



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



# The veteran's guide to living in an aged care home



SERVING WELL >> LIVING WELL >> AGEING WELL



### **Contact Details**

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You can find this product at [dva.gov.au/ac](https://dva.gov.au/ac)

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# 1. Supporting you

## Overview

This guide has been developed to help you, your family and carers better understand the health and wellbeing support available from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) while you are living in an aged care home.

As a DVA client you may be a veteran or a war widow(er).

A veteran is a serving or ex-serving member with at least one day of continuous service in the Australian Defence Forces (ADF). ADF service includes service in the:

- Royal Australian Navy
- Australian Army including NORFORCE (North-West Mobile Force)
- Royal Australian Air Force, and
- National Service and the Second Australian Imperial Force.

As a DVA client you may also identify as a First Nations person or person from a non-English speaking background and your aged care home should acknowledge your culture and community needs alongside your veteran or war widow(er) experience.

## Supporting you

Moving into an aged care home is not an easy decision and can, for some, be a time filled with complex emotions, family dynamics and confusion about what supports are still available to you through your DVA Veteran Card arrangements.

DVA has also developed a guide for aged care teams, to help them understand the additional supports available to you. The booklet ***A guide for residential aged care teams supporting Department of Veterans' Affairs clients*** can be downloaded at [dva.gov.au/RACresources](https://dva.gov.au/RACresources).

If your aged care team are unsure about the supports you are eligible for they can visit [dva.gov.au/RACproviders](https://dva.gov.au/RACproviders), call the DVA health provider enquiries number **1800 550 457** or email [HealthApprovals@dva.gov.au](mailto:HealthApprovals@dva.gov.au).

DVA has developed a few resources to assist DVA clients, carers and their families understand the supports available to them. These resources are available at [dva.gov.au/ac](https://dva.gov.au/ac).

- ***A veteran's guide to living independently***
- ***A veteran's guide to moving into an aged care home***
- ***A veteran's guide to better hearing.***

## Income support payments

If you receive a DVA disability or income support payment you will continue to receive these, except for rent assistance, when you move into an aged care home.

For couples receiving income support payments (Service Pension, Income Support Supplement, Veteran Payment, Aged Pension paid on behalf of Centrelink), once you move permanently into an aged care home you may be entitled to be paid at the illness separated rate, even if you both move in together. To maximise your payments please advise DVA on the day you move permanently into the aged care home by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.



## Veteran Cards

Veterans and war widow(er)s can receive a Veteran Card from DVA which provides access to a range of health treatments and other benefits, including services accessed from DVA while living in an aged care home. There are three types of Veteran Cards: Gold, White and Orange.

The Veteran Gold Card provides eligible veterans and war widow(er)s clinically required treatment for all medical conditions. Services and support are free or low cost, and prescription medications are limited to a patient contribution for each item until the Safety Net Threshold is reached for each calendar year. Specific eligibility criteria apply. For more information visit [dva.gov.au/gold-card](https://dva.gov.au/gold-card).

The Veteran White Card provides access to clinically required treatment for accepted service-related conditions, as well as mental health treatment fully funded by DVA. Anyone who has served one day of continuous full-time service in the ADF is eligible for the Veteran White Card. For more information visit [dva.gov.au/white-card](https://dva.gov.au/white-card).

The Orange Card may be provided to eligible British, Commonwealth or allied veterans, or mariners of the Second World War and gives access to prescription medications, wound care items and nutritional supplements at a concessional rate. For more information visit [dva.gov.au/orange-card](https://dva.gov.au/orange-card).

If you do not have a Veteran Card, you can apply for one by visiting [recognition.dva.gov.au](https://recognition.dva.gov.au) or calling DVA on **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**. You can also ask your local advocate or ex-service organisation (ESO) for assistance.



## Care plans

Your aged care team will develop a care plan with you. Your care plan will provide your care team with information about you including your preferences, goals and clinical and care needs.

It is important if you are accessing any DVA services and supports these are detailed in the care plan you develop with your aged care team.

When developing a care plan with your aged care team you can ask them to include:

- that you are a veteran or war widow(er)
- equipment you use or need and if it is supplied by DVA
- medication or wound care products
- additional appointments with allied health providers, if you have a clinical need beyond those provided by your aged care home
- transport arrangements for off-site medical treatment
- any mental health conditions you may have. You may also like to discuss how to manage any mental health conditions you have, including to:
  - ask if a behaviour support plan can be developed to assist your care team avoid triggers and understand the activities you do to stay well
  - discuss how the Veteran Supplement in Residential Care can be used to support your mental health (if you have consented to the provider accessing this payment).

## Recognition in aged care

A resource pack including stickers has been developed to assist your care team and other residents in your aged care home identify you as a veteran or war widow(er), in recognition of your contributions to the nation. These stickers may also remind your care team of your possible eligibility for additional supports through DVA.

The red poppy is a symbol of undying love, remembrance, sacrifice, hope for a peaceful future and support for the defence community.

The 'V' represents our veterans and their sacrifice to our nation.

The 'W' represents the contribution war widow(er)s have made to Australia.

The resources may be used (with your permission) on your door, near your bed, on your care plan and clinical files, medication charts, on your place card at a table in the dining room, or on your equipment.

You or your aged care home can order stickers, download the digital resources from [dva.gov.au/RACresources](https://dva.gov.au/RACresources) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.



## The Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant

Eligible veterans may also apply to DVA for recognition products available under the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant (Covenant). The Covenant serves to recognise and acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the contribution of veterans and their families. The Covenant is supported by the Veteran Card, Lapel Pin and Oath.

The Veteran Card provides access to specific health treatment services. The Lapel Pin provides the opportunity for Australians to identify veterans when they are not in uniform or wearing their medals. The Oath is a declaration on behalf of the Australian people to give enduring and formal recognition of veterans and families.

