

Starting a new chapter - Paulene's story

Moving into her own SDA apartment after 6 years living in aged care has been a life changing experience for Paulene.

This time last year you were living in RAC, how did you cope with moving during a pandemic?

Yes, I moved through the pandemic. I was just so happy to get out because when you are in aged care during that time they lock up everything and you're only allowed in your kitchen or to go outside a little bit.

The move was good. We were allowed to move all the stuff because my room was next to the door to go outside. They parked the truck there and I was able to move everything - that was a really good day.

I couldn't believe it was happening. I was so excited, I couldn't wait to get everything out of my room, just to get everything in there (the truck) so I could get out. It was such a good feeling - the start of a new beginning, a new chapter in my life.



How did you manage to decorate your apartment so beautifully?

In the morning after breakfast I'd go to the windows and look outside and visualise how I wanted my apartment to look...so I knew what to order straight away. I did most of my ordering while in RAC - it was interior designing on the phone. I bought pillows, crockery, everything, they were all stacked in boxes in my room.

I'd think I need a nice small clock so would look up the web for crystal wall clock - it passed the time in aged care and the workers would ask me what I was looking at, it was a conversation.

When did your SDA apartment start to feel like home to you?

I looked at every room, I thought this is mine no one can take this away from me. I know it sounds clichéd, but I felt like a new woman, a new life, a new beginning, it was exciting, I felt like everything from here on was going to be just great.

I love living here, I love the lights at night time, I just feel very good. Where I live is awesome, it's perfect, I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm in the heart of the city, I have everything I need all around me.

Mum says wouldn't you move, I say no way. I've always worked in the city, the city is my home, it's where I'm most comfortable. I feel at ease, I feel relaxed, this is where I belong.

Were there aspects of living independently that worried you?

No, not all. I've got great carers and one carer worked in RAC with me so she came with me. I felt so comfortable, I thought everything is going to go smoothly, they know what to do. I had no worries whatsoever.

My girls (support workers) are my angels.

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What are the differences between living in RAC and your new SDA home?

The support workers are there just for you, they work with you and for you. If you talked to a carer in aged care they would say they had to go and see someone else. Now they are here just for me and don't have to go somewhere else.

What is the best thing about your life now?

I can do what I want, when I want and how I want. I can be my own person - I say what goes, I make my own choices. I'm free like a butterfly.

Do you have advice for others thinking about making this move?

Tell your support coordinator that you want to live independently, do all the paperwork, do what you have to to get out of aged care. It's all up to you, no one can make the decision for you, you need to speak up.

Have good support around you - people to inspire, people 100% behind you with what you want. Having my Mum and sisters behind me made me feel better.

This year you have also contributed to the work of Summer Foundation, how has that experience been?

It feels good. You feel very important and you feel like you're doing something good for someone else. It feels good that others want to know what you feel about things, and that your answers are valued by other people.

If I can help anyone it makes me feel like I've achieved something, I've done something good.

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