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Am I a carer?

People become carers in many different ways. Sometimes they start helping someone out bit by bit. Sometimes it happens suddenly, because of an accident or illness. If you are a carer there is support to help you in your caring role.

Being a carer

Carers can be family members or friends. They can be parents, children, siblings, grandparents or neighbours. They can come from any background. They can live in the city or the bush.

Carers can be any age. Some carers are children. Children and young adults (under 25) are called 'young carers'. There is specialised help and support available for young carers.

Some carers look after another person 24 hours a day. They help with all sorts of things, like feeding, bathing, dressing, helping go to the toilet, lifting and moving, and helping with medicines.

Other carers look after people who are fairly independent but might need someone to help with everyday tasks such as banking, transport, shopping and housework.

You might not be the only person who provides care for someone and you may not provide care each day. Every situation is different.

What the legislation says

The Australian Government's Carer Recognition Act 2010 says a carer is someone who provides care and support for a relative or friend who:

- has a disability
- has a mental health problem
- has a medical problem (including an illness that's gone on for a long time, or an illness that's expected to end in death)
- is frail aged

Some state and territory laws are based on this act, and others are not. But all of them are similar.

Carers can get help and support from the government and other organisations. This can include help to make your life easier, including financial help.

Who is not a carer

You are not considered to be a carer if you are employed to look after someone, if you work as a volunteer for an organisation, or if you are doing work experience as part of a course. For example, a 'home care worker' is not the same as a carer.

Planning for an emergency situation

Emergencies happen when you least expect them. You might get sick, have an accident or have to leave home suddenly to see family or friends. No-one wants emergencies to happen and they can be even more stressful if you happen to care for someone.

If you are caring for someone, it makes sense to plan for an emergency. Who could replace you? Would they know what to do?

Having a plan in place can help you have confidence that if something goes wrong, the person you care for will still be looked after.

There is a good way to do this - you can make an emergency care plan.

What is an emergency care plan?

An emergency care plan is a folder or a piece of paper with all the important information in one place. The idea is to make it easy for someone to take over from you in a hurry.

Your emergency care plan should include:

- general information about the person you care for
- their medicines
- what they usually eat and drink
- what care they need
- emergency contacts including family and health professionals
- a list of the regular support services they receive.

It also helps to include information about important documents such as wills, guardianships and powers of attorney so that anyone stepping in can fully understand the legal and financial situation.

It can be a good idea to ask people close to you if they could take over your caring role in an emergency. Make sure they understand and agree to the level of commitment and types of tasks that would be asked of them in an emergency.

The Australian Government provides an emergency care kit. You can also contact your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre (CRCC) on 1800 052 222 for help completing an emergency care plan.

Where should I keep my emergency care plan?

You might want to give a copy of your emergency care plan to each of your emergency contacts. You may also want to give a copy to a close family member or friend, your doctor, service provider or anybody else who may need to know what to do.

SUPPORT PACK FOR CARERS

You should keep the original plan where it is easy to see and to take a copy with you if you travel away from home with the person you care for.

What is a Carer Emergency Card?

A Carer Emergency Card can be kept in your wallet and lets people know that you care for someone. This card contains the contact details of people who have your emergency care plan and anyone else who can help the person you care for if something happens to you.

The Australian Government emergency care kit includes a Carer Emergency Card.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Connecting with other carers

One way to help cope with the challenges or isolation you might feel as a carer is to join a carer support group. There are general groups and specific ones catering for carers of people with particular illnesses, injuries, disabilities or chronic conditions.

Why join a carer support group?

If you feel isolated or need help coping, joining a carer support group might be a good option. What is spoken about in each group is confidential so you can feel comfortable to discuss personal situations.

Being part of a group can help you feel understood. The right group can give you practical and emotional support and let you share experiences. It can be good to talk to people who have shared similar experiences. Joining a group may also help you to:

- discover new information
- go to education or training workshops
- join in activities
- go on relaxing outings.

Some groups also advocate for the rights of carers and people with specific conditions or disabilities.

Groups are free and often meet regularly, usually in a member's house or public place, such as a community hall or hospital.

General or specific carer groups

You can join a general support group that caters for all carers. These are available across the country.

Another option is to join one that is specific to your situation. For example, there are special groups for parents, grandparents or young carers.

Some groups cater for just men or women or carers from a particular language, religious or cultural background. There are also carer groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Other groups are aimed at carers looking after people with particular illnesses or disabilities, such as brain injuries, Alzheimer's disease, cancer or autism.

What if you cannot attend meetings?

Some groups offer telephone support or online forums where carers can connect with others in similar situations and offer tips, information and emotional support to each other.

