



Aged care in rural and remote Australia

One in four (25%) Australians in the aged care target population aged 65 and over live in rural or remote areas.

In addition to mainstream aged care services (Table 1), flexible aged care programs such as the Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) Program and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program play important roles in providing access to aged care to these communities.

Table 1: Aged care target population and number of people using aged care in rural and remote Australia, 30 June 2023 (or during 2022–23 for home support)

	Rural			Remote	
	Large rural towns (MM 3)	Medium rural towns (MM 4)	Small rural towns (MM 5)	Remote communities (MM 6)	Very remote communities (MM 7)
Target population	360,540	240,012	448,422	45,248	22,970
Permanent residential care	16,025 (4.4%)	10,767 (4.5%)	10,105 (2.3%)	758 (1.7%)	197 (0.9%)
Home care	24,551 (6.8%)	14,422 (5.0%)	20,587 (4.6%)	2,125 (4.7%)	947 (4.1%)
Home support	70,515 (19.6%)	48,221 (20.1%)	84,290 (18.8%)	9,824 (21.7%)	5,423 (23.6%)

Note: The population aged 65 and over was used to align with the aged care target population (denominator). People using aged care includes all ages (numerator). Location for home care and home support is based on recipient address. Due to changes in 2022–23, numbers in this table may not be comparable with published counts of people using permanent residential care.

The Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification system defines whether a location is a city, regional centre, rural town, or remote community. MM 1 is a metropolitan area, including Australia's major cities, and MM 7 is a very remote community, such as Longreach, Wilcannia or Derby.

This fact sheet presents data predominantly on mainstream aged care services in rural (MM 3–5) and remote (MM 6–7) Australia. See 'Where can I find out more?' for access to resources and data on the MPS and NATSIFAC programs, and aged care data by region. For information on all remoteness categories (MM 1–7), see individual topic pages on the GEN Aged Care Data website.

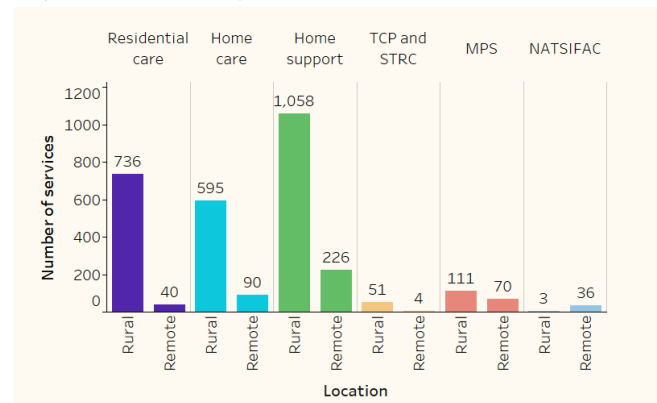
Aged care services

There are fewer aged care services located in rural and remote Australia than in the cities and regional centres.

In 2023, most aged care services in rural and remote areas were home support outlets (Figure 1). The second most common service types were residential care facilities in rural areas and home care services in remote areas.

In remote areas, there were almost as many MPS and NATSIFAC services (106) as there were residential care and home care services (130).

Figure 1: Aged care services located in rural and remote Australia, 30 June 2023 (or during 2022–23 for home support outlets)



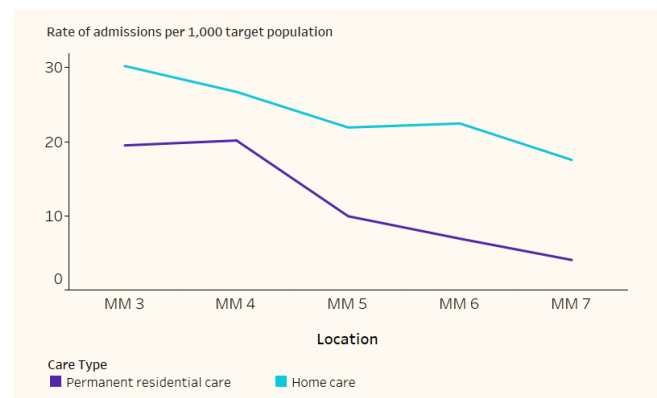
Note: STRC = Short-Term Restorative Care; TCP = Transition Care Programme.

Admissions into aged care services

The proportion of admissions into aged care services differs between rural and remote areas. The location of services may mean that people living in these areas need to move to less remote areas to access aged care services.

In 2022–23, rates of admissions into mainstream aged care services tended to be highest in large and medium rural towns (MM 3–4) and lowest in remote and very remote communities (MM 6–7) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Admissions into aged care per 1,000 target population, by care type in rural and remote Australia, 2022–23



Note: The population aged 65 and over was used to align with the aged care target population (denominator). Admissions into aged care includes all ages (numerator). Location for home care is based on recipient address.

