

Living the luxe life comes with hefty price tag

For seniors after luxury in their later years there are some fine options

Jenne Brammer

Perth property prices may be on shaky ground, but the cost of residential care is soaring. Perth this month saw the opening of its seventh aged care facility which charges a Refundable Accommodation Deposit (often called the bond) of \$800,000 or more.

Berrington Aged Care's new \$60 million, 4000sqm facility in McNabb Loop Como, has a maximum RAD of \$895,000, which gets you a private room with ensuite.

The RAD works like an interest-free loan to an aged care home. After other agreed charges are taken into account, the balance of the deposit is refunded (to the person or their estate) when they leave the aged care home.

Most residential care facilities have a maximum RAD below the Aged Care Minister's threshold of \$550,000. Providers wanting to charge more than this amount must seek special approval from the Aged Care Pricing Commissioner. According to the ACP Commissioner, 13 WA groups have approval to exceed the threshold.

There are also further charges associated with all residential care facilities, such as the basic daily fee and means tested care fees.

While Berrington Como may seem pricey, it's a bargain compared with Berrington's Subiaco facility, with a maximum RAD of \$1.25 million — the most expensive facility in Perth.

Both facilities are privately owned by locals Glen and Karen

Gillingham. The Subiaco facility is full and has a waiting list, while Como is filling fast, and expected to be at capacity by September.

So what do you get for the extra money at these premium facilities? They're all located in the better suburbs of Perth, where land values are more expensive. And typically, they more closely represent five-star boutique hotels than traditional nursing homes.

For instance, Berrington Como residents get a life of luxury, including access to an on-site cafe, hairdresser, gymnasium, billiards room, grand piano, quality art works, concierge staff, manicured grounds and lush gardens.

Three-course meals are served by waiters and waitresses daily for lunch and dinner, in a "beautifully appointed" dining room using high-end crockery. Residents' guests are welcome to attend all activities, including meals.

One of Berrington's buzzwords is "outlook living" — in other words residents go there to live and enjoy life. "Micro communities" was also mentioned — rather than the old clinical corridor-based nursing home, it's more hotel like with pods of four or five suites, where people form their own communities and refer to each other as neighbours.

Another of its claims is WA's first interconnectivity IT platform, seamlessly linking residents to families. That means chosen family members can have swipe cards to visit anytime of day. W-fi and central air-conditioning are connected to a sophisticated integrat-

ed platform. There are 50-inch TV screens and residents can video-conference their families.

Bethanie Gwelup was another premium facility to open earlier this year boasting the five-star tag. Its one platinum room has an RAD of \$800,000 while its 56 premium rooms have an RAD of \$700,000. Others are available with RADs of \$600,000 and \$650,000.

Bethanie Gwelup's rooms also avoid the clinical feel, all looking like bedrooms with an ensuite, offering wall-mounted televisions and ample storage. A cafe is available, and there's plenty of dining choices which can cater for residents' guests.

Aged Care Gurus principal Rachel Lane said there was strong demand for facilities at the premium end of the market.

"When people move into residential care, they want to stay in the communities they are familiar with, and local land prices have a big impact on the RADs charged," she said.

"There are also plenty of people who want that luxury, or their children want that luxury for them. They are happy to pay for the better facilities and services, a trend we see continuing with the ageing population.

"Further, following changes introduced by the Federal Government in January, for most people it's now more attractive to sell their home and pay an RAD that closely represents the house price (as both are exempt from the pension assets test), rather than renting out the family home."



Karen and Glen Gillingham at their up-market Berrington aged care facility in Co

SOME OF PERTH'S PRICIEST RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

Mercy Place Mont Clare	Claremont	\$1,125,000
Wearne	Cottesloe	\$900,000
Opal	Applecross	\$1,100,000
Opal	Murdoch	\$875,000
Berrington Care	Subiaco	\$1,250,000
Berrington Care	Como	\$895,000
Bethanie	Gwelup	\$800,000

SOURCE: MYAGEDCARE, PROVIDER WEBSITES (BASED ON SINGLE ROOM WITH ENSUITE)



Mercy Place Mont Clare in Claremont.



Berrington's Subiaco facility.



Bethanie in Gwelup