

# The Great Australian Aged Care Entry Survey 2016

How Australians choose an aged care facility for themselves  
or their loved ones

—  
Aged Care Reviews | Apia  
April 2016





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At Apia, we realise that the more you live life, the better you get at it. So it's only fair that the experience you've gained should count for something. That's why we reward people over 50 for their experience, with better insurance products and the service you deserve.



Aged Care Reviews and Ratings levels the playing field for families and our most vulnerable, arming consumers with the information they need to make a more informed decision.

## About the Survey

The Great Australian Aged Care Entry Survey 2016 addresses the question "How do Australians go about finding an Aged Care Residential Facility for themselves or for a loved one?" In this report of the survey findings we look to explore the real life experiences and learn from the people who have been there and done it. The survey addresses interesting topics like:

- How many family members are involved in this significant decision?
- How long does it normally take to find a place/service?
- How stressful is the process? (Hint: it can be pretty stressful!)
- What are the key deciding factors?
- Where do most people go for information?

The Survey was conducted online in late 2015. More than 500 people, comprising members of Apia and Aged Care Reviews, completed the Survey.

## Choosing an Aged Care Residential Facility or In Home Care Service

Over 3.2 million Australians are aged 65 years or older, representing 14% of our population. By 2051 nearly 20% of Australians will be aged 70 years or older, and the number of people aged 85 years and over is projected to quadruple.

At the same time the Australian aged care industry is currently worth over \$11 billion, with nearly 70% of that coming from the taxpayer in the form of subsidies. Families are regularly asked to put up hundreds of thousands of dollars for bonds to secure a vacancy. This is without any real certainty of the quality of the service and care of the facility. Accreditation is against a minimum standard done on a pass/fail basis, with reassessment occurring only every 3 years.

The process of finding the right Residential Facility can be very challenging. There are plenty of websites listing a directory of the homes and villages, but how do people find out what they are really like to live in? How do you know that your loved one will be really cared for and treated well?



### Other Influencing Factors

“Mum was happy with the choice and was involved in the search.”- Robyn W

“I wanted Mum to have her own room and bathroom and good care.” - Lisa

“Care and respect is what is important. But it became a big lie.” - Bronte

“That the staff were friendly and kind and sincerely love their job” - Mary

“It was the only placement available...no choices at all.” - Dona

“The lifestyle activities that are available and how it matches the needs of the residents.” - Enza

“Mum liking the place and having someone she knew living there already.” - Carol

## Key Findings

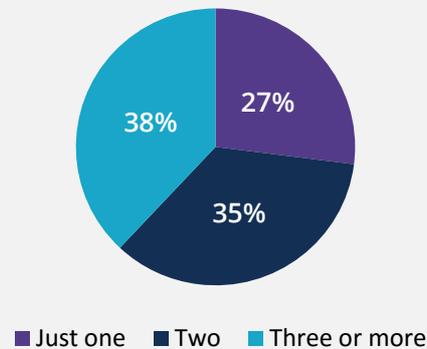
Some of the most interesting key findings which arise from the Survey include:

- Finding the right place is most often a family decision with 3 or more family members involved
- Location ranks as the biggest deciding factor when choosing Residential Care
- Nearly 60% of people physically visited 3 or more facilities prior to making their decision (20% visited 5 or more)
- More than half of the respondents reported that the process also involved selling the family home
- More than 2/3 of people report that Online Ratings and Reviews are “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” to the decision-making process
- 50% of people rate the experience of finding a facility as “Very Stressful” or “Extremely Stressful”

### Who does the legwork to find a service provider?

The process to find the right place most often involves two or more family members, the majority being female. Only ¼ (one quarter) of people make the decision on their own.

Fig 1: Number of people involved in aged care placement decision



### How long does it take?

More than half of the respondents reported taking more than a month to find the right place. Some people reported taking 2-3 years and others said they had moved from place to place a number of times before settling.