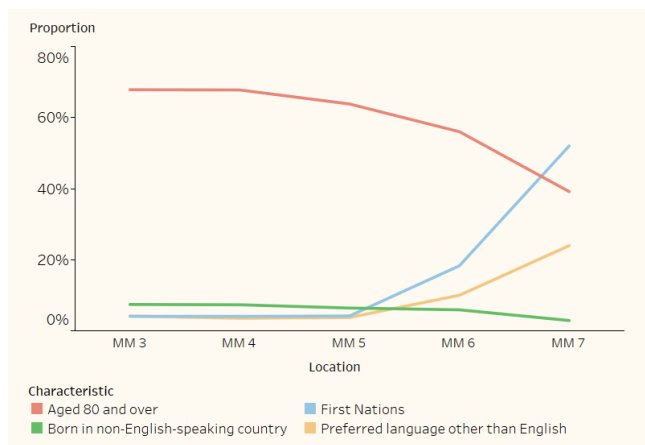
People using aged care

During 2022–23, over 218,000 people in rural and remote areas received entry-level home support services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) (Table 1).

Over 100,000 people in rural and remote areas were using permanent residential care or home care on 30 June 2023 (Table 1). The characteristics of permanent residential care and home care users varied by remoteness:

- The proportion of these aged care users aged 80 and over decreased with remoteness (68% in large rural towns compared with 39% in very remote communities).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people made up a greater share of these aged care users in very remote communities (52%) and remote communities (18%) compared with small, medium and large rural towns (4.2%, 4.1% and 4.1% respectively).
- The proportion of these aged care users born in a non-English-speaking country decreased with remoteness, but a greater share of those in remote areas preferred to speak a language other than English (which may include Australian First Nations languages).

Figure 3: Characteristics of people using permanent residential care or home care in rural and remote Australia, 30 June 2023



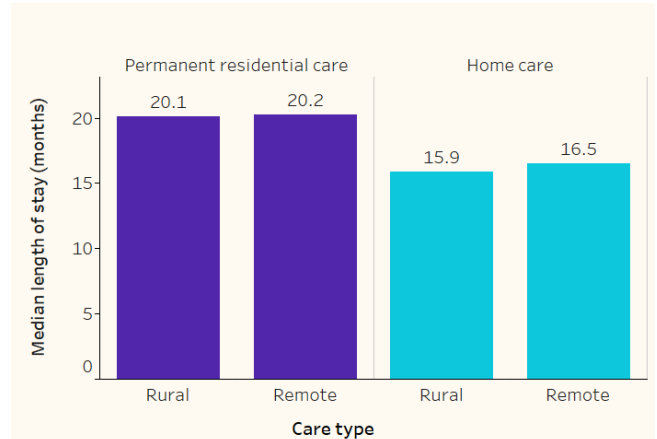
Note: People with unknown age, Indigenous status, country of birth or preferred language are included in the total (denominator). Non-English-speaking countries are defined as all countries except Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the USA. Location for home care is based on recipient address.

People leaving aged care

The time that a person spends using an aged care service in a single episode is described as 'length of stay', regardless of whether they used residential care or home care. Here we describe length of stay using the median value, which represents a typical length of stay.

For exits that took place in 2022–23, the median length of stay in rural and remote areas was longer for permanent residential care compared with home care (Figure 4). The median length of stay for permanent residential care was around the same length in rural areas and remote areas, but for home care the median length of stay was longer in remote areas.

Figure 4: Median length of stay for exits from permanent residential care and home care in rural and remote Australia, 2022–23



Note: Location for home care is based on recipient address.

Changes over time

For comparisons with previous years, see *Fact sheet: Aged care in rural and remote Australia 2019–20*.

Where can I find out more?

Modified Monash Model

<<https://www.health.gov.au/topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm>>

Fact sheets:

Aged care in rural and remote Australia 2019–20

Multi-Purpose Services Program Residential Care

<<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/factsheets-and-infographics>>

GEN dashboard: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using aged care

<<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/dashboards/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-using-aged-care>>

GEN dashboard: My aged care region

<<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/my-aged-care-region>>

© The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024



All material presented in this document is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence, with the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms (the terms of use for the Coat of Arms are available at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms>) or any material owned by third parties, including for example, design, layout or images obtained under licence from third parties and signatures. All reasonable efforts have been made to identify and label material owned by third parties.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (available at <https://creativecommons.org>), as is the full legal code for the CC BY 4.0 licence.

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) *GEN fact sheet 2022–23: Aged care in rural and remote Australia*, AIHW, Australian Government.

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6244 1000 | Email: GEN@aihw.gov.au