More information

Carers Australia and the Network of Carer Associations can provide information on carer support groups and ways to connect with other carers. To contact the carer association in your state or territory, call 1800 242 636.

There are also short-term counselling services provided by professional counsellors to assist carers with emotional support. These services are available in person (face-to-face), by telephone or in a group through the National Carer Counselling Program.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Health and wellbeing

When you're caring for someone else, it's easy to put your own needs last. But it's important to look after yourself. This means maintaining healthy habits, such as a balanced diet and getting enough exercise.

Healthy habits

When you look after your physical health, you're more likely to feel better mentally, cope better with caring for someone and feel more in control of your life.

An important first step to becoming healthier is to identify any unhealthy habits you may have and replacing these with new, more positive ones.

Some of the best choices you can make for good health are:

- getting enough sleep
- doing regular exercise
- eating a balanced diet
- not smoking
- not drinking too much alcohol
- avoiding drugs

It's also important to manage your stress as best you can.

The importance of sleep

Getting enough sleep is vital for both your mental and physical health. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each day, but this can be hard to get, especially if you're caring for someone who has disturbed sleep.

If you're not getting enough sleep, it can be hard for you to concentrate and make good decisions. You might feel irritable, and a lack of sleep can push some people towards depression.

Healthy sleep habits can help improve the sleep you get. There are also other things that may help, depending on whether you or the person you care for has a recognised sleep disorder, such as sleep apnoea.

If you're feeling sleep deprived, your doctor may be able to provide some advice.

Alcohol and your health

Alcohol can harm your physical and mental health. If you drink alcohol, it is a good idea to know the recommended limits. For healthy adults, this means no more than 2 standard drinks a day. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid alcohol altogether.

If you have medical conditions or use either prescription or illegal drugs, then even 2 drinks a day might be too much.

Also, if you drink alcohol, think about whether or not it could affect your ability to properly look after the person you care for.

Department of Health has for more information, including tips on how to manage alcohol intake.

Smoking

If you're a smoker, one of the best things you can do for your health is quit. Smoking can reduce your life span by as much as a decade, lead to many diseases, and kills 2 out of 3 long-term smokers.

If you smoke, the smoke you breathe out called 'second-hand smoke' can damage the health of people around you.

The good news is that as soon as you quit, there are immediate and long-term health benefits, even if you already suffer from smoking-related health problems.

Check the Quit Now website for useful tips and tools to help you quit, or call the Quitline on 13 7848.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Taking a break

Sometimes being a carer can make it hard to find time to socialise with friends and family. You may be too tired or feel you don't have time to have people over, visit others or go on a social outing. Sometimes the person you care for may not want to go out with you, or may not want you to leave them.

It is important to have time for yourself. Respite care may help you to take a break

How caring may change your life

When you are caring for someone, your life can change in many ways. Some of these changes can be positive, but sometimes they might be challenging. Everyone's experience of caring will be different.

The rewards of caring

Many people who care for someone say there are a lot of positive things about being a carer. These can include:

- knowing that you are helping someone who needs you and who you care about
- a strong relationship between you and the person you care for
- a sense of purpose
- personal growth and new skills
- being acknowledged and appreciated by the person you care for, and by family and friends
- sharing the fun times, and being there for successes and improvements.

The challenges of caring

Caring for someone can be hard work and take up a lot of time. It may change your relationship with the person you are caring for, as well as limit your freedom and spontaneity.

Sometimes relationships can be strengthened, but the demands of caring mean that relationships can also become strained. There could be a change in roles too, as you take on more responsibilities.

Carers often have to deal with strong emotions, like guilt, anger and stress. These emotions can spill out into other relationships.

Many carers feel socially isolated. Caring for someone means you might miss out on being with friends and making new friends. Sometimes there is little time to spend with family members or to do things just for yourself.

Caring for someone can affect work and education opportunities. It can also be expensive. You might be entitled to carer payments, even if you are caring and working.

As a carer, your health and wellbeing can suffer. Some health problems, like back problems, anxiety and depression, can be linked directly to caring.

SUPPORT PACK FOR CARERS

It's very important to look after yourself. This includes exercising, eating and sleeping well, and taking time out. Respite services might also be useful for you.

Talking to someone can be good too. This could be a friend, a family member, another carer or someone from a support service. You might also find counselling services useful.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and young carers may also face extra challenges including cultural differences, language barriers, or trying to manage school.

There is a lot of help and support available for carers. You can call Carers Australia's state-based associations on 1800 242 636.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Talking to health professionals

It may not always be easy to talk to doctors, nurses or other health professionals. But it will help both you and the person you care for if you can ask the right questions at the right time.