For more information visit [recognition.dva.gov.au](https://recognition.dva.gov.au).



## Questions you may ask your aged care home

As a resident you may wish to ask some questions of your aged care home:

1. Are you a veteran specialised aged care home with My Aged Care'?
2. Are there other veterans or war widow(er)s living in your home?
3. What is your understanding of what a veteran or war widow(er) is?
4. What linkages do you have with the veteran community and local ESOs?
5. How can I be connected and supported to be part of the local veteran community?
6. How do you support and acknowledge veterans and war widow(er)s?
7. Do you have any veteran specific activities?
8. What do you do for significant days in the veterans' calendar, such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day?
9. How will you help me to access additional DVA funded health services and supports if I am eligible and clinically need them?
10. If I choose to use my existing medical practitioners will this impact on my care?
11. May I bring my DVA provided aids and equipment into the home?
12. If I need customised or personalised equipment will you support me accessing these through DVA?
13. Are there any extra services you can provide and are there any additional costs for these services?



## Commemorating military service

Your aged care home may commemorate significant days, such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.

For some veterans, commemorating these days is very important. If you would like to be included in these commemorative events, please let your care team know so they can arrange for you to attend.

For some, these commemorative events may be a reminder of a challenging time in your life, and you can choose not to be included, just let your care team know.

## Nominated representatives

While you are living in an aged care home you may wish to authorise a person to be your nominated representative, to represent you in your dealings with DVA. A nominated representative can be a partner, adult relative, trustee, agent or legal representative. You can also choose to nominate an organisation, such as an aged care home, that receives your payments. You also need to nominate a contact person within that organisation.

There are four different levels of permission you can give to your nominated representative permitted to enquire, permitted to act, permitted to act (health) and permitted to receive payment. For more information visit [dva.gov.au/representative](https://dva.gov.au/representative), or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

Any nominated representative arrangement you make with us is only applicable to your DVA business. Other government departments and organisations may have a different process.

## Supported decision-making

As a resident of an aged care home, you can nominate one or more people to assist you with decision-making. This person or people can help you by promoting your personal, cultural and social wellbeing to enable you to make decisions about your life and your care.

Supported decision-making helps you to be involved and to maintain the capacity to make your own decisions for as long as possible. Supported decision-making also means you are informed about aspects of your care, so you can consider the pros and cons before making an informed choice about your care.





## Advance care planning

Advance care planning involves planning for your future health care. It enables you to make some decisions now about the health care you would or would not like to receive if you were to become seriously ill and unable to communicate your preferences or make treatment decisions.

Advance care planning can empower and prepare you, your loved ones, carers and healthcare professionals for important healthcare decisions in the future. This approach can reduce anxiety and improve outcomes.

Ideally, advance care planning will result in your preferences being documented in a plan known as an advance care directive and the appointment of a substitute decision-maker to help ensure your preferences are respected.

Everyone should consider advance care planning, regardless of your age or health. Ideally, you should start planning when you're healthy. Start a conversation today with your family and your aged care home about advance care planning.

For more information or to request a printed starter pack visit [advancecareplanning.org.au](http://advancecareplanning.org.au) or call **1300 208 582** Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm (AEST).

## End of life arrangements, care and conversations

As you age and your needs change it is important to consider your end-of-life arrangements and who will manage your affairs if you no longer have the capacity to make decisions about your personal finances, medical and health decisions. This may also be a good time to set up or update your will as your circumstances may have changed following your move into an aged care home.

As the end of your life approaches you may want to consider having conversations with those you love about your wishes. These conversations can be valuable and can make your loved ones feel more assured, confident and comfortable about following your wishes and can advocate appropriately if they need to.

For more information on setting up a will, enduring power of attorney arrangements and funeral planning, DVA has created ***Planning Ahead – A guide to putting your affairs in order – preparing for and coping with bereavement***. This book is available through DVA at [dva.gov.au/publications](http://dva.gov.au/publications).



## 2. Accessing DVA supports and services

After you move into an aged care home you continue to be eligible for support through your DVA Veteran Card.

These services may be on top of the services and supports provided to you by your aged care home as part of your care plan.

Your aged care home is funded to support you with your clinically assessed needs. However, there are some services and supports provided to veterans and war widow(er)s that are beyond those provided and funded by your aged care home. These may be funded by DVA, if you meet the eligibility requirements. The information provided here is general information, and you may need to check with DVA what additional support might be available.

It is important if you are accessing any DVA services and supports these are detailed in the care plan you develop with your aged care team.

### Veterans' Supplement in Residential Care

If you have a DVA accepted mental health condition, you or your nominated representative can agree for your Australian Government subsidised aged care home to receive the Veterans' Supplement. This Supplement is to ensure veterans with service-related mental health conditions get appropriate access to aged care homes.

When you agree to this arrangement, you are consenting to certain information being disclosed to the aged care home. The information provided is limited and no details of your accepted mental health condition will be disclosed to the aged care home or their team. You do not need to apply or undergo an assessment for DVA to pay the Supplement to your aged care home. War widow(er)s and dependants are not eligible for the Supplement.

For more information on the Veterans' Supplement visit the DVA website – [dva.gov.au/agedcaresupplement](https://dva.gov.au/agedcaresupplement) or call DVA on **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.





## Aids and equipment

### Accessing customised or personalised equipment

DVA clients living in an aged care home who have a clinical need can access customised or personalised equipment through DVA's Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP).

Your aged care home is funded to provide you with standard and non-standard aids and equipment to meet your needs.



**DVA does fund** customised products for eligible veterans and war widow(er)s living in an aged care home. An example of this is a shower chair customised or personalised for a resident with an amputated leg.