### Thoughts on Pathways

“Nothing prepares you for the terrible feelings of guilt for placing your love one in a "HOME". - Georgina

“Very difficult especially when the person concerned doesn't think they need to go.” - Sue

“Make it a lot easier to understand the process. It can be very complicated for a loved one when they are under stress.” - Jenny

“It seems odd that decisions on care provided is made by people in city offices, who are out of touch with the needs of the individuals requiring care, and who won't listen to the care workers at the coalface who try to provide a home for the elderly and the care required with such limitations on funded hours.” - Barry

“Great difficulty caused by Mum not wanting to consider aged care before she was hospitalised. It meant she didn't have a say.” - Siobhan

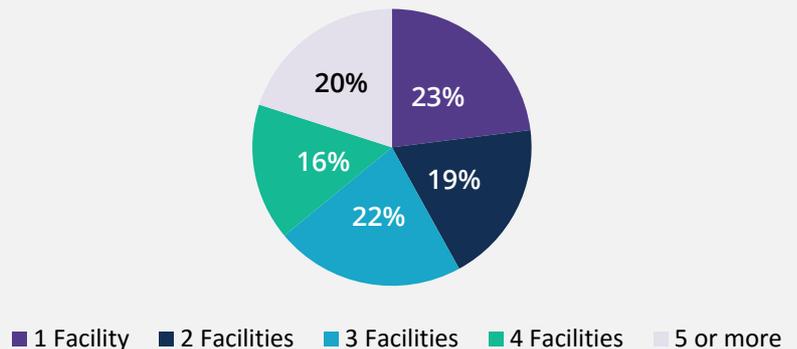
Fig 2: Time taken to find the right aged care facility



### How many facilities did you visit?

Most people (58%) visit at least 3 facilities as part of their search, with 20% of people visiting 5 or more.

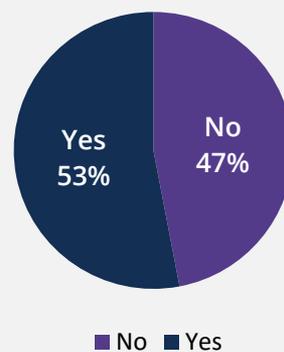
Fig 3: Number of facilities visited



### Did you use the Internet to research?

The Internet, not surprisingly, is being used as a tool for finding and researching aged care facilities.

Fig 4: Using the Internet for research





### Learning from Experience

“Live in a small rural town and only 2 facilities available. We asked at both and told wrongly that one of them didn't take high care so only had 1 option.”

“Being in a small community we felt it was most appropriate for Mum to continue living in that area if possible.”

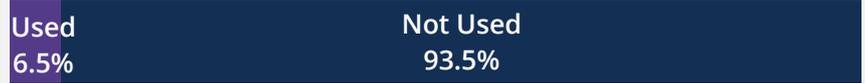
“Home care supervisor found and suggested placement. Mum was due for an ACAT assessment and would have gone from low care to high care, so she advised us to accept the offer for Mum, as it had ageing in place, and was much more amenable than high care placements.”

“My mother lived in a Regional Town with my sister living nearby. The search was limited by a choice of 4 facilities and my sister and mother visited them all and spoke to staff. Mum entered as a respite patient and identified when she needed to move permanently some 12 months later.”

### Did you use a paid placement consultant or broker?

Only 6.5% of respondents reported using the services of a paid placement consultant or broker to help them in their search.

Fig 5: Instances of using paid consultant/broker



### Where was your loved one located immediately prior to entering aged care?

Fig 6: Location before entering aged care

At home <b>not</b> receiving in home care	24%
At home receiving in home care	24%
Respite accommodation	8%
Hospital	34%
Other	9%

Most people (48%) moved into an aged care facility directly from their home. Of these, half were receiving some form of in home care and the other half were not.

One third (34%) of people moving into an aged care facility transitioned through a hospital.

Those who reported as being in some other place included:

- At daughter's house / Living with family
- Transitional Care Units



### Learning from Experience

“Live in a small country town and a bed was available in local aged care facility so didn't have to do much research.”

“We did all of the looking & took mum along to view every facility that we were considering.”

“The social worker gave us so much helpful information and I used Internet research also.”

“Physical examination of each of the nursing homes was the best indication of how that would work for the parent involved.”

## Using respite care as a test

Fig 7: Trying out the service with respite care

	Usage	YES	NO
Did you use Respite Care before entering aged care?		52%	48%
Did you use Respite Care to “test” out the provider?		40%	60%

Just over half (52%) of the respondents used some form of respite care before they entered a residential facility full time. Of these, 40% used the experience of their respite care to check out the facility in detail before committing.

## Sources of information

Fig 8: Sources of information ranked in order of usefulness

Source	Rank
Word of Mouth/Friend	1
Hospital/Social Worker	2
Internet Research	3
Online Directory	4
Other	5
Local Council	6

Most people surveyed relied on “word of mouth” or advice from a friend as their main source of information, by a significant margin.

