is a coordinated package of services tailored to meet the consumer's specific care needs. The package is coordinated by a home care provider, with funding provided by the Australian Government.

There are four levels of Home Care Packages:

- Home Care Level 1 – to support people with basic care needs
- Home Care Level 2 – to support people with low level care needs
- Home Care Level 3 – to support people with intermediate care needs
- Home Care Level 4 – to support people with high care needs.

Some of the services these packages cover include:

- home and domestic assistance
- personal care assistance
- nursing services
- in-home respite for carers
- shopping assistance
- delivered meals
- personal alarms
- transport assistance.

## **Residential respite care**

Residential respite care provides short-term care in Australian Government subsidised aged care homes for people who are in temporary need of care and who intend to return to the community. Residential respite care may be used on a planned or emergency basis to help with carer stress, illness, holidays or if the carer is unavailable for any reason. An ACAS assessment is required to access residential respite care.

For assistance in locating an appropriate respite facility call:

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

Tel: 1800 052 222

### **For emergency respite**

Tel: 1800 059 059

## **Residential care**

The decision for residential care can be difficult and very emotional. Often people find this idea too overwhelming but there are supports in place to assist you with this process. An ACAS assessment is required to access permanent care. The ACAS team will determine what level of care is required and therefore what types of facility you will need to consider. Please contact your local ACAS team for assistance.

*Helpful publications and resources:*

### **Residential care, your choices: A guide for older Victorians.**

Call 9096 7777 for a copy or access at [www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/publications](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/publications)

### **5 Steps Guide to Entry into Residential Aged Care**

Call 1800 200 422 for a copy or access at [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-rescare-resentry\\_a.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-rescare-resentry_a.htm)

### **Seniors and Aged Care Australia**

[www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

### **Aged Care Information Line**

Tel: 1800 200 422

### **Aged Care Online**

[www.agedcareonline.com.au](http://www.agedcareonline.com.au)

# Legal and Financial Considerations

## Powers of Attorney (POA)

In Victoria, there are four different Powers of Attorney. There is one general power and three enduring powers. All of the enduring powers give the decision maker the authority to act when the person being cared for is unable to make their own choices. If Power of Attorney paperwork is not in place and it is something that you are considering, the person being cared for must be deemed to have capacity by a medical doctor to proceed.

### *Powers of Attorney*

1. General Power of Attorney – the appointment of someone to make financial and legal decisions on your behalf. If you lose capacity (your understanding to make decisions) at a later stage, this document will no longer be valid.

2. Enduring Power of Attorney (financial) – the appointment of someone to make financial and legal decisions in the event you lose capacity in the future.
3. Enduring Power of Attorney (medical) – someone to make medical decisions for you in the event of you losing the capacity to make these decisions for yourself.
4. Enduring Power of Guardianship – someone to make lifestyle decisions (e.g. where you live) if you are unable to make these.

‘Enduring’ means the power continues (endures) even when an individual is unable to make these types of decisions for themselves due to accident or illness resulting in incapacity, either temporary or permanent.

## Guardianship and Administration

Guardianship and Administration are decided by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT):

– **Guardian:** A Guardian is a person or organisation appointed by VCAT to make personal lifestyle decisions for someone with a disability or who does not have the cognitive capacity to make their own decisions. A Guardian is then authorised to make decisions in the person's best interests. Decisions made are usually around lifestyle, accommodation and health care decisions.

– **Administrator:** An Administrator is a person or organisation appointed by VCAT to make financial and legal decisions for someone with a disability or who does not have the cognitive capacity to make their own decisions. An Administrator is then authorised to make decisions about matters such as the purchase or sale of assets, payments of debts and investment of money. When there is no suitable family member or friend to take on this role, VCAT can appoint an independent Administrator such as State Trustees. An administrator is often required when a person has not done an Enduring Power of Attorney (financial) and who now lacks the capacity to appoint a Power of Attorney.