**Customised products** include:

- a custom-made product to meet the specific care needs of an individual resident.
- an advanced model of a product with extra features which are needed to meet assessed care needs (when a lower specification model that meets the definition of a standard or non-standard product is also available).
- a product prescribed by a suitable health provider to meet a client's clinical need that is beyond the scope of what the aged care home is funded to provide.

A customised product differs significantly to the standard normally provided. The product is not able to be shared or used by other residents, as it has personalised features/functionality.



**DVA does not fund** items aged care homes are funded to provide including:

- **Standard** – fit-for-purpose “off the shelf” product chosen by the aged care home which is suitable for use by the general resident population. An example of this is a shower chair.
- **Non-standard** – fit-for-purpose “off-the-shelf” product chosen by the aged care home which differs to the standard normally provided, but which does not have the personalised features/functionality of a customised product. An example of this is a bariatric shower chair – a shower chair for larger residents.  
The non-standard product is required to meet the particular needs of an individual resident (as assessed by a health professional) but is reusable for caring for other residents who have similar needs.



## How to access customised or personalised products

If you have a clinical need for a customised or personalised product/s you must be assessed by a suitable health provider. Talk with your GP and aged care team about your needs.

Your prescribing health provider is expected to speak to your aged care home first to check if they are responsible for supplying a particular aid or appliance. If the aged care home is not responsible, the prescribing health provider should contact DVA General Enquiries [RAPGeneral.Enquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:RAPGeneral.Enquiries@dva.gov.au) or call the Provider Hotline on **1800 550 457** to check your eligibility.

Your prescribing health provider should also check the RAP in Residential Aged Care List ([dva.gov.au/rap-residential-aged-care-list](http://dva.gov.au/rap-residential-aged-care-list)) published on the DVA website. This is a guide for aged care homes and prescribing health providers on items that may be supplied through the RAP National Schedule of Equipment to DVA clients living in residential aged care.

If you have a clinical need for an item that the residential aged care facility is unable to provide, or the item is **personalised** or **customised**, DVA will consider providing this on a case-by-case basis through prior approval.



If you have a need for customised or personalised products.

Talk with your GP and they may refer you for an assessment.

Assessing health provider confirms your eligibility and suitability with aged care home and DVA.

The assessing health provider prescribes and orders the item.

## Relocated DVA equipment

DVA clients who have been provided with aids and equipment through the RAP may relocate the equipment, if the aged care provider agrees.

If your aged care home has agreed to you relocating and using your DVA supplied equipment then you need to advise the supplier of your new address, so they know where to provide ongoing repairs and maintenance, if required. DVA will continue to fund any repairs and maintenance on this equipment.

If you have moved into your new home with DVA supplied equipment and discovered your aged care home already supplies it, you may be able to return the DVA equipment by:

- contacting the contracted supplier by calling them (a sticker with their details is usually on the item) and seeing if the item can be returned then arranging a time for them to pick it up or
- calling DVA on **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** or email [RAPGeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:RAPGeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au).



## Hearing devices

Nearly three in four people over the age of 70 have some degree of hearing loss, and while it is a common part of ageing, it can also have a harmful effect on your health and wellbeing. As a DVA client, you may be eligible for a range of hearing assistance, advice and high-quality devices through the Hearing Services Program, DVA's Rehabilitation Appliances Program and/or the Tinnitus Program.

Most hearing professionals are familiar with these programs and providing services to DVA clients. You can learn more about your eligibility to access hearing loss services, as well as make an appointment with a hearing provider in your local area, by visiting the Department of Health and Aged Care website [hearing.services.gov.au](https://hearing.services.gov.au) or by email [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au) or calling: **1800 500 726**.

***The veteran's guide to better hearing*** also provides step-by-step and comprehensive guidance for veterans and their families on the hearing devices and treatments available to assist them improve their hearing and quality of life. Visit the DVA website to download or order a copy at [dva.gov.au/ac](https://dva.gov.au/ac).

For more information on hearing visit [dva.gov.au/hearing](https://dva.gov.au/hearing) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

## Medications and wound care

### The Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

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The Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) provides eligible people with access to a wide range of medicines and wound care items at a concession rate. The RPBS may help you access more items than are available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

You may get your prescribed medicines and wound care items at the concession rate if they are available through the RPBS; you have an assessed clinical need for the item; and you have a:

- Veteran Gold Card
- Veteran White Card and the script is for a condition covered by your Veteran White Card
- Veteran Orange Card.

You will still be asked to pay the normal concessional co-payment for your medications under the RPBS, just as you did before entering an aged care home.

For more information visit [dva.gov.au/medicine](https://dva.gov.au/medicine).



## Managing medications

Aged care homes are expected to manage your medications for you, which includes assisting you with ordering, reordering and reminding and helping you take your medications.

Medications can make you more comfortable, keep you safe and healthy, and help you to live longer. Sometimes these medications can have side effects, or they don't work as well as expected. You and your nominated representatives have the right to be provided with information about your medication, including how it works and how it may impact your quality of life.

You have the right to say no to a recommended medication option and health care and aged care professionals, families, friends and carers must respect and support your choices.

It is important you are aware of the medication you are taking and feel comfortable talking with your treating team about the medication, any side effects and the risks of not taking the medication prescribed for you.

### Questions to ask about your medication.

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Next time you visit your GP, take this list of questions with you. These questions are also helpful for reviewing medication that you're taking.

- what am I taking?
- how should it help me?
- what are the side effects?
- what could happen if I don't take it?
- what are the alternatives (including non-medication alternatives)?
- when can my medication be reviewed?

### Informed choice

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An informed choice is when you make a decision about your medical care, or the care of your loved one, with the knowledge and understanding of the benefits and potential risks involved.