Hospital Staff and Social Workers ranked second, very closely followed by various forms of Internet Research.

Most people did not rate their Local Council as a very useful source of advice for this decision.

### Other sources of information were many and varied, and included:

- ACAT / ACAS
- Local GP
- RSL
- Solicitor
- Advertising
- Alzheimer’s Australia
- Previous work experience
- Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- Religious groups / local Church



### Decision Factors

“Staff ratios, reputation, happy staff with working environment.” - Roz

“Alzheimer’s understanding / controls.” - Della

“Looking for established facility in a suburban setting. This facility offered 6 weeks respite as a trial which became permanent as Mum settled in beautifully.”

“Rural area - minimal choice. Dad put on waiting list for low care. Had a few hospital admissions as not coping at home. Eventually had a stroke and was then high care and after acute care was transferred to district hospital”

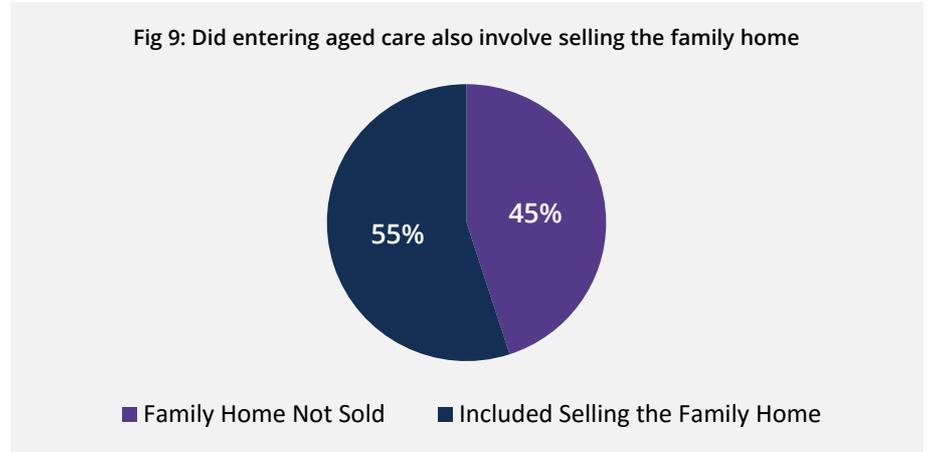
“Quality, cleanliness and caring friendly staff. Also variety of life style activities” - Alanda

“There was a vacancy and I only had a week to find a placement.”

## Selling the family home?

More than half (55%) reported that their aged care decision included selling the family home.

Fig 9: Did entering aged care also involve selling the family home



## Decision factors – What is important?

People make up their minds about the right aged care facility to choose in many ways. Some are fortunate to have enough time to consider lots of options. Others find themselves needing to make a rushed decision.

In this part of the Report, we look at answers to the question “What was the biggest factor in deciding on an aged care facility?”

*“Range of activities available; cleanliness; access to spiritual support; quality of food” —Julie*

*“Cleanliness (smell), Services provided, Activities for residents” —Bella*

Fig 10: Decision factors ranked by importance

Factor	Rank
Location	1
Friendliness/Vibe during Tour	2
The Building & Amenities	3
Staff	4
Personal Recommendation	5
Bond/Price	6

As they say in business: Location, Location, Location. In the Survey, location ranks as the most important factor when choosing an aged care facility.



### About Stress

“Although I found the process rather stressful, it was mainly due to the fact that I had never placed a loved one in aged care before.” – Kim

“It is important that the process of placing family members into aged care be as less stressful as possible because in itself the decision to do so is stressful.” – Genevieve

“It is very distressing and I think the facility should provide more information about staff and their qualifications.”

“It is a very emotional and stressful times for the patient and loved ones, but it gets better as time goes by, and the patient settles into their aged care facility.” - Irma

“This was a very stressful time for my sister and I. It is not a decision that is easily made.” - Julie

The friendliness and “vibe” during prospective customer tours rated highly, coming in at number 2, closely followed by the Building and Amenities.

Bond/Price was considered to be of least importance and only half as important as location.

Other factors reported as being important decision factors by some of the respondents includes:

- Both parents needed to be together
- Own room, not shared rooms/wards
- Open spaces and nice garden
- Quality, cleanliness and caring, friendly staff
- Security. Coded access.
- Less staff employed by agencies.