Who's who in the healthcare system?

You'll know the doctors, nurses and pharmacists you deal with regularly; however there are many other people in the healthcare and mental health systems, such as:

- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- social workers
- psychologists
- dieticians.

Sometimes these people come together in what is known as a multidisciplinary team. The team members work together to provide the best possible care, with each person addressing the area of health they specialise in.

It is good to get to know this team, if you can.

How do I talk to health professionals?

Talking to doctors, nurses and others can be daunting. The most important thing to know is that you have a right to talk to them. You have the right to tell health professionals what you think is important for the person you care for and to ask questions.

Here are some tips:

- Talk to the person you care for about any questions or concerns that they may have about their health.
- Write down a list of questions that you want to ask. Don't be afraid to ask 'stupid' questions – these are often important.
- Write down a list of points you want to tell the health professional.
- Take notes of what they say.
- Ask for an explanation of anything that you don't understand.
- Ask if there are any handouts, websites or other places you can get more information.
- If they can't help with any specific issues, ask who you should contact for more help.

You may also find it helpful to have a friend or family member come to appointments with you for comfort and support, or to remind you of anything you might have forgotten.

Remember, communication is a two-way process, so speak up about your thoughts and concerns. They know some of what you need to know, and you know some of what they need to. It is better for the person you care for if everybody knows everything. *Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>*

What is respite care?

Caring for someone can be a valuable and rewarding experience. It can also be stressful and may leave you feeling emotionally or physically tired. As a carer, you should try to take regular breaks from your caring role.

A caring break can give you time to do everyday activities and might help you deal with stress, recharge and look after yourself a bit. It can also help you continue to provide care.

Respite care

Respite care can allow both you and the person you care for to take a break. You can choose what is best for you and the person you care for.

Respite care can be provided informally by family or friends, or formally by a respite service. Some people may choose respite at home, while others prefer community or centre based services.

Types of respite care

Different types of respite services may be available:

- **In-home respite** - a care worker provides care in the home or may organise to take the person you care for on an outing. In-home respite can also be overnight.
- **Centre-based respite** - held at a centre or club that organises group activities for the person you care for, allowing them to meet other people.
- **Community access respite** - provides activities to encourage a sense of independence in the person you care for by providing social interaction.
- **Residential respite care** - a short stay in a residential care home can be organised for the person you care for.
- **Consumer-directed respite care (CDRC)** - a CDRC package gives you more choice about the type and delivery of respite care.

Short breaks - a few hours or part of a day - are offered by in-home respite and day centres. Longer term breaks - a full day, overnight, a weekend or a few weeks - are offered by day centres, overnight cottages or residential care homes.

Carers often worry about leaving the person they care for. It is important to remember that respite is only for a short period of time and regular breaks may be important for you as a carer.

Planning respite care

Consider planning a break in advance. This can help avoid stress build-up. It can also help to avoid waiting lists that services may have. Emergency respite care may be available if the unexpected happens: a major illness, a bereavement or you need help at short notice.

Costs associated with respite care

Some services are free and others are not. The cost of respite care depends on the care provider, the length and the type of care.

You can contact your nearest Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222 for advice on the types of respite and support available in your area. They may be able to help you find the respite care that best meets the needs of you and the person you care for.

If you need respite due to an emergency, you can call 1800 059 059.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Who can get respite?

Caring for a friend or family member can be rewarding. But being a carer can also be physically, mentally and emotionally tiring and draining. Regular breaks, known as respite, may help relieve stress for the carer and the person receiving care.

What forms of respite care are available?

There may be many ways to get help. The best option for you will depend on your circumstances. There are several types of respite care including:

- **In-home respite care** - provides a respite carer to give support at home - day and night care is possible.
- **Centre-based day respite care** - provided at a centre.
- **Community access respite care** - can include social and activity-based outings.
- **Overnight or weekend respite care** - can be flexible, and can involve in-home care or a short stay with a host family.
- **Residential respite care** - involves a short stay in a live-in care facility.
- **Emergency respite care** - available following an unexpected event such as an illness, and may be available at short notice.

Providers of respite care

Many government and community organisations offer other forms of respite care. For example, informal respite care may be organised with a family member or friend.

Some government-funded and community organisations offer care through camps and activity programs to particular groups, for example, children with disabilities.

Respite care can help frail older people to remain living in their own home.

Some organisations provide respite care that meets the spiritual and cultural needs of people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Eligibility for respite care

Eligibility for respite care depends on the type of care needed and the service provider. For example, some organisations cater specifically for children with disabilities; others cater for older people.