It is both your right and your role to choose which option is right for you, or for the person you care for, and to commence or discontinue a medication. Informed choice means being able to:

- understand the reason for the medication
- understand the available options to you (including not taking the medication)
- understand the risks and benefits of those options
- come to a considered decision, without any undue pressure from others
- communicate your decision
- organise a review of your treatment plan regularly
- have ongoing discussions about your medication.





You can say 'no' and choose not to take a medication. You can also change your mind at any time, even after you have started to take a medication.

For more information and resources visit the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) website [opan.org.au/infromation/medication-its-your-choice/](https://opan.org.au/infromation/medication-its-your-choice/) or call the OPAN on **1800 700 600** for free, independent and confidential advocacy services to help you raise and address issues around aged care.

## Deciding if a medication is right for you

The following is a process to help you discuss medication with your doctor and make informed choices around your medication. It may also be helpful for you to consider medication you are already taking or want reviewed.



## Diabetes products

If you are living with diabetes you can continue to access a range of equipment and products to assist you in the management of your diabetes. Products can be obtained through the RAP. For more information on accessing these diabetes products visit [dva.gov.au/diabetes](https://dva.gov.au/diabetes) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

Alternatively, you can also continue to get a limited range of diabetes consumables through the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) through arrangements your aged care home has with their local pharmacy. DVA funds the co-payments for Veteran Gold Card holders, Veteran White Card holders with diabetes as an accepted condition, Pensioner Concession Card Holders and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders. For more information visit the NDSS website [ndss.com.au/](https://ndss.com.au/) or call their helpline **1800 637 700**.





## Medical Grade Footwear

The Medical Grade Footwear (MGF) Program provides eligible DVA clients with access to footwear when readily available everyday footwear cannot be used or modified due to your foot structure or clinical reasons. The MGF Program includes related services, such as footwear modification and repairs.

MGF is clinically prescribed to accommodate and/or correct abnormal foot and/or ankle structure or significant deformity. Clients may be prescribed either of the following:

- ready-made extra depth and/or width MGF listed on DVA's MGF Register
- custom made MGF which meet DVA's technical specifications, is manufactured by a person or organisation contracted to DVA and has been approved by DVA for supply.

If you are a Veteran Gold Card holder, you will need to be assessed as having a clinical need by an appropriate health prescriber and your foot structure must meet the criteria for MGF.

If you are a Veteran White Card holder, you must have an assessed clinical need due to a disability accepted by DVA as being related to your service and your foot structure must meet the criteria for MGF.

DVA will not pay for MGF if the provision is for any of the following:

- inappropriate styles of shoes (for example, runners/sneakers, slippers, slip-on style shoes, open heeled sandals/shoes or orthotic sandals or shoes)
- shoes provided for the sole purpose of accommodating orthoses. Your provider should be able to fit orthoses in appropriate off-the-shelf footwear.

For more information visit [dva.gov.au/MGF](https://dva.gov.au/MGF) or call DVA on **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

## Stoma products

The Stoma Appliance Scheme provides free stoma appliances to people who have a stoma (ostomates), through their stoma associations. All the items subsidised under the scheme are listed on the Stoma Appliance Scheme Schedule (SASC).

The scheme schedule specifies a maximum monthly quantity for each product. If you need more than this limit for a clinical reason, an authorised health professional (stomal therapy nurse, registered nurse, nurse practitioner or registered medical practitioner) can authorise additional supplies using the 'Application form for additional supplies – Clinical'. This authorisation is valid for 6 months. If you have had a stoma for 6 months or more your aged care team can order 2 months' supply of products at a time.

For eligible DVA clients requiring stoma products, DVA funds the annual membership fees to their local stoma associations and the delivery costs for these products.

For information visit the Department of Health and Aged Care website [health.gov.au/stoma](https://health.gov.au/stoma) or call **(02) 6289 2308** or email [stoma@health.gov.au](mailto:stoma@health.gov.au).

## Medical services

Many aged care homes have arrangements with local GPs and other health providers. Depending on your circumstances you may wish to use one of these GPs and other health providers or you can choose to continue seeing your own GP, specialist/s and health providers, if they are still local to you and the aged care home.

It is expected the aged care home's team will help you to make appointments and access a GP, health providers and/or the specialists of your choice. These appointments can be either offsite or at the aged care home.

You can use your Veteran Gold Card to pay for all medical appointments, including admission into hospital. If you are a Veteran White Card holder, you can only use your card to pay for medical appointments, including admission into hospital, when it relates to your DVA accepted condition. For transport to and from offsite medical appointments, Veteran Gold and White Card holders and their travel attendants may access travel assistance through DVA. The aged care home can arrange this for you. If they need help with arranging transport they can call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

### MyMedicare

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This is a Commonwealth Government initiative you may consider registering for to help you stay on top of your health and wellbeing.

MyMedicare builds on the supports provided through Medicare by formalising the relationship you have with your GP. Once you register, your GP will visit you regularly at your aged care home and develop a care plan to help you stay as healthy as possible.

Combining MyMedicare with the additional supports you are eligible for through your Veteran Card, will enable your GP to refer you to allied health services beyond those provided by your aged care home if you clinically require them.

Speak with your GP about registering for MyMedicare or ask your care team to contact your GP's practice.

For more information and frequently asked questions visit [health.gov.au/our-work/mymedicare](https://health.gov.au/our-work/mymedicare) or speak with your GP.





## Dental services

Good oral health is an important part of your overall health. The health of your mouth and teeth can affect your wellbeing and quality of life. Looking after your teeth and mouth every day is an important part of your daily routine.

