

Choosing a Home Care Package provider

MARIA'S STORY

Maria migrated to Australia from Italy in 1953 and is now in her 80s. She had been managing her household well – including shopping, cleaning and cooking – but has struggled since having a fall. Her children are working and do not have much time to help. She has missed a few doctor's appointments as she could not get there by herself, and her health has deteriorated.

Maria's friend suggested she call My Aged Care to find out if she could get some help to enable her to stay at home – something that is important to her. She called My Aged Care and, with assistance from a free interpreter, arranged to have an assessment in her home to find out what support she needed. A few weeks later she received a letter from the government saying that she was approved for a level two home care package. A week later she received another letter which informed her that she was assigned a package. This letter included a referral code and a date by which she needed to enter a home care agreement with a provider of her choice.

Maria was relieved to be offered assistance but did not know how to go about choosing a home care package provider. She asked her daughter, Nella, if she could help. Maria has limited English, so she was keen to get someone who spoke Italian and understood her culture – including her passion for the Italian food she had been missing since her fall. It was also important to her that the person coming to her home was flexible so she would be able to get assistance to go to doctor's appointments and to the Italian club.

Nella dropped in and together they searched on the internet and called the Italian club, asking if they knew of a home care package provider who could meet Maria's requirements. Once they found two potential providers, Nella called them and told them what her mother was looking for. Both providers were able to provide the services she wanted. In the end Maria choose a provider who had a care worker from the same town she came from. They were able to start services immediately.

Maria's story is very common. Currently in Australia over 74,000 people receive home care packages every year. There have been some changes to the way home care packages are being delivered to give people receiving care more choice and control. People can now choose which provider they want to deliver their package for them or change the provider if they are already receiving services. There are many accredited providers to choose from and it can be a bit daunting to make a choice. Maria used a range of sources to find a provider which meets her unique needs. She talked to family and friends, asked her local club for advice and, with her daughter's help, did an online search using the My Aged Care Service Finder.

Choosing a home care package provider? Here are some tips:

- **Think about what is important to you.** Maria's priorities were having a care worker who understood her language and culture; flexibility to access support when needed; and being able to start services immediately.
- **Talk to family, friends and people you know** and ask for their recommendations.
- If you have access to the internet and feel comfortable to do searches, **use the new, improved Service Finder on the My Aged Care website** to compare providers. If you are less comfortable using the internet maybe a family member can sit down with you to do the online search.
- Ensure you have your unique package referral code which is in the letter confirming that you have been assigned a package when contacting a provider
- You have 56 days from the date your package has been assigned to choose a provider. This can be extended by a further 28 days if required but you need to call my aged care to arrange this.

Here are some questions you may like to ask selected providers:

- What **variety of services** can they provide or source for you?
- How **flexible** are they? If they can't provide something themselves, will they help you to find it somewhere else?
- Where are they located?
- How often will you see or speak with your **case manager** or adviser? What is included in the case management fee?
- Can you choose how much or how little you are involved in **self-managing** your care plan and budget?
- What's their **reputation**? You may ask to speak to one of their consumers already receiving care.
- What are the **costs and charges** for services, including case management, administration, hourly rates, exit fees, etc.?
- Will they negotiate how much you pay for the **Basic Daily Fee**?
- If you have specific cultural or language needs, do they have staff who **speak your language**?

What was the outcome for Maria?

Maria started services with her provider and was amazed by the kindness of the staff. Their flexibility meant she could get physiotherapy, which helped her gain more mobility and the confidence to walk. They told her about an Italian grocer who offered home delivery, so she did not need a worker to take her shopping. That meant she could direct her package into other important areas of her life, even using some of her package funds to buy some smaller, lighter pots and pans so she could cook her Italian food again. Maria has not missed a doctor's appointment, her health has improved, and she enjoys being able to go the Italian Club regularly.

Choosing a home care package provider can be overwhelming at first, but there are some strategies you can use. By thinking about what is important to you, talking to family and friends, checking out the Service Finder on My Aged Care and contacting different providers to find out what they can offer, you stand the best chance of finding a provider who will meet your needs.

Find out more

- Compare providers with the [My Aged Care Service Finder](#).
- Use the Home Care Today [Choosing Your Home Care Provider Checklist](#), which we developed with consumers.
- [Changing Providers – Considerations and checklist](#)