



When a loved one is ageing and their care needs increase beyond what their family, friends and home care providers can offer, their alternative is to move into a residential aged care facility.

Residential aged care facilities can offer 24-hour care with staff onsite to support people with complex or high care needs. We are seeing people moving into residential aged care much later in life than previously, mainly for 'end of life' care, those who have very high care needs or due to financial constraints of needing more care than they can afford.

When faced with the possibility of moving a loved one into an aged care facility, the process can often be daunting and difficult. Here are some simple tips to help you choose a good residential aged care facility.

- Visit the site and ask to see the facilities and features.
- Who are the owners and the senior staff members? What is their experience in managing aged care facilities and individual customer needs? Do your due diligence and read reports, recommendations and even ask for references.
- Meet the staff members who will manage the care of your loved one. Can you communicate with them easily? What is the process to speak to them about care concerns? Do you share the same standards of care?
- Do they have the same values as you and your loved ones?
- How many residents are there at the facility? Do they have enough staff on every shift to meet the needs of all the residents?
- Is there always a Registered Nurse or General Practitioner available?

- What services are in place for medication management? Is it just prompting or assistance with medications or complete management. Do they organise medication with the General Practitioner and pick it up, or is it managed by the family?
 - Are there overnight staff skilled to meet the care needs of your loved one?
 - What clinical services/equipment do they have on site to manage relevant medical issues? If there is a medical emergency, what is the procedure?
 - Does the facility have all the services required for optimal care? E.g. carers, psychologists, transport, visiting clinical staff, podiatrists, physiotherapists, diversional therapists.
 - Are pets allowed? What are the procedures for having a pet?
 - How is the residents spending money managed?
 - How secure is the facility? What safety measures are in place? How do they manage wandering residents?
 - What does the meal plan look like? Is it nutritious and fresh? Does it cater to the taste of your loved one?
 - How much is the monthly fee? Does this include all the fees or are there additional out of pocket expenses?

Choosing a residential care facility can be daunting. It is recommended to try a facility for respite care first and see how your loved one manages that environment. If they appear settled and happy, that's a good sign they would settle in quickly as a permanent resident.

There is a lot to consider before making a choice about which facility best meets the care needs of your loved one.

These days there are several websites and forums providing useful information about previous or current customers experience with aged care facilities. In addition to visiting several facilities and viewing the premises, asking the right questions can help you make the right choice for your loved one.

Contributor



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