If you have a Veteran Gold Card, or if your treatment is for a DVA accepted condition and you have a Veteran White Card you can access clinically required dental services including:

- regular check-ups and cleaning (6 monthly)
- prevention of tooth decay
- treatment for cavities
- dentures including re-line (every two years) and replacement as clinically require (usually every 6 years)
- treatments for dental injuries or conditions.

In most cases you won't need to pay for your dental treatment. However, for high-cost items such as bridges and crowns an annual calendar year limit applies and you may need to make a co-payment.

For more information visit [dva.gov.au/dental](https://dva.gov.au/dental) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

## Optical services

Optical services improve your vision. Optical service providers test your eyes and supply you with glasses and other devices.

If you have a Veteran Gold Card, or if your treatment is for a DVA accepted condition and you have a Veteran White Card you may access optical services and products. Eligible clients living in residential aged care over 65 years may have 2 appointments with an optometrist or ophthalmologist every year. DVA will fund one pair of glasses with multifocal lenses or one pair of reading glasses and one pair of distance glasses. Clients can choose any appropriate frames within DVA price limits and quality standards. Check with the optical dispenser which ones DVA will fund. If you choose frames above the price limit DVA will not reimburse you for this extra amount.

For more information visit [dva.gov.au/optical](https://dva.gov.au/optical) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.



## Allied health services

Your aged care home is funded to provide you with access to the allied health care services you require for health and fitness therapy programs. However, sometimes you may have a clinical need for allied health services that are beyond the allied health services the aged care home provides. DVA will fund these allied health services for eligible clients. Your clinical need for additional allied health services may relate to a stay in hospital, a chronic health condition, an injury or a surgery which requires further or ongoing rehabilitation.

An example of when you could access DVA funded allied health for physiotherapy is if your aged care home held only group sessions of physiotherapy and you have a clinical need for regular one-on-one sessions. Your GP will need to prescribe these and include them in your care plan.



The aged care home's team will help you make these appointments with the allied health care provider/s and if transport is required to attend the appointment, they can arrange this with you by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** to check your eligibility for DVA's transport assistance.

Allied health providers include chiropractors, clinical psychologists, diabetes educators, dietitians, exercise physiologists, occupational therapists, orthotists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists, psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers and mental health social workers, orthoptists, and optometrists.

The client has a clinical need for additional allied health support  
e.g. to improve/ maintain mobility and independence.

Referral to allied health provider arranged.

Appointment/s arranged by aged care home staff.

If appointment/s are off site, transport and attendant arranged  
for client by aged care home.

Client attends appointments.





## Travelling for treatment

DVA clients and their travel attendant may be eligible to access funded transport assistance to and from medical treatment. Transport assistance varies depending on your eligibility and if the medical treatment is approved by DVA.

A travel attendant (normally a partner, family member or friend) must be responsible, competent and physically able to assist the client to travel for treatment. They do not need any medical qualifications or training.

**Note:** DVA cannot pay the salary or cost for a health care worker or qualified nurse to assist the client to travel for treatment.

### Booked Car with Driver service

DVA may arrange taxi transport for eligible clients. Your aged care team will need to call the Booked Car with Driver (BCWD) service on **1800 550 455** to check your eligibility and to make a booking.

### Reimbursement

For DVA clients not able to access BCWD, you can receive full reimbursement of taxi, community transport, public transport fares, or an allowance for private vehicle travel, meals and accommodation when travelling for approved treatment.

For assistance with claiming a reimbursement, please call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** or your nominated representative can visit the local Veterans' Access Network (VAN).

### Emergency and non-emergency ambulance

DVA will pay for ambulance transport in a medical emergency for Veteran Gold or White Card holders in relation to a DVA accepted condition.

DVA will pay for non-emergency ambulance transport in specific circumstances when medically required.

**For more information** on travel assistance, including access to BCWD, ambulance and information on lodging transport claims, go to the DVA website [dva.gov.au/TFT](https://dva.gov.au/TFT) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.



## 3. Accessing mental health support

### Behaviour support plans

A behaviour support plan can form part of your care plan you develop with your aged care home. The aim of a behaviour support plan is to improve the quality of care provided by your care team by reducing and potentially eliminating the use of restrictive practices in aged care. Effective behaviour support planning is built on an understanding of you and your unique experiences and your changing needs.

The plan sets out information for your care team, so they understand your background, any assessments you have had, your behaviours, changes that have occurred in your behaviour, triggers or causes which happen before certain types of behaviour. The plan also details approaches your care team can take when these behaviours happen.

You or your decision maker must consent to the approaches in the plan.

To find out more about behaviour support plans visit [dementia.com.au/behaviour](https://dementia.com.au/behaviour) or call Dementia Support Australia on their 24/7 helpline **1800 699 799**.

### Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling is a free and confidential 24/7, nation-wide counselling and mental health support to eligible serving and ex-serving members, and their families.

Visit the website [openarms.gov.au](https://openarms.gov.au) or call **1800 011 046** to access information, self-help tools, mobile apps, and advice about how to seek professional help.

**Note:** Open Arms is unable to support people with dementia or other forms of cognitive decline.



### Non-Liability Health Care

If you have completed at least one day of continuous full-time service in the ADF you can access mental health treatment fully funded by DVA under Non-Liability Health Care. It doesn't matter when you served, how long you served, or the nature of your service. This mental health treatment is also available to reserve members who have rendered border protection or disaster relief service, or who were involved in a serious service-related training accident.

For more information visit [dva.gov.au/mental-health-care](https://dva.gov.au/mental-health-care). To check if you are eligible phone **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** or email [nlhc@dva.gov.au](mailto:nlhc@dva.gov.au).

### GP referral

If you are not eligible for Non-Liability Health Care, a GP may provide treatment or refer you to



a Medicare-subsidised psychologist, psychiatrist, mental health social worker or mental health occupational therapist.

