

Introducing Living Well Navigator's Owl Ratings

Looking for a retirement village and not sure where to start? Living Well Navigator's Owl Ratings is the place to go. It's an Australian first; an innovative online resource based on what residents of individual villages say matters to them most.

What is an Owl Rating?

Owl Ratings are designed to assist you in your search for quality retirement living options with plans to extend the concept to home care services and residential aged care.

They independently rate retirement living services on what matters most to you from a personal and emotional perspective. Considerations include the genuine friendliness of staff, the variety of services and activities available, the flexibility and timeliness of services and the look and feel of living spaces.

The Owl Rating is a new initiative of the National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA) in partnership with the [Council on the Ageing Australia](#) (COTA) and global research company, [Gallup](#). The service has been developed in response to feedback that NRMA members have difficulty navigating retirement living and aged care, and knowing how to choose the best service providers.

Russell Westacott, CEO of The Aged Care Rights Service, says the Owl Ratings are important for their potential to provide older people with information they can easily grasp in order to access retirement services.

A common complaint received by his organisation is that retirement village contracts can be too complicated, forcing people to hire lawyers to understand them and therefore draining their already dwindling resources.

He also sees the potential for the ratings to help raise retirement village standards with regard to contracts and other aspects that are found to be important to people.

"If it is well promoted, I imagine that villages that comply with current legislation will want to be part of it," he says.

"Those that are willing to show their hand will be there, so that will help people making a choice."

He says it is an advantage that the ratings scheme is backed by the NRMA because it has been a trusted brand within the seniors' community for many years.

Gillian McFee, the NRMA's aged care industry advisor, agrees. "The NRMA is not a service or funding provider and is completely independent. With the partnership of Gallup and COTA, it brings credibility and trust to what we are trying to do," she says.

"In terms of the navigation for retirement living and aged care, Owl Ratings will make it easier for people to find the best services. It is a win-win, not just for the customer but for aged care and the retirement village industry."

The ratings are also expected to be of interest to the children of people searching for retirement living. Faith Jackson, 85, who lives with her husband Douglas at [Mt Eymard Retirement Village](#) at Bowral, says many of the people who choose to live there have done so after their children have seen it first.

She has been there for almost three years, having lived in the Bowral district for many years. When the house and garden became too big and too much effort, Mt Eymard was the obvious place to go.

Interestingly, Jackson says what she likes best about the place is the amount of help that is available, even if she doesn't use it yet. "As people get older and frail they can have their meals delivered from the kitchen, there is a nurse here regularly and carers. Knowing that is reassuring."

She says the Owl Ratings will be very useful to people searching for a retirement village. "People have told me they visited many different villages before finding this one, which took a great deal of time and effort. It would help to have a guide."

She is not surprised that Mt Eymard has a three-Owl Rating. "It deserves it," she says.

Why you can trust Owl Ratings

An Owl Rating uses a customer engagement metric developed by global research company Gallup.

Retirement living services achieving an official Owl Rating are more likely to be industry leaders. They are the best at understanding your needs and making it possible for you to live life your way, when you need support.

To be Owl Rated, service providers must request to be rated. Supported by its partners, Gallup and COTA Australia, NRMA works with the service provider to conduct a survey of its customers.

NRMA only publishes Owl Ratings for services with high customer engagement scores. This means that the majority of people using that service rate it as a quality provider.

The three levels of Owl Ratings



One Owl means the service is good



Two owls means the service is very good



Three Owls means the service is excellent.

Owl Ratings are valid for two years. A service is then required to apply to be rated again.

How do I find Owl Rated services?

You can search the [Living Well Navigator listings](#) by selecting 'Independent Living' to find the first group of retirement villages with an official Owl Rating in your preferred location.

Where you have had experience with a service, you can also post feedback and give a personal review on that service.

This information will help others like you to make decisions about the services most suitable to their needs.

NRMA believes Owl Ratings help people and retirement living service providers understand what is needed to develop new models of care. Over time, as more services are rated, it hopes to build confidence in the community that providers are available that have a passion for giving the best services possible to enable people to have more personal choice, wellbeing and independence.

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