

Charlene's story

Learn how Charlene lives independently with the help of her aged care support.

Charlene is in her 80s and Deaf and has found aged care support that works for her, delivered in Auslan (Australian Sign Language). She gets help with cleaning and shopping, as well as social support to maintain her connections with the Deaf community.

Read Charlene's story or [watch](#) her video story.



Charlene lives in regional Queensland and is Deaf. After losing her hearing at 5 years old due to meningitis, Charlene had to learn how to adapt. Now in her 80s, Charlene has been an Auslan teacher, enjoys Deaf theatre and is very active within the Deaf community. She's been involved in a range of Deaf social, leisure and lobby committees and organising groups. Charlene loves being an advocate for Deaf people, and she enjoys being able to stay socially connected with her community.

As Charlene got older, she started struggling with spinal issues and her balance, which is common for people with hearing loss. This led Charlene to apply for aged care support to help with everyday tasks like cleaning and shopping.

Finding the right aged care

Charlene was able to get help from family and friends to access aged care. She wanted an aged care provider that was local, trained in Auslan and could support her to stay social and involved with the Deaf community. After being moved up to the second level in her aged care package when her balance got worse, Charlene's Deaf friends referred her to a Deaf and hard of hearing service provider, Deaf Connect.

'I previously had aged care with a hearing organisation but my Deaf friends influenced me and they told me to (use) Deaf Connect – Ageing Well. I've now been with them for a very long time and I'm incredibly happy.'

Deaf Connect helped Charlene access their Ageing Well service, which could better support her specific needs as well as provide Auslan-fluent support workers.

'I have been home alone; my family are in Sydney. These Ageing Well support workers come to do my cleaning for me. My body is getting older so I'm not able to do that anymore. Otherwise, they take me to go shopping, because shopping can be quite heavy. We also have the opportunity to chat as well, and I can hear the news about what's going on.'

Communication and care

This support has helped Charlene to stay living in her own home, which was one of her top goals. She also found it a welcome change to be able to communicate in Auslan without having to lipread.

Some of the Auslan signs most familiar to Charlene are only used in older generations. However, her support workers understand and use these signs as they regularly communicate with Deaf seniors.

'They (support workers) mix with other Deaf as well and they visit other older Deaf people. And everybody is different. It's a similar situation when you meet with Deaf people from around the world, we have different sign language but we're still able to communicate without any issues. We just know we are Deaf, we are family. That's the power of identity.'

Charlene enjoys being able to directly communicate with her support workers in Auslan and appreciates that she isn't treated differently. This has helped her to stay socially connected and empowered to communicate in her primary language.

Charlene says using a Deaf-specific aged care provider has made her so much happier. She is thrilled to continue to live in her home while receiving support and making more time for the things she enjoys.

'We have interpreters, we have help, we have everything – all you need to do is ask. The doors are open for us now. So join up, come along.'

Sometimes we need extra support or help with everyday tasks as we get older. For people who are Deaf, Deafblind or hard of hearing, support might be a little different. Like Charlene, getting the right support can help you stay living at home for longer.

For more information visit [MyAgedCare.gov.au](https://myagedcare.gov.au) or free call **1800 200 422**.

If you are Deaf, Deafblind or hard of hearing, you can access My Aged Care with a [sign language interpreter](#) from [Deaf Connect](#).