## Other support services

### **Lifeline Australia**

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Provides free support services if you are in crisis and need to talk to someone.

Call **13 11 14** or visit [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au).

### **1800 RESPECT**

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Provides 24-hour counselling services to help you cope with sexual assault or violence.

Call **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)** or visit [1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au).

### **Head to Health**

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Head to Health provides resources and links to a variety of websites and apps to support mental health and wellbeing.

Call **1800 595 212** or visit [headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/support-for/veterans](https://headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/support-for/veterans).

### **Ex-service organisations**

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Connect with an ESO in your local area. These organisations may be able to provide you with support and resources.

Visit [dva.gov.au/ESO](https://dva.gov.au/ESO).

### **Relationships Australia**

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Offers a broad range of services to individuals, families and communities across the country such as counselling, mediation, and family dispute resolution. Contact your state-based Relationships Australia service.

Call **1300 364 277** or visit [relationships.org.au/contact/](https://relationships.org.au/contact/).



## 4. Staying connected

Moving into an aged care home can be a challenging time for you and your family. There may be times when you may feel anxious, sad or angry. You may be troubled by memories, not sleeping well or having difficulties relating to other residents, your carers, support staff or family and friends.

It is normal to have these feelings, or to experience problems after stressful events or during stressful periods in your life. Moving into aged care can be a very stressful time for most people. There are benefits to you taking action to manage your mental health if you notice an issue or any changes in your feelings or behaviour.

### Connecting to the veteran community

Staying connected is very important and maintaining friendships or connections to family and community can be difficult when you move into an aged care home. The following are available to you, if you need them.

#### Ex-service organisations

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As a member of the veteran community, you may invite representatives from an ESO to visit you in your aged care home. The home staff should be able to help you, or your family get in touch with your local ESO. You will need to give the person making contact permission to give out your personal details as they cannot provide them to the ESO without your permission. Alternatively, your family or friends can contact a local ESO and make the necessary arrangements.

For more information go to [dva.gov.au/ESO](https://dva.gov.au/ESO) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

#### Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme

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The Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) is available for all Australians living in government-funded residential aged care. If you are feeling lonely or isolated, a network member can match you up with a suitable volunteer in the area who will visit you regularly.

For more information and to request a visit, go to [health.gov.au/acvvs](https://health.gov.au/acvvs).

#### Recreational Transport Allowance

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If you have a specific severe disability accepted as service-related you may be able to receive the Recreational Transport Allowance. This provides financial assistance for your transport to recreational activities. The rate payable is determined by your accepted disabilities.

For more information go [dva.gov.au/RT](https://dva.gov.au/RT) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

#### Engage

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Engage is an online portal for current, transitioning, and former ADF members; their families, and/or those involved in their support can use to help locate support services. Engage simplifies the process of accessing support by providing information on not-for-profit services available from a range of service providers.

For more information go to [engage.forcenet.gov.au/](https://engage.forcenet.gov.au/) or call the All-hours Support Line on **1800 628 036**.





## Veteran news subscriptions

### Vetaffairs

Vetaffairs is DVA's official newspaper for Australia's veteran community. It is provided free as either a printed or digital version and is published three times a year.

Visit the DVA website to view the latest edition [dva.gov.au/newsroom/vetaffairs](http://dva.gov.au/newsroom/vetaffairs).

To register for a subscription complete the digital form here [dva.gov.au/vetaffairs-subs](http://dva.gov.au/vetaffairs-subs) or email [vetaffairs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vetaffairs@dva.gov.au) to nominate your preferred version (printed or digital), the name of the aged care home, the number of copies you require and your postal address/email address for delivery.

You can unsubscribe at any time by emailing [vetaffairs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vetaffairs@dva.gov.au) with your name and address and publication you wish to unsubscribe to or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.



### DVA News

DVA's e-News is an electronic newsletter emailed to subscribers. It is published at the beginning of every month and comprises articles published on the latest news for veterans webpage on the DVA website.

Subscribe to DVA e-News by visiting [dva.gov.au/vetaffairs-subs](http://dva.gov.au/vetaffairs-subs) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

You can unsubscribe at any time by emailing [vetaffairs@dva.gov.au](mailto:vetaffairs@dva.gov.au) with your name and address and publication you wish to unsubscribe from.

### Anzac Portal

The Anzac Portal acknowledges and remembers those who have served Australia. This monthly newsletter is for those passionate about Australia's military history.

Subscribe to the newsletter by visiting [anzacportal.dva.gov.au/about-us/subscribe](http://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/about-us/subscribe) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

### Defence newspapers

Defence newspapers: Navy News, Army News and Air Force News are published fortnightly for the information of ADF members.

Print copies can be posted to all former ADF members, families of current members, Defence welfare organisations and those with an interest in Defence.

For digital versions and to subscribe visit [defence.gov.au/news-events/defence-newspapers](http://defence.gov.au/news-events/defence-newspapers).

## 5. Addressing concerns

As a resident of an aged care home, you have the right to receive safe, high quality care and services and to always be treated with dignity and respect. Good quality care requires respect, honest communication and teamwork from everyone involved.

### Your aged care rights

The Charter of Aged Care Rights sets out the 14 rights that protect people receiving aged care. Everyone receiving aged care services has the same rights, regardless of the type of care.

Your rights, and how your provider will support them, should be included in your resident agreement with your aged care home. You should be provided a signed copy of this for your reference.

