



Assessing the detail in aged-care options will help you make the best move for future years

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OPINION

organised: AUSTRALIA has one of the most advanced aged care systems in the world, which is fortunate given that life expectancy here is high compared with many other nations.

Statistics indicate that South Australia has one of the highest ageing populations in Australia, with more than 15 per cent of residents who are aged over 65 years.

For many people, the financial aspect of aged care comes as a bit of a shock.

Recent findings indicate some facilities in Adelaide are charging accommodation bonds in excess of \$300,000, while daily care fees can easily total more than \$25,000 a year for individual aged care recipients.

While, at first glance, this may seem unmanageable, there are a number of strategies that can be utilised to control these costs and appease some of the financial worries that many experience leading into their twilight years.

If you, or a loved one is going to need care in the future, what it costs will depend on a number of factors.

Your income and assets will be assessed, along with whether or not you

are a Centrelink pensioner, or a self-funded retiree at the time you enter aged care.

The level of care you will require will also be reviewed.

Independent facilities and Centrelink assess all assets to determine what a resident will pay for aged care.

However, this assessment and its criteria differ from the way Centrelink calculates asset values for social security purposes.

For example, the family home may count as an asset for aged care purposes but may be excluded if your partner, dependent child, carer or a close relative lives in it.

To be eligible for a Centrelink aged care concession, you must be receiving an Australian Government means-tested pension, not have owned or part-owned a home in the past two years and your assets must be under a specified threshold.

There are also different levels of care to suit a range of needs.

Low-care facilities provide a relatively modest level of service, while nursing homes provide a higher level of atten-

tion. Some low care facilities and nursing homes may be approved as an extra service facility which means they provide higher standards of accommodation such as private bathrooms or other special services.

Naturally, there is an extra cost for this support. Some aged-care or community-support providers can also care for you in your own home.

When planning the budget for aged-care arrangements, there are a number of areas to consider including general living expenses and your entitlement for government subsidies.

Residential aged-care and home-care pricing structures vary between providers and will also depend on your income and assets.

The costs associated with aged care can be complex and professional planning assistance is essential to minimise future expenses. If you, a relative, or a friend is starting to consider options for the future, early planning is vital and you should review all your options before deciding which is best for you.

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