Catalyst Retirement Communities survey summary - 2025

- At least seven in ten are happy with their community
- Residents are concerned about rising fees, maintenance issues and absent head office management
- Better communication from head office and on-site management is needed

Year four of *The Catalyst Report* summarises feedback from over 15,000 Australians including 3,711 retirement community residents. Thanks to all respondents for your input – the factual, funny, sad and those with advice for the next generation of residents.

House and garden challenges remain the number one reason to consider community living, but residents told us a wide range of factors can trigger a move:

"Criminal activity where I'm living now"
"Weather is horrible in Victoria"
"Avoiding moving to a nursing home"
"I wanted to lock up for a long holiday"
"Looking for a home that doesn't have stairs"
"Told to leave rental and find another place"
"My husband died – I was lonely"
"We could 'cash in' by selling our house"

Overall satisfaction is steady at 72%, though there was a wide spread across different communities. Residents are generally positive about privacy, communal areas, sense of community and social activities. Residents are less happy about head office management, onsite community management and maintenance of facilities. Fewer than half are happy with communications around maintenance.

On-site and head office management at many sites need to up their game to be more visible, responsive and to give better picture on what residents are getting for their monthly fees.

There were plenty of enthusiastic comments about community life:

"You can be as involved as you want with activities. We feel very safe"

"*It's great to not have the responsibility of caring for a yard"*

"We have a sense of community, fully maintained outside areas and can lock and go for long holidays"

But residents warned those considering a move to think carefully:

"There is a certain loss of control. If that would bother you then village life may not be suitable"

"Think long and hard. There can be hidden traps so check your contract fully"

"Sales people will offer you 'the dream life'. Get everything you ask to be replied in writing"

Almost two thirds told Catalyst that the support of their family was important as they made their move. Some are concerned that moving to a retirement community will diminish family wealth ahead of estate planning. The survey revealed different perspectives:

"It's a lifestyle decision for us, not an investment. I wished we had moved earlier to take advantage of all the facilities when we were younger"

"I have to pay a 30% 'exit fee' which has implications for the future".

Most older Australians are comfortable with the concept of precincts offering aged care alongside a retirement village. Australia is not fully prepared for the oncoming 'silver tsunami'. The number of over 85s will increase dramatically in the coming 20 years. Demand for assisted living sites will inevitably grow.

"I would consider a village with a nursing home just next door if one of us needed extra support"

But some can see a downside too.

"I moved to a lifestyle village, I don't really want the place to look like an aged care facility. There would need to be an entirely different campus or have separate spaces"

Most Australians want to stay at home as long as possible. However many will consider retirement living as aged care beds dry up and home care becomes problematic or more expensive. Retirement living is particularly attractive to those seeking to build a new community. Half of all residents are single:

"There is always something to do or someone to talk to"

"Some places are cliquey, but the vibe here is good. We have a few dominant personalities, but you get that in every walk of life".

The most-used facilities in a village are the community room, library, bar and bowling green. Of all the new facilities residents think are worthwhile upgrades – EV charger, café and pickleball courts are the most requested. A local resident survey should always be undertaken to assess options, explain the cost impact, and get the buy-in of the majority.

Thanks again to those who contributed to the study. Names of those receiving the $150 online vouchers will be published at www.thecatalystreport.com.au/vouchers on 20th August 2025