

This leaflet is part of a series written by nurses, doctors and experts with experience in aged care. The series aims to make your journey into residential aged care easier. Look for other leaflets on questions to ask about specific care needs. These can be downloaded at:

www.10questions.org.au

You may find these leaflets useful when:

- Searching for a high quality residential aged care facility
- Reviewing the quality of your current residential aged care facility
- Deciding between two residential aged care facilities that appear similar.

It's important there are enough registered nurses within the staff skill mix to meet everyone's needs. You should ask questions about how your individual care needs will be met.

Many staff wear similar uniforms. Just because someone looks like a nurse does not mean they are. Here are the differences:

A **Registered Nurse (RN)** has undertaken a minimum three-year Bachelor of Nursing course. They can undertake nursing procedures, manage pain medication and help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

An **Enrolled Nurse (EN)** works under the direction of an RN. Both are registered by a regulatory body. Registration ensures professional standards are maintained and protects the public.

Assistants in Nursing (AIN)/Care Workers/ Care Service Employees (CSE) work under the supervision and direction of nurses and provide most of the care in residential aged care facilities and community. Their level of training and roles vary.



IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO ASK

The best way to find a residential aged care facility that suits you is to visit a few.

To find your local ones, or for more information about aged care services contact


My Aged Care
 **1800 200 422**
myagedcare.gov.au

This leaflet has been developed and endorsed by:



For a full list of supporting organisations please visit www.10questions.org.au

If you have concerns about a residential aged care facility contact:

 1800 951 822



Australian Government
 Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

www.agedcarequality.gov.au



10 Questions to Ask

ABOUT RURAL AND REMOTE RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE



www.10questions.org.au

Receiving care in rural and remote locations does not compromise your right to safe, timely, good quality and culturally appropriate healthcare. The way residential aged care services are provided may vary between locations so the following questions may be helpful when considering your options[^].

1 What if there is no residential aged care facility in my home town?

If there's no residential aged care facility in your home town, there may be other alternatives to suit you such as a Multipurpose Health Service (MPS) or home care. Or you may have to consider relocating to a nearby town to access residential care. Check with MyAgedCare* what is available locally.

2 What is the difference between a residential aged care facility and a MPS?

Residential aged care is permanent or temporary accommodation providing continuous supported care, ranging from help with daily tasks and personal care to 24-hour nursing care. MPS are integrated health services usually run from small public hospitals. Aged care beds could be allocated within the main hospital or as a separate unit. These are generally run more like hospitals, so it's important to check who will be organising outings and activities and how frequently these sorts of things happen.

3 Are Registered Nurses (RNs) on site at all times or has the facility received a temporary exemption?

The law requires residential aged care facilities to have an RN on site at all times; however, some facilities can receive an exemption with certain conditions for a limited time. It's important to know if an exemption is in place because it may make the difference

between getting prompt treatment at the facility or being admitted to your nearest hospital if you get ill. If there is an exemption, you should ask why, and how long it will be in place for.

4 How will I keep in touch with my community?

Check if there are arrangements for day trips back home and if you have to pay for transport costs. Visiting hours can vary so ask if you can have visitors to stay overnight and if rooms are provided for them. Check if you can have a phone in your room to call friends/family and internet access. There may be an additional charge for these services.

5 Can I keep my local GP?

If you are moving outside the area serviced by your usual GP, you may not be able to keep them. Discuss which GPs are able to visit if that will affect your choice. If you have to change GPs ask your current one to forward your medical records to the new one so they know your medical history. Continuity of care is important, particularly if you have dementia or are unable to explain your symptoms.

6 Does the GP visit, or is there a telehealth model?

If a local GP is based some distance away, telehealth may be used. This allows GPs to use video or phone calls to manage your care. In these circumstances GPs rely heavily on RNs to carry out their recommended treatment, so it's important to check how many are employed. Getting new or repeat medications on time is important, so check what arrangements are in place, as your nearest pharmacy may also be some distance away.

*Contact details are included on the back of this leaflet. [^]See other leaflets in this series on Contracts and Fees and Additional Service Charges

7 Is there palliative care available?

Palliative care is care of a person with a life limiting illness. This can range from ensuring the person is pain free to looking after their skin and relieving other symptoms. Sometimes a specialist palliative care team may be needed to provide advice. Check if staff are trained in palliative care and whether there is a visiting specialist palliative care team available to provide assistance.

8 What will happen to me if there is an emergency or disaster?

Some rural facilities are in areas where bush fires, floods or drought can occur so it is important to know if there is a natural disaster plan with evacuation contingencies and acquiring alternative medical care and treatment. Your nearest hospital may be several hours away so check how your needs will be met, especially if your medical equipment and prescriptions require power.

9 Will I have access to allied health professionals?

Allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and speech pathologists play an important role as part of the wider health care team. They are involved in assessing and managing many health conditions and can help with keeping you active in your daily life. Ask what allied health services are available in your area, and if you will have to pay extra for these.

10 How will my family/loved ones know if there are changes to my health?

Check the arrangements that are in place to inform loved ones as soon as there is any sort of change as they may need to travel a long way to get to you.