### How stressful was the aged care placement experience?

Fig 11: Stress levels



Perhaps not surprisingly, half (50%) of the respondents described the process of making an Aged Care placement as ‘Very’ or ‘Extremely’ Stressful. Only 7% reported feeling no stress at all. A full 78% of respondents reported moderate or higher stress levels.

### Aged care consumer reviews & ratings

Anyone living in an aged care facility (or using home care), or family and friends who visit them, are invited to share their experience with others at [www.agedcarereviews.com.au](http://www.agedcarereviews.com.au)

86% of people in the survey responded that had Ratings and Reviews been available when they were making their placement decision, they would have taken them into consideration.

Fig 12. Propensity to use aged care consumer reviews





### The Journey

“Would have been nice not to have had to sell the family home mum and dad had live in the same house for 62 years and it was a huge emotional journey to see it sold.” - Anne

“Excruciating journey with placing my Mum after discovery of Alzheimer’s and hospital staff believed she was unable to care for herself.” - Corry

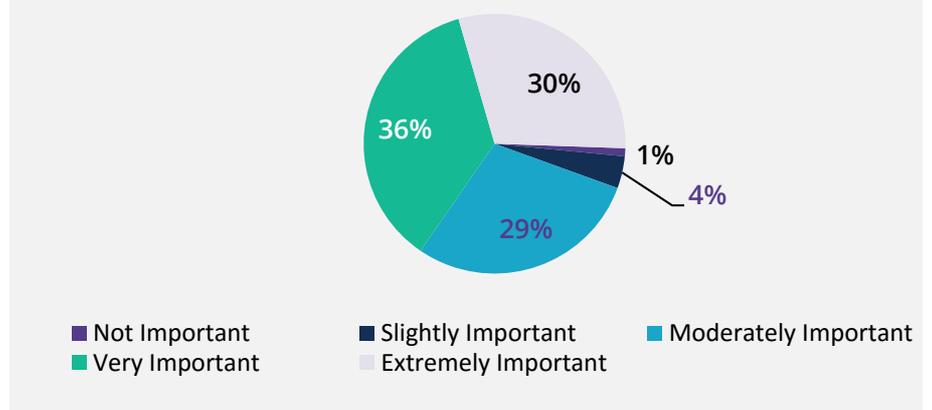
“We called a previously used respite facility as I had broken my arm and could not provide care, they were full, but, had a respite bed available at their full time care facility. They were also aware that we were embarking on a full time care journey. 2 weeks after she entered the facility as a respite patient we were offered a permanent placement there.” - Tricia

*“Provides opportunity to pass on information for others going through the very stressful process of finding quality caring care for a loved one. It also meant we could pass on the good experience we had with our chosen care facility.” —Julie*

*“Cleanliness (smell), Services provided, Activities for residents” —Bella*

### How important are online reviews?

Fig 13: What aged care consumers say about the importance of online reviews



Given the opportunity to use online ratings and reviews as a trusted information source in the aged care facility search process, more than two-thirds (2/3) of respondents recognised this as a ‘Very Important’ or ‘Extremely Important’ information source.

Aged Care Reviews Pty Ltd

***Australia's first and only dedicated consumer review website for residential aged care facilities, and in home care providers.***

Find us on the Web:

**[www.agedcarereviews.com.au](http://www.agedcarereviews.com.au)**

## How Aged Care Reviews Works

Launched in January 2014 and currently housing more 5,000 reviews, the site receives facility data directly from the Australian Government's 'My Aged Care' directory website to ensure every aged care facility an home care service in Australia can be reviewed and rated by care recipients and their families.

Residents, care recipients or (most often) their families leave a review. That review then goes through a rigorous validation process before it appears online. Aged Care Reviews works with aged care operators to see reviews responded to and to encourage reviews from their residents and families. We don't charge the public a cent at any point.

We don't ever pull down a review, even negative reviews, unless the review infringes our Content Guidelines, in which case we always ask a reviewer to amend it first.

## About Apia

Apia is a specialist insurance provider for over 50s and we realise that the more you live life, the better you get at it. So it's only fair that the experience you've gained should count for something. That's why we reward over 50s for their experience, with a wide range of great insurance products and the service you deserve.

This winning combination of service and excellent insurance products means Apia now has more than 750,000 customers across Australia, serviced by our network of branches and over 450 staff. So wherever you are and whatever your insurance needs are, Apia can help you.

For more information visit <http://www.apia.com.au/>

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