



Aged care in Australia

Over 800,000 Australians used entry-level home support services from the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) in 2016–17, according to Gen Aged Care Data. Aged care isn't uncommon, but that doesn't make talking about it easy, for either you or your loved one. However, to ensure your family member or friend can continue to live their life to the fullest, it's necessary to have the hard conversation. We've created this guide to help you do so.

Before the talk

Before opening up the conversation of care services, take the time to prepare beforehand.

Doing this is important, partly because it gives you a chance to work through how you're feeling about it all. It's often frightening to realise that someone in your life is getting older - recognising how you're feeling is vital to ensuring you don't let your own emotions overwhelm the conversation.

Investing time before the conversation better equips you for having the discussion. Before broaching the subject, consider:

Discussing it with other family members or relevant individuals — Doing so allows you to get further input and together you can figure out the best way of approaching the conversation, as well as the options involved.

Doing thorough research — Learn as much as you can about what's available for different types of aged care, and what might best suit your loved one's lifestyle. For example, in-home connected care could give the necessary support without requiring them to leave their home.

Learn the progression of an illness — If they are living with a chronic condition, like dementia or Parkinson's, find out what you can about it. Knowledge means you can tailor the care services to their needs. However, it's important to remember that internet research only allows you to understand so much of what they're experiencing. Keep an open mind to hear their view point.

Put yourself in their shoes — Getting older isn't something anyone is comfortable facing. Discussions around aged care services force your loved one to confront the topic and can cause them to react in emotional and

unpredictable ways. Seeing it through their eyes can help you understand their response. You could also start your own advanced care directive, discussing it with them as a segue to their care plan. Resources for Australian Advance Healthcare planning can be found here: <http://cartwrightconsultingaustralia.com.au/#resources>

Practice what you're going to say — Plan out what you want to discuss with your loved one, and practice how you're going to frame the conversation to show the most support and love that you can.

Find the positive — You want to focus on how your loved one can retain their independence, not on how they're losing it. Show them how the right aged care, such as in-home options, helps to empower them as they get older, removing worry on both sides.

Research trial options or visits — Sometimes you can take the pressure off of a decision by asking your loved one to simply experience the options. You can do this by seeing if a visit to a retirement home is possible, or whether someone can demonstrate assistive technology and potential in-home care options to your loved one. Familiarity without commitment can help take the fear of the unknown out of the discussion.

Consider any thoughts, questions or objections they might have and how you might respond to them.

Ease into it

Try and avoid springing the conversation on your loved one out of the blue. Instead, ease into talking about the care options.

Where possible, begin discussing it before it's a necessary conversation so that the topic doesn't feel so close to home. This removes some of the pressure and allows both sides to discuss care services and the different types available more openly.

You want to focus on how your loved one can retain their independence, not on how they're losing it.

Dealing with hypothetical scenarios makes working through the different options much easier. The first time you bring up the conversation leave it open-ended. Let them know you understand that it's a hard discussion to begin, but that you want to have it at some point so you can make sure their wishes are acknowledged and fulfilled.

By starting the dialogue but not forcing it that day, you give them space to adjust and prepare just as you've had the opportunity to do. An important thing to remember is that it's rarely just one conversation. Creating an open dialogue is important. Be careful how you do this, however. You don't want the topic of care services to feel pointed or negative, or to bring it up every time you spend time with them.





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Choose the setting, time, and people

The setting for your conversation is important. You want your loved one to feel like they're:

- **In a safe and familiar place** — Confident and comfortable in the situation. For example, having the conversation in someone else's home can leave them feeling awkward and on the back foot. Instead, consider doing it in a quiet space where they feel supported.
- **Comfortable to talk at the time** — Make sure you think about the timing of the conversation. Where possible, letting it come up naturally is the best option. However, this is not always possible.

When the discussion does start, make sure you both have time to engage in it fully. Don't rush it, and choose a moment when you're both in a safe and comfortable headspace.



Think about who you want involved in the discussion

A few options could include:

- **Other close family members**
- **Your loved one's doctor or geriatrician**
- **An individual from your loved one's faith community**
- **A close friend of your loved one**
- **A social worker**

A third party helps to mediate should tension grow during the discussion. It also gives support to your loved one and provides a network that they can lean on.

If there is someone in your loved one's community that is already using care services, ask them if they could provide an extra viewpoint in the discussion. Having someone who is using home care technology or living in a retirement village removes the stigma around the topic, and gives practical insight into the positives and negatives involved.

Consider any thoughts, questions or objections they might have and how you might respond to them.

Having the hard conversation

When the time comes to sit down and have the discussion with your loved one, make sure you're in an open frame of mind and ready to listen to them. Actively hear their concerns, and repeat them back to your loved one to show them you've fully understood their point of view.

By doing this and remaining calm but empathetic, you can help prevent the discussion escalating. Strong emotions often only cloud the conversation.

Remember to approach the conversation in a way that makes it clear to your loved one that you're not taking charge, but rather that you're wanting to hear their thoughts and wishes to help them make the best choices moving forward. The discussion will likely become an open and ongoing dialogue.

While the conversation isn't easy, it presents a chance for you to grow your relationship and become closer. For example, you may find out that part of the reason they'd prefer to stay in their own home and use connected health technology is because they've never experienced communal living before.

Here at Tunstall Healthcare, we know how difficult this time might be for you and your loved one, and are here to support you through it.



We offer assistive technology and support services to help create a specialised Connected Care solution which meets your loved one's needs, all provided with care and understanding.

Our aim is to help empower individuals to continue living their life to the fullest in a place of their choice.

Next steps

To learn more about our range of connected healthcare solutions, call or email us on:

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