In most cases an assessment will be required to determine your eligibility and the services that best suit you and the person you care for.

If residential care is required, a more in-depth assessment may be conducted by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT)[Opens in a new window](#).

Call your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222 for help to find respite care services that meet your needs.

Why are breaks important?

Caring for someone can be very rewarding, but can also be physically and emotionally tiring.

It's important to take a break and have some time to yourself. It can benefit both you and the person you care for.

When is it useful to take a break?

Consider taking a break if you:

- need to attend an appointment or event
- want a holiday
- need some time for yourself
- are ill
- find tension between you and the person you care for
- feel stressed, tired or burnt out
- need time to attend to other matters.

Planning to take a break can be difficult, particularly if you are concerned about care in your absence. Respite services can provide care for a few hours or a few weeks. However, if you or the person you care for are uncomfortable with respite care, there are other ways of arranging a break.

You may be able to get help from your family, friends or other groups in your community that you know and trust. It's worth asking - you never know.

Managing stress

It can be stressful looking after someone. That stress can come from:

- what you have to do for the person you care for
- trying to balance that with work, family and friends
- strain in the relationship with either the person you care for or with other family members.

Trying to reduce stress is important. If you are feeling stressed, try taking a break so you can have some time to relax.

If you feel anxious or stressed and need someone to talk to, you can phone your state based carer association on 1800 242 636, or for more information read the managing stress page.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

How to get the most out of respite

If you're caring for someone, it can be rewarding, but it can also be tiring. Taking a break can be important.

It helps to plan ahead so you can get the most out of your respite. You might want to consider when and how you will need respite, and what the financial considerations might be.

Why should I plan ahead?

It is not always easy to get the type of respite you want, at the time you want it.

If you can organise it ahead of time, that's good. It gives you a better choice, it's better for the person you care for and it's better for you.

How do I organise respite?

Start by calling your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre (CRCC) on 1800 052 222. They can provide information on respite services to suit you.

CRCCs can also assist with emergency respite if the unexpected should happen; a major illness, a bereavement or if you need help at short notice.

If the person you care for is aged 65 and over, you can contact My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 to find out what services you may be eligible for.

How much will respite cost and can I get any financial support?

The cost of respite varies depending on the type of respite and the respite service provider. Some organisations offer private respite services that you pay for.

Other services may be free or subsidised by government programmes. The CRCC can provide information about respite services and any associated fees you may need to pay.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Life after caring

At some time, your role as a carer might end. This might be when the person you care for recovers, or when they die, or if other people take over the caring role. You may have to adjust to changes and 'rebuild' your life.

Reactions to life after caring

You might feel intense loss, guilt, sadness, grief and stress. You might also feel worried about the future. This is a natural reaction. Grief has no timeline. Grieving can continue for some time, even for many years.

Some people find that physical and emotional exhaustion catches up with them and they might feel unwell for a while.

It's common to be worried about your financial situation changing as well.

Many people feel alone and isolated when caring changes or ends. If the person you care for recovers, you might feel you are no longer needed. If they move into residential care you might feel a loss of control. Adjusting to your changed carer role will take time.

In this case, your caring role isn't over. You might still have a strong sense of responsibility. You could still be providing some physical care and emotional support.

If the person you care for dies, the grief may be overwhelming. It's common for carers to feel guilty and angry.

What happens next?

The time will come when you are ready to think about what to do next. Research shows that many carers give up activities and lose contact with friends and their community. Try to follow your interests, reconnect with friends and family, and make new friends.

You might also consider volunteering, learning something new or going back to work.

If the person you cared for died you may have to take legal steps. Contact Centrelink about bereavement payments and what happens to other benefits, like the carer allowance or carer payment.

More information

The Department of Human Services has information on what to do following a death.

Carers Australia has associations in each state and territory. Call them on 1800 242 636 for advice and support, as well as counselling services.

The Five steps to entry in an aged care home booklet gives a good overview of the process of entering an aged care home. You can ask for free printed versions of the booklet by calling My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.

Source: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

How My Aged Care helps you

My Aged Care helps you find the information you need about aged care services.

This can be as simple as calling the My Aged Care contact centre on 1800 200 422 or reading this website. My Aged Care provides you with information about:

- the different types of aged care services
- eligibility for services
- how we understand your aged care needs and help you find local services to meet your needs - you are able to select your own service provider
- the cost of your aged care services, including fee estimators.

To perform these activities, the contact centre will seek your consent to create a personalised client record. This will hold up to date information on your needs and any services you receive. The client record will reduce the need for you to retell your story to the contact centre, assessors and service providers.

How much does it cost?