An application to VCAT is only required as a last resort and your social worker can provide more information regarding your particular circumstances. Otherwise, please contact the Office of Public Advocate advice line.

For more information on legal considerations the best places to contact are:

### **The Office of the Public Advocate**

Tel: 1300 309 337  
(local call cost)

### **The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal**

Tel: 9628 9911

### **Legal Aid Victoria**

Tel: 9269 0120

### **Office of the Public Advocate**

The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) helps people with a disability or cognitive impairment.

They have many responsibilities, including:

- to protect and promote the rights of people with a disability or cognitive impairment.
- to act as an independent statutory guardian, when appointed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for a person with a disability who lacks the capacity to make decisions for themselves.
- provide an Advice Line for the community

The Advice Service operates from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.  
Tel: 1300 309 337

### **Seniors Rights Victoria**

Seniors Rights Victoria is a free service, established by the Victorian Government to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians. The only service of its kind in Victoria, Senior Rights Victoria leads research, policy and advocacy on issues of elder abuse, mistreatment and neglect.

### **Services include:**

- legal advice
- education and training
- information and advice
- referral
- advocacy.

**Helpline:** 1300 368 821

## Centrelink

As a carer, you may be eligible for a Centrelink benefit. There are two types of Centrelink support: Carers Payment and Carers Allowance.

### *Carer Payment:*

The Centrelink Carer Payment is available for people providing substantial daily care for a person aged over 16 years who has a severe disability, medical condition or is frail or aged. The payment is roughly equivalent to other pensions and so eligibility is determined by an asset and income assessment. If you qualify for the Carer Payment, you may also be entitled to a Carer Allowance.

### *Carer Allowance:*

A small supplement for a carer who provides daily care to a person at home. The Carer Allowance is not income or asset tested and is available to carers who would not otherwise be eligible for a Centrelink Carer Payment. You do not have to qualify for a Carer Payment to be eligible for a Carer Allowance.

If the person you care for goes into respite care or hospital, you can still receive Carer Payment for up to 63 days in a calendar year if the person you care for is in respite care, as well as 63 days in a calendar year if the person you care for is in hospital.

If you are a carer and you think you may be eligible for this financial assistance, you should register an intent to claim as soon as possible. You should then submit your claim within 14 days so that Centrelink can pay you from the earliest possible date. You will require a medical report to substantiate your claim.

If this seems to be a likely option for you or a family member, it is best to contact Centrelink directly: 13 27 17.

# Cognitive Concerns and Mental Health

## Dementia

An increasing number of Australians have dementia. Dementia can cause significant changes to a person's life as well as to the lives of family and carers.

Dementia is a group of symptoms affecting a person's brain by changing the ability to think, reason, remember and learn. It also affects a person's ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities such as getting dressed or eating or planning their daily activities. They may also lose their ability to solve problems or control their emotions and their personalities may change. They may become agitated or see things that are not there.

Not everyone experiences the same symptoms and they may also be more or less severe from person to person. It is important to have an early assessment of cognitive abilities as early identification allows better treatment and management of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia but there are also other forms such as vascular dementia caused by circulation problems to the brain or dementia with Lewy bodies.

Remember that providing a caring, happy and fulfilling environment for a person with dementia can be both challenging and rewarding; it also requires energy and patience. It is important to form supportive relationships between the professionals involved and with the family carers and the person with dementia. It is important that carers recognise the need to take care of themselves also.

\*This information can be found in the Department of Health 'Best care for older people everywhere toolkit'.

*What supports are available:*

### **Alzheimer's Australia**

Tel: 1800 100 500 (free call)

### **Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) VIC**

Tel: 1800 699 799

## **Cognitive, Dementia and Memory Service (CDAMS)**

The closest CDAMS to St Vincent's Hospital is St Georges Health Service (Kew) **9268 0522**  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/subacute/cdams.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/subacute/cdams.htm)

## **Depression**

While we all feel sad, moody or low from time to time, some people experience these feelings intensely, for long periods of time and often without reason. Depression is not a normal part of ageing and many older people do not let others know they have depression and will often concentrate on their physical symptoms but not discuss how they are really feeling. People with depression find it hard to function every day and may be reluctant to participate in activities they once enjoyed. They may have significant changes in their appetite or weight and feel very tired with little energy.