#### **As a person using aged care, I have the right to:**

1. safe and high quality care and services
2. be treated with dignity and respect
3. have my identity, culture, and diversity valued and supported
4. live without abuse and neglect
5. be informed about my care and services in a way I understand
6. access all information about myself, including information about my rights, care and services
7. have control over and make choices about my care, and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk
8. have control over, and to make decisions about, the personal aspects of my daily life, financial affairs and possessions
9. my independence
10. be listened to and understood
11. have a person of my choice, including an aged care advocate, support me or speak on my behalf
12. complain free from reprisal, and to have my complaints dealt with fairly and promptly
13. personal privacy and to have my personal information protected
14. exercise my rights without it adversely affecting the way I am treated.

The new Aged Care Act introduced on 1 July 2025, introduced a statement of rights, which outlines the rights of older people when accessing aged care services. These rights are designed to put older people and their needs at the centre of the aged care system. The statement of rights includes the right for every individual to:

- maintain independence, autonomy, empowerment and freedom of choice have equitable access
- receive quality and safe funded aged care services
- have their privacy and personal information protected
- experience person-centred communication and raise issues without the fear of reprisal
- access advocates, maintain significant persons and stay socially connected.

For more information visit [health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/rights](https://health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/rights).





## National Aged Care Advocacy Program

The National Aged Care Advocacy Program provides free, independent and confidential information and advocacy support to older people, their family and carers. The program is delivered by OPAN which has member organisations in every state and territory.

All older Australians receiving or seeking government-funded aged care services, their families, and carers are eligible to access this service.

### **An aged care advocate can support you to:**

- understand and exercise your aged care rights
- understand your aged care options and make informed decisions
- have your voice heard and views and wishes considered.

### **It may be useful to engage an aged care advocate when you:**

- are finding it difficult to access aged care services
- have a concern about your aged care services
- don't feel like your aged care service is listening to you or meeting your needs
- would like support to talk to your aged care service about your concerns or make a formal complaint.

Aged care advocates can also deliver free rights-based information sessions to both aged care residents and their families and aged care staff.

If you're an older person and want to find out more, visit the OPAN website [open.org.au/](https://open.org.au/) or call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on **1800 600 700**.



## Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) is the national end-to-end regulator of aged care services focusing on delivering a world-class sector that safeguards the welfare and rights of older Australians. Its vision is for older Australians to trust and have confidence that aged care services protect and enhance their safety, health and quality of life.

Everyone has the right to safe, compassionate care. ACQSC preserve this right and ensures that people who use aged care are treated with dignity and respect.

### ACQSC aims to:

- build confidence and trust in aged care
- empower people who use aged care
- support providers to understand and comply with their obligations and responsibilities
- promote best-practice care and services.

### ACQSC is responsible for:

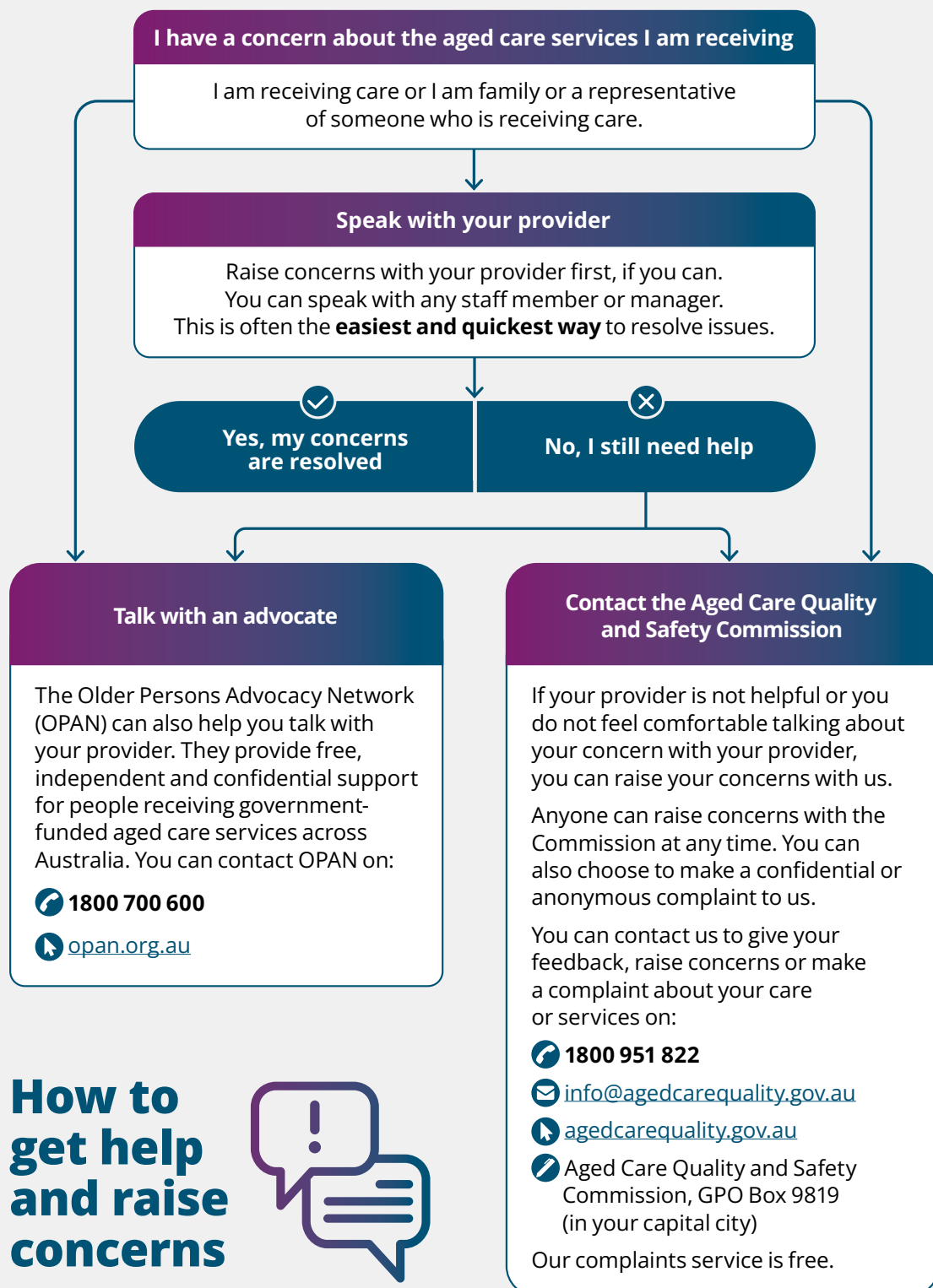
- resolving complaints about services
- approving providers to deliver aged care services
- administering the Serious Incidents Response Scheme
- reducing the use of restrictive practices
- accrediting residential aged care services
- monitoring and assessing providers' compliance with the Aged Care Quality Standards and other obligations
- taking compliance and enforcement action to compel compliance, when required.