Costs for respite care may vary depending on your circumstances and the kind of help you need. The Australian Government subsidises a range of aged care services in Australia. If your personal circumstances allow, it's expected you'll contribute towards the cost of your care if you can afford to do so.

If you receive residential respite care through an aged care home, you won't have to pay an accommodation charge or bond. You also won't have to pay any additional income-tested fees. You will however be asked to pay a basic daily fee and perhaps a booking fee. The booking fee is a prepayment of respite care fees and not an extra payment. The booking fee cannot be more than either a full week's basic daily fee or 25% of the fee for the entire stay, depending on which amount is the lowest.

The maximum basic daily fee for a respite resident is set at 85% of the single basic Age Pension. From 20 September 2016, the single rate of the basic Age Pension is \$797.90 per fortnight, and 85% of the single rate of basic Age Pension is \$678.21 per fortnight or \$48.44 per day.

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Further information on the Age Pension and a full list of current rates is available on the Department of Human Services website.

What you pay is discussed and agreed upon between you and the organisation that delivers your respite services. The rate is set before you receive the relevant services.

Sharon's story

A few weeks ago, Sharon's mum slipped while she was getting out of the bath at home. Unfortunately, she broke her hip and needed surgery. After the surgery, Sharon and her husband talked about having her mum move into their place while she recovered, but with three kids it just wasn't practical.

The hospital helped Sharon organise transition care for her mother in an aged care home, so she could get the care and services she needed. This has given Sharon some time to figure out what type of help her mum will need in the future, as well as how much it's all going to cost.

Alison's story

Alison lives in Western Sydney with her husband and her father. Her son Matthew lives overseas, while her daughter, Jane, lives in Sydney.

Jane has just had her second baby, but her husband left recently, so Alison spends a lot of time looking after her grandchildren as well as her dad. A neighbour who works for the local council suggested Alison look into day respite services for her father, where he can go to a centre and meet new people. Although Alison's father wasn't keen at first, he now enjoys it. It's only a couple of times a week and it means Alison can look after Jane's kids without worrying about her father at the same time.

Counselling and support for carers

It's easy to become isolated or lonely when you're a carer. You may be too busy to keep up with family, friends and people may visit you less often. Sharing your experiences with someone you trust – family, friends, neighbours, other carers or health workers – can help.

How can counselling and support services help me?

Counselling and support services may help you to understand and manage situations, behaviours and relationships that can be a part of being a carer. This help could, in turn, reduce the stress you may be feeling in your caring role, and perhaps help you to continue in this role for longer.

What types of services are available?

Counselling and support services can include:

- providing short-term emotional and psychological support
- offering guidance in your relationship with the person you care for
- helping you to manage situations and challenging behaviours
- offering grief counselling
- providing advice to help protect your rights as a carer.

These services may be provided by qualified professional counsellors or other professionals depending on the type of support you need.

You may also consider using specialist carer information and advice services to support you in your caring role. These services will help you with information about:

- accessing independent aged care advocacy services
- making decisions within your caring role
- planning appropriately for things such as respite (short-term) care.

Where are counselling services delivered?

In most cases, counselling and support services are delivered in community settings, or to you over the telephone. This is called 'phone counselling'.

What about carer support groups?

Carer support groups can also offer you a safe place to talk about your role as a carer. They can put you in touch with other carers who may be experiencing similar things to you so you can share advice and suggestions to support each other.

Carer support groups can sometimes be organised around specific caring roles and the situation of the person you care for. For information about these groups in your area, read about caring for someone with a particular need, or call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.

How can I access grief counselling?

When someone close to you dies you may have trouble coping with the intense feelings of grief. It might be helpful to talk about these feelings with someone from outside your circle of family or friends.

Grief counselling focuses on helping you to understand your grief and to adjust to life after your loss. It can also help you to understand the people around you who may be expressing their grief in different ways. Grief counsellors can also put you in touch with other services in your area that may be able to help.

The following two national support organisations — which have local branches throughout Australia — may also be able to help you cope with your grief:

- The National Association for Loss and Grief Australia (NALAG) is an independent, non-profit organisation. They help individuals, organisations and communities to work through their loss, grief, bereavement and trauma to make sure they are as strong as possible afterwards. A range of links to local resources, education and counselling programs can be found at the NALAG website.
- The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement is another independent, non-profit organisation. It is also the largest provider of grief and bereavement education in Australia. Visit the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement website to find out how they may be able to help you through counselling services, education courses and support information.

What if I feel like I'm not coping?

If you need to talk to someone immediately, contact Lifeline (24 hours a day) on 13 11 14.

How do I get these services?