Older people are not necessarily more prone to depression than other age groups, but there are certain risk factors in late life that can greatly increase people's chances of developing depression, including:

Risk factors:

- social isolation
- an increase in physical health problems e.g. heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease
- chronic pain
- side-effects from medications
- losses: relationships, independence, work and income, self-worth, mobility and flexibility
- significant change in living arrangements e.g. moving from an independent to care setting
- admission to hospital
- particular anniversaries and the memories they evoke.

The most important message about depression and older people is that depression is a common health problem and with the right treatment, most people recover.

One of the most comprehensive services useful for more information is **'Beyond Blue'**, an organisation which provides free information materials on depression, anxiety and related disorders to the Australian community.

**Info line:** 1300 22 4636

If you need to speak to someone urgently call Lifeline on 13 11 14

\*This information contained here on Dementia and Depression has been taken in most part from the Department of Health 'Best care for older people everywhere toolkit'.

# Cultural Specific Services

## *Aboriginal*

### **ASK – Access Services for Kooris**

66-68 Sackville Street  
Collingwood 3066  
Tel: 8679 2000

### **VAHS – Victorian Aboriginal Health Service**

186 Nicholson Street  
Fitzroy 3065  
Tel: 9419 3000

### **ACES – Aboriginal Community Elders Service**

5 Parkview Ave  
East Brunswick 3057  
Tel: 93834244

## *Greek*

### **Fronitha**

335 Station Street  
Thornbury 3071  
Tel: 9495 2306

### **Australian Greek Welfare**

7 Union Street  
Brunswick 3056  
Tel: 9388 9998

## *Italian*

### **CO.AS.IT**

189 Faraday Street  
Carlton 3053  
Tel: 9349 9000

## *Chinese*

### **Chinese Community Social Services Centre Inc. (CCSSC)**

Suite 11, Level 1,  
Professional Suites, Centro  
Whitehorse, 17 Market Street  
Box Hill 3128  
Tel: 9898 1965

## *Vietnamese*

### **Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association**

30-32 Lennox Street  
Richmond 3121  
Tel: 9428 9078

## *Migrant Resource Centre*

### **Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)**

251 High Street  
Preston 3072  
Tel: 9496 0200

# Contacts for support

## **My Aged Care Australia**

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

## **Aged Care Assessment Services:**

Tel: 1300 884 850  
[www.agedcareconnect.com.au](http://www.agedcareconnect.com.au)

## **Aged Care in Victoria – Department of Health**

Tel: 9096 7389  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/  
index.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/index.htm)

## **Carer Support**

### **Australian Government Seniors website –**

‘Carer Support’ section  
[www.seniors.gov.au/internet/  
seniors/publishing.nsf/Content/  
Carer+Support](http://www.seniors.gov.au/internet/seniors/publishing.nsf/Content/Carer+Support)

### **Carers Australia**

Tel: 1800 242 636 or  
[www.carersaustralia.com.au/](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/)

### **National Carer Counselling program**

Tel: 1800 242 636

## **Legal and Financial**

### **Centrelink**

Tel: 13 27 17 or  
[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

### **Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)**

Tel: 9628 9911 or  
[www.vcat.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcat.vic.gov.au)

### **Office of the Public Advocate:**

Tel: 1300 309 337 or  
[www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)

## **Residential Aged Care**

### **DPS Guide to Aged Care**

[www.agedcareguide.com.au](http://www.agedcareguide.com.au)

### **Aged Care Information Line:**

Tel: 1800 500 853



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- Department of Health
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Carer's Victoria
- Carer's Australia
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Office of the Public Advocate
- Centrelink
- Senior Rights Victoria