

Aged Care Assessment: A positive path to accessing aged care services

MYTH: 'HAVING AN AGED CARE ASSESSMENT MEANS I MIGHT GO INTO A NURSING HOME'

Brigid refused to have an assessment by the Government as her family had requested. She had just turned 80 years old and although more fragile, loved the home in which she had raised her family. She knew the garden was becoming too much, and her family made such a fuss about her recent fall.

She agreed to accept some help in the garden – that was all she really needed for now. Her independence was really important to her, keeping her home for her grandchildren to visit. The idea of an assessment felt like the beginning of the end. Brigid was very concerned that the assessment would recommend that she needed to go to a nursing home.

Her concerns are very common. Talking about thoughts and feelings can be difficult for anyone, especially older people, whose reluctance to ask for assistance is often related to a range of fears. They are afraid they will become a burden to their families; they worry about what will happen if they admit they are finding it harder to manage on their own.

Conversations about aged care can be challenging for older people. Ask open ended questions, assure them that you do not want to interfere, tell them you want to understand what is happening for them. It is also important to understand and acknowledge their concerns and use words which have meaning to them. Remember to be patient.

Myth Buster 1:

While the aged care system can be very confusing, all assessments are focused on getting the best care that meets your needs. For the vast majority of people, this means helping you to stay at home. Very few will have care needs requiring residential or nursing home care.

There is now one place to go for information about aged care – a single entry point for everything from basic information about services, to different kinds of assessment, to comparisons of services near you – and much more.

My Aged Care is a website www.myagedcare.gov.au that includes information about the different services available and eligibility. You can also ring 1800 200 422 to talk to someone about your circumstances and explore service possibilities.

Myth Buster 2:

Aged Care Programs Subsidised by the Australian Government

There are three key government subsidised aged care programs, each of which has its own fees and charges. Over 85% of subsidised care is delivered to people in their own homes.

1. **Commonwealth Home Support Program:** This entry level program provides small amounts of care to over 800,000 people per year to help them live at home. My Aged Care can refer you to a Regional Assessment Service (RAS) if your needs seem simple. The RAS assessors will visit you at home to see how you manage your daily life and discuss with you the possible services that will help meet your needs.
2. **Home Care Packages:** This program is for people with more complex care needs. It provides a coordinated package of services tailored to meet the care needs of a person living at home. Eligibility and the recommended level of service are determined by an Aged Care Assessment, undertaken by an Aged Care Assessment Team, usually in your own home. There are about 80,000 Home Care Packages which are offered on the basis that you can choose the mix of services that best meet your needs.
3. **Residential Aged Care:** This is a program that supports people with very high care needs in residential settings when they are unable to continue living independently in their own homes. An Aged Care Assessment is required to determine eligibility. There are currently about 200,000 aged care beds operational across Australia.

For some older people, private ‘fee for service’ aged care services which are not subsidised by Government may be an alternative solution. You do not require an assessment through My Aged Care and you can go directly to a provider of your choice to seek the services that will help you stay independently in your own home.

Myth Buster 3: So what about Brigid?

For Brigid to have an assessment would not be the beginning of the end. It is much more likely to be the beginning of living independently at home with the right support.

An assessment is the first step. It would allow Brigid to explore options and services which are available to assist her. Simple supports from the Commonwealth Home Support Program – things like hand rails in the bathroom to help her avoid falls – are most likely to help Brigid and people like her stay safe and independent at home.

For more information about aged care and assessments visit

www.myagedcare.gov.au

Telephone 1800 200 422

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm across Australia

Interpreters are available