Carers Australia delivers carer counselling and support services through a network of state and territory Carer Associations. These associations are funded by the Australian Government through the National Carer Counselling Program (NCCP).

How much does it cost?

Costs for counselling and support services vary depending on your circumstances and the kind of help you need. The Australian Government subsidises a range of aged care in Australia. If your circumstances allow, it is expected you'll contribute to the cost of your care if you can afford to do so.

Carer payments and carer allowance

Caring for someone can be a demanding job that doesn't leave you much spare time for other work, and you may need some extra help with finances. There are two types of payments that you may be able to access – Carer Payment and Carer Allowance – to support you to stay in your caring role.

What is a Carer Payment?

The Carer Payment provides an income support payment (similar to a pension) for people who are unable to participate in the paid workforce because they're caring for someone who is frail aged, or who has a severe medical condition or disability.

Visit the Department of Human Services' website to find out how you may be able to access the Carer Payment.

What is a Carer Allowance?

The Carer Allowance provides an income supplement payment for people who provide daily care for someone who is frail aged, or who has a severe medical condition or disability. It can be paid on top of the Carer Payment or an Age Pension, and ensures that carers who have reached retirement age have an income.

Visit the Department of Human Services' website to find out how you may be able to access the Carer Allowance.

Useful contacts for carers

If you're caring for someone, there are a range of organisations and programs around Australia that may be able to help you – whether by providing respite care to help you take a break, or through counselling, information and advocacy services.

A few of these useful contacts and resources are listed below. Click on the organisations' names to visit their websites or contact them directly to find out how they may be able to help you.

<i>Organisation or resource</i>	<i>What they do</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres	These Centres can help link carers to a wide range of aged care services to help at home and in the community, including options to take a break through short-term and emergency respite services. The Centres also provide information about services for people of any age with a disability.	1800 052 222
Carers Australia	The peak national body representing carers of people with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or those who are frail or aged. Carers Australia provides information, support, education, training and counselling.	1800 242 636
Carer support groups	Carer support groups are sometimes organised around specific conditions. For information about these groups in your area, read about caring for someone with a particular need, or call My Aged Care.	1800 200 422

Organisation or resource	What they do	Contact
Department of Human Services – financial assistance for carers	Carer payments and allowances are available for some carers. Contact Department of Human Services to find out if you're eligible.	132 717
Aged Care Complaints Scheme	The Scheme looks after complaints about the quality of care and services provided by Australian Government-subsidised aged care residential services, home care packages and HACC services. If you have been unable to resolve your concern with the service provider or are not comfortable doing so, the Scheme provides a free service that you can contact to make a complaint.	1800 550 552
National Aged Care Advocacy services	Aged care advocacy services are free, confidential and independent. If you're caring for someone receiving Australian Government-subsidised aged care services and you're unsure about making a complaint, you may find that an advocacy service can provide information, advice and support.	1800 700 600
Help with translation	If you speak a language other than English you can phone the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) on 131 450. TIS covers more than 100 languages and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for the cost of a local call. Alternatively, you can call the National	131 450

Organisation or resource	What they do	Contact
	<p>Contact Centre on 1800 200 422 (between 8am and 8pm on weekdays or 10am or 2pm on Saturdays), and we will organise an interpreter through TIS to support the contact centre in communicating with you.</p> <p>My Aged Care also includes information on aged care in other languages.</p>	
<p>Help for deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired</p>	<p>People who are deaf or who have a hearing or speech impairment can contact My Aged Care through the National Relay Service in two easy steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Visit the National Relay Service</u> website to choose your preferred access point and 2. Ask for My Aged Care on 1800 200 422. 	<p>133 677 (TTY)</p> <p>1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen)</p> <p>0423 677 767 (SMS relay)</p>
<p>Department of Veterans' Affairs</p>	<p>The Department runs a variety of support groups and training sessions for carers of veterans and veterans who are carers. Contact the Department directly to find out more about whether you or the person you care for may be eligible for these services.</p>	<p>133 254</p> <p>133 677 (TTY)</p>
<p>Independent Living Centres</p>	<p>These are information resource centres that display a range of products and equipment to assist with day-to-day living activities. You and the person you care for can try out products on display and talk to the Centre's occupational therapists on</p>	<p>1300 885 886</p>

Organisation or resource	What they do	Contact
	their infolines. Staff at these Centres are trained to match products and services to your requirements and can help you locate suppliers of special-needs equipment.	
Young Carers	An initiative of Carers Australia, Young Carers provides information and support groups targeted specifically to the needs of young carers	1800 242 636
National Continence Helpline	The National Continence Helpline is staffed by a team of continence nurse advisers who provide information, education and advice to callers with incontinence or who are caring for someone with incontinence. The Helpline also provides information and advice to health professionals.	1800 330 066
Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service	The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service program m provides clinical support for people caring for someone with dementia who is demonstrating behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia which are impacting on their care.	1800 699 799

Source: <http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

Carer Gateway

Carer Gateway is a fantastic national carer service which provides reliable information for unpaid carers.

