

## **Podcast 36 - Growing Old in Australia**

**by Rob McCormack - Friday, March 14, 2014**

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**Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack**

*Podcast Number 36 – Growing Old in Australia*

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Hi,

We all get old. Getting old is not necessarily a problem, as long as you can remain active and independent. But for most people, there will come a time when they are no longer able to look after themselves. Both my parents have recently passed away which I am very sad about. They both reached the point where they could no longer look after themselves. It's a difficult time for everybody when that happens. Decisions have to be made about where they will live and who can look after them. Unfortunately, sometimes the old people themselves are not able to make these decisions and their children need to help them decide, or in some cases, actually make the decisions for them. That can be tough, especially when, throughout your life, it's been the other way round. But I guess that's just part of the circle of life. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about how we care for the aged in Australia.



This can be a complicated topic, so the government has set up a special website where all the information about this topic is provided. It's great and I highly recommend it. It is <http://www.myagedcare.gov.au>. You should visit this site if you want full information.

As I said in podcast 34, Australians love to own their own home. Usually, by the time people get into old age, say into their 80s, they have paid off their mortgage with the bank and their home belongs to them. So it's no wonder that they want to stay in their own home as they get older. Often, it's where they raised their children and it's where they feel comfortable. In keeping with this, it is the government's policy to allow people to stay in their own home as long as possible as they get older.

How can you stay at home as you get old?

Well, perhaps with just a little extra support or assistance, older people can stay in their own home and continue to live independently. The government has set up a program to provide this support. It is called Home and Community Care, or HACC for short. Examples of such support include help with cooking, washing, cleaning, personal care, shopping or home maintenance. My father, for example, had a support carer come in to his house for about an hour a day 5 days a week to cook, clean and wash for him and he really appreciated it. Or it may include making small changes to the home so that the person can better manage with their daily life. For example, for my parents HACC organized a hand rail near the bath and up the front steps to the house. Other services could include help with transport, so that the person can, for example, visit the doctor or go to the bank. Or perhaps there are special health services which can be organized where the aged person has particular health problems, for example, physiotherapy for those who have mobility problems.

All these services are provided by service providers who receive funding from the government to provide the support.



The aged person will also pay a fee which depends on how much income they earn. With these HACC in-home services, each aged person decides, with advice from the provider of the service, what services they need and which ones they will have. It's up to them.

What if a person's needs are more complex?

In this situation, perhaps something more comprehensive is required. A coordinated package of services may be needed, where health professionals help make the decision about the support required. To obtain this type of support, the aged person needs to be assessed. The government has set up a free assessment service, carried out by an Aged Care Assessment Team, called ACAT for short. If requested, a person from this team will visit the aged person and assess what sort of care they need. They will look at their ability to live independently and how they are managing their day to day living. Where possible, they will try to keep them in their own home if suitable support can be organized. There are four different levels of in-home support available, depending on how much support is required. The support provided can be for personal care (for example help with showering, dressing, meal preparation, etc), help around the house (for example cleaning, gardening) or for health reasons (for example, nursing or physiotherapy). The important point is that it is a package of support which looks at all the needs of the aged person.

I can remember the ACAT assessment which my mother received. This ACAT person was the same person who later assessed my father. I was very impressed with the gentle and friendly way in which he

asked his questions and carried out the assessment. It only took about 30 minutes. He filled in a form as he went and at the end he spoke to us all about what might be best for my mother, and what the options were. A few days later we received a letter in the mail with his assessment and recommendation about what sort of support was best.

But what if a person is no longer able to live in their home?

Often, the aged person will be assessed as needing full time care. Sometimes a family member can provide this type of care, in order that the person can stay at home. In fact, the government provides support for these carers such as counseling, respite care and, in some cases, a carer's payment. However, in many cases this type of care will not be possible. For these aged people, living in their own home, or a family member's home, is no longer possible and they will need to live in a properly equipped aged care home.

### Aged Care Homes in Australia

In June 2011, Australia had approximately 185,000 places for aged persons in around 2760 aged care homes.



The government funds most of the cost of aged care in Australia, although aged persons will be required to pay a fee if they can afford it. Aged care homes must meet strict standards in order to receive government funding. Importantly, no aged person in Australia will be denied aged care, even if they can't afford to pay. I like that about our country. We look after our people, including when they get old, and

that's the way it should be.



When your ACAT assessment says you need ongoing residential care, you will be assessed as needing either low care residential support, or high care residential support. If you are a low care resident, then you don't need 24 hour care and are still able to look after yourself in some things. However, staff are there to help you if required. If you are a high care resident, then you may need special care 24 hours a day. The aged care home will be equipped and have the staff needed to provide you with that care.

In an aged care home, just about everything is provided, including your bed, some furniture, your meals and general assistance with everyday tasks such as washing and taking your medication. Aged care homes also have a program of activities for the residents. For example, I am a volunteer at a local aged care home near where I live. I take a small group of residents for Scrabble, a word game. We play for 2 hours every Wednesday and we have a lot of fun. This is just one of many activities which are organized for residents.

As for all aged care services in Australia, the government pays for most of the services you receive, but each resident will be asked to pay an amount, based on their income and their personal assets. Details about these costs are explained on the [myagedcare](http://myagedcare.gov.au) website.

All in all, I think our aged care system in Australia is a good one. It's not perfect, but my experience has been that it takes good care of people when they get old. What more can you ask.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this

page. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. Perhaps you could suggest a topic for a future podcast. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 19]

### Vocabulary

aged = old

appreciated = when someone likes something or is thankful for something

approximately = about, not exactly

assets = the things you own. For example, a house, property, land, etc

assessed = to measure against a standard

assessment = the process of being assessed

assistance = when help is given

carer = someone who cares for, or looks after, someone else

circle of life = life goes from birth to death and is like a circle

comfortable = when something gives comfort

community = the people who live in your city, town or area

complex = when something has many parts and is hard to understand

complicated = when something has many parts and is hard to understand

comprehensive = when something has a large content. It covers all aspects

coordinated package = when all aspects work together to solve a problem

counselling = when you receive advice from an expert, from a professional

denied = when someone is not allow to have something

equipped = when a place or person has the right tools to do a certain job

hand rail = something you can hang on to, to stop you from falling over

impressed = when you like something

independently = when you can look after yourself

maintenance = fixing things that are broken or that need to be replaced

mobility = being able to move about

mortgage = a loan from a bank, used to buy a house

options = the different ways that something can be done

other way round = when something is opposite to how it was before

passed away = when someone dies

physiotherapy = a special type of health care worker who helps you with muscle and joint pain

preparation = to get things ready

professionals = people who are specially trained

raised a family = when you look after your children as they grow up

recommend = to tell another person that something is good

requested = to be asked

resident = a person who lives in a place

residential = when you live in a place (a residence)

respite care = when you give a carer a rest from their carer role

strict = when something must be followed or done a certain way

tough = very hard, very difficult

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