For more information, visit [agedcarequality.gov.au](https://agedcarequality.gov.au) or call **1800 951 822** Monday to Friday between 9am – 5pm (AEST).





## How to get help and raise concerns



## Elder abuse

Elder abuse has been defined by the World Health Organization as ‘a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person’.

Elder abuse can take various forms, including financial, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect. No older person should be subjected to any form of abuse. Elder abuse is a crime.

Abuse can be deliberate or unintentional. It can occur once or many times. Abuse does not have to be physical – misusing an older person’s money or threatening to restrict access to friends and family can cause immeasurable and lasting damage to an individual and their family. It can also lead to older people needing more help from the health and aged care systems, government benefits, and other services.

### Five commonly recognised forms of abuse of older people

**Physical abuse** is an act that causes physical pain or injury to an older person. It can include, but is not limited to, actions such as hitting, pushing or kicking. Inappropriate use of drugs or physical restraints is also an example of physical abuse.

**Financial abuse** is the misuse or theft of an older person’s money or assets. It can include but is not limited to, behaviours such as using finances without permission, using a legal document such as an enduring power of attorney for purposes outside what it was originally signed for, withholding care for financial gain, or selling or transferring property against a person’s wishes.

**Sexual abuse** is sexual behaviour without a person’s consent. It includes sexual interactions and non-contact acts of a sexual nature.

**Psychological or emotional abuse** is an act that causes emotional pain or injury to an older person. It can include insulting or threatening a person, acts of humiliation or disrespect, and controlling behaviours including confining or isolating a person.

**Neglect** is the failure to meet a person’s basic needs such as food, housing and essential medical care.

**Cultural Abuse** in a First Nations context, cultural abuse can occur where service system interventions require a person to move away from Country to receive, for example, healthcare, or where a person is denied access to culture and connection to their family and community. It can also be linked to cultural obligations around sharing and maintaining family bonds, which can increase the risk of financial abuse or humbugging.



## Elder abuse phone line

**1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374)** is a free phone number that automatically redirects callers seeking information or advice on elder abuse to their state or territory phone service.

Elder abuse phone lines are not crisis support services, and operating hours and services vary across jurisdictions.

**If you require immediate assistance in an emergency or life-threatening situation, contact Triple Zero (000).**

If you feel comfortable, you can talk with the nursing staff or manager of your aged care home or a trusted family member or friend.

To raise concerns about your aged care support visit [agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint](https://agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint) or call **1800 951 822**.

## More information

For more information on the continued support you might be eligible to receive from DVA while in residential aged care:

- Call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**
- Visit [dva.gov.au](https://dva.gov.au)
- Email [generalenquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:generalenquiries@dva.gov.au)





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Page 7 – Australian War Memorial Photography Library: photo – Last Post Ceremony commemorating Private Charles Roland Bird with 98 year old VIP WWII Veteran LAC John McKenzie in attendance 29/09/2022 (AWM2022.4.133.24)

Page 15 – Deciding if a medication is right for you flowchart – OPAN Australia

Page 29 – Addressing concerns flowchart – Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

RSL LifeCare residents and staff.

The Core Advisory Group to the Department of Veterans' Affairs assisted with the development of this booklet.

## Glossary

**Allied health services** – Therapeutic services provided by professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and social workers to support the wellbeing of residents.

**Australian National Aged Care Classification** – AN-ACC is an independent assessment used to determine your care needs and the amount of subsidy the Australian Government will pay the aged-care home for your care.

**Care plan** – A personalised plan of care that outlines the services and support a resident requires based on their health, preferences and goals. This is developed by the healthcare providers (and families, if applicable).

**Care worker/carer/aged care team** – A trained staff member or team responsible for assisting residents with their daily needs, including personal care, medication, management and companionship.

**Medication management** – The process of ensuring that medications are correctly prescribed, dispensed and administered, including monitoring for side effects and interactions.

**My Aged Care** – A government service that provides information and access to aged care services. It includes assessments, eligibility, determinations and referrals.

**Nominated representative** – A nominated representative is a person authorised to represent a client in dealings with DVA. The client can choose who they wish to represent them and scope of their dealing with DVA. They can give limited permission to discuss a particular topic or full permission.

**Palliative care** – A form of medical care focused on providing comfort and relief for individuals with serious, chronic or terminal illnesses.

**Personal care** – Assistance with daily self-care tasks such as bathing, dressing, grooming, eating and toileting.

**Residential aged care home/facility** – This is a term used by some other government agencies. It means aged care home.

**Treating doctor** – The term treating doctor refers to medical doctors, GPs, local medical officers and specialists.

**Veterans' Supplement in Residential Care** – Available to residential aged care providers who care for veterans with service-related mental health conditions.