Carer Gateway provides information about the services and support available for people who care for someone with a disability, chronic illness, dementia, mental illness or who is frail aged.

Carer Gateway is available by phone and online.

Phone – **1800 422 737** Monday – Friday 8am – 6pm

Online – www.carergateway.com.au

DVA

Aged and community care

DVA provides a variety of in-home and community support programmes focused on assisting you to continue living independently by supporting your health, well being, and community connection.

You will find information about DVA-administered programmes and other in-home and non DVA community support services available to all older Australians, including:

- Veterans' Home Care (VHC)
- Assistance managing medications and health conditions (Veterans' MATES)
- Attendant care and household services
- Veterans' Supplement in Home Care
- Community nursing
- Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP)
- Home modifications
- Veteran & Community Grants
- Counselling services
- Home Care Packages
- Commonwealth Home Support Programme
- Respite and carer support
- Aged care reforms

DVA administered homecare and community support services

Veterans' Home Care Program

If you are a Gold Card or White Card holder with low level care needs, DVA's Veterans' Home Care (VHC) Program can assist you to continue living in your home. The Program provides a range of home care services designed to maintain your health, wellbeing and independence.

To receive these services, you will need to be assessed by a VHC Assessment Agency as needing home care assistance.

Assistance managing medications and health conditions (Veterans' MATES)

You can access comprehensive information about a range of health issues through the Veterans' MATES programme. This programme was designed to help you and your treating general practitioner and pharmacists to manage common medical conditions.

Information is also available to other health professionals, for example directors of care at residential aged care facilities. The Veterans' MATES programme aims to improve the health care of veterans and war widows through quality use of medicines and better use of health services.

More information is available through your general practitioner, pharmacist or through the Veterans' MATES website.

Attendant care and household services under MRCA and SRCA

If you are a former ADF member with incapacitating medical conditions, accepted under either the MRCA or SRCA, you may be eligible for attendant care (personal care) and household services. Attendant care and household services can be provided for a short period, for example, if you are recovering from surgery; or for a longer period to meet your ongoing needs.

Attendant care services available include assistance with:

- mobility
- personal hygiene (bathing and toileting)
- grooming
- dressing
- feeding

Household services available include assistance with:

- meal preparation
- cooking
- cleaning
- laundry
- ironing
- shopping
- child-care
- lawn mowing and gardening.

Requests for any other similar services required for the running and maintenance of a household may also be considered.

Veterans' Supplement in Home Care

If you have a service related mental health condition accepted by DVA, and are receiving a Home Care Package, you may also be entitled to the Veterans' Supplement in Home Care.

For more information see the Frequently Asked Questions: Veterans' Supplement in Residential Care and Home Care Packages page and Eligibility Guidelines.

Community Nursing

Community nursing provides clinical nursing and/or personal care services in your home by registered and enrolled nurses and support staff to:

- restore health following illness
- allow you to maintain the best level of independence
- allow for a dignified death.

If you are a Gold Card holder with high level personal care needs (requiring more than one-and-a-half hours per week) identified by a Local Medical Officer, DVA will pay for your clinical nursing services. If you are a White Card holder, the condition requiring nursing must also be an accepted disability

Find out more about your eligibility for community nursing services.

Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP)

If you are a Gold or White Card holder you can access mobility aids or appliances to help you maintain independence in your home through the Rehabilitation Appliances Program.

Aids or appliances prescribed through the program can include:

- continence pads
- wheeled walkers
- beds (hospital)
- chairs (high back, lift)
- lifting hoists
- showering or toileting aids.

You can find out more about the RAP program and your RAP eligibility.

Respite and carer support

DVA recognises the important role carers play in providing valuable support and help to those who are unable to care for themselves. The care many veterans and war widows and widowers provide to others is also valued by DVA.

Direct support to carers is provided through the provision of Respite Services which provides a break to a carer by temporarily relieving them of their caring responsibilities. DVA's VHC Program offers three types of Respite Care including In-Home Respite; Residential Respite; and Emergency Short-Term Home Relief (ESTHR).

Respite care is also available through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme or the Home and Community Care Program (in Victoria and Western Australia). The Commonwealth Home Support Programme or the Home and Community Care Program provide additional types of respite care that are not available through the VHC Program, including:

- centre-based respite
- community access respite
- host family respite

Note: These programmes are not funded directly by DVA and there may be additional costs associated with these services.

For more information about respite care provided through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme or the Home and Community Care Program, you can visit the My Aged Care website or contact the My Aged Care National Contact Centre on 1800 200 422* (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm) from any location within Australia. Alternatively, you can contact the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222.*

*Free local call - calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.

In addition to the respite services provided through the VHC program, DVA provides carers with information and resources.

Home modifications

If you are a Gold Card or White Card holder, in certain instances DVA will fund major home modifications based upon your clinical need as assessed and prescribed by an appropriate health professional.

Find out more information about your eligibility for major home modifications.

- [Home modifications \(PDF 131 KB\)](#)
- [Home modifications \(DOC 40 KB\)](#)

Veteran and Community Grants

Veteran & Community (V&C) Grants provides funding for projects that support activities and services that sustain and/or enhance the health and well-being of members of the ex-service community including veterans, their widows/widowers, their spouses, partners, carers and dependants and other members. Projects may also benefit the wider community.

V&C Grants fund the development of activities and services that:

- promote and enhance healthy lifestyles, particularly physical activity and mental well-being

- support quality independent living at home
- reduce social isolation
- encourage involvement in community activities
- increase access to community services
- address gaps in local services
- encourage supportive and safe communities
- support carers.

Counselling services

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provides counselling and group programmes to Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. It is a specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service.

VVCS staff are qualified psychologists or social workers who can provide a wide range of treatments and programs for war and service-related mental health conditions including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling. Phone 1800 011 046.*

*Free local call - calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.

Non-DVA administered homecare and community support services

Home Care Packages

A Home Care Package is an individually tailored and coordinated package of care services, support services, clinical services and other services to support older Australians (including veterans and widows/widowers) who want to continue living at home. Home Care Packages are administered by the Department of Social Services.

On 1 July 2015 all Home Care Packages transitioned to a Consumer Directed Care model of delivery. This is a way of delivering services that allows you to have greater control over your home care services. Consumer Directed Care allows you to make choices about the services you access, the delivery of those services, who will deliver those services and when they will be delivered. Under Consumer Directed Care, you can work with your provider to choose the services you will receive under the Home Care Package.

If you are receiving a Home Care Package and have a service related mental health condition accepted by DVA, you may also be entitled to the Veterans' Supplement in Home Care. This supplement is additional funding paid directly to your Home Care Package provider on your behalf for the additional costs that may be required to deliver care appropriate to your circumstances.

For more information about Home Care Packages, Consumer Directed Care, and the Veterans' Supplement in Home Care, you can visit the My Aged Care website or

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contact the My Aged Care National Contact Centre on 1800 200 422* (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm) from any location within Australia.

*Free local call - calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.

Commonwealth Home Support Programme - CHSP

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme is an entry level program for older people aged 65 years and over (or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) to provide a base level of care to support people to be independent in their own homes and in their communities for longer. Clients will be able to access a wide range of services such as planned respite, delivered meals and domestic assistance.

It combines four existing programmes:

- Commonwealth Home and Community Care (HACC) Programme;
- National Respite for Carers Programme (NRCP);
- Day Therapy Centres (DTC); and
- Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA).

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme has been implemented across all States and Territories however, at commencement, it will not include HACC services for Victoria or Western Australia, as funding responsibility for these jurisdictions has not yet been transitioned to the Commonwealth. The HACC program will continue to operate along with the Commonwealth Home Support Programme in these States.

For more information on the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, you can visit the My Aged Care website or contact the My Aged Care National Contact Centre on 1800 200 422* (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm), from any location within Australia.

*Free local call - calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.

Other support and information available includes:

- Back to Basics: A Practical Guide to Back Care
- My Aged Care - freecall - 1800 200 422*
- Carers Australia - 1800 242 636 *
- Dementia and Cognition Supplement in Home Care
- Veterans' Supplement in Home Care
- Home Care Packages Programme
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres – national freecall – 1800 052 222* & 1800 059 059* (after hours)
- Partners of Veterans association of Australia
- Financial support through Centrelink – local call cost 132 717 *

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- Aged & Community Services Australia
- Reach Out (information for young carers)
- Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline – national freecall - 1800 639 331
- Aged Care Complaints Scheme – national freecall - 1800 550 552

*Calls from mobile or pay phones may incur additional charges.

Source: <http://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/home-and-care>



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Please note – there are also a range of private home care packages and nursing providers available. Please speak with your doctor for more information.