Purr-fectly happy at home

It's a good thing that feisty Geelong great-grandmother Sandy Dalrymple gets some help around the home. She needs it to ensure she's as fit and as healthy as possible to keep her four cats in the life of luxury they've grown accustomed to.

Sandy started out with moggies Michaela and Lizzie – then Richard and Ginger turned up to her Norlane unit one day and refused to leave.

"They've adopted me, and that's that!" the 78-year-old laughs.

The cats, who sleep on Sandy's bed and sit in the lounge and watch TV with her, clearly recognise a cheerful home-maker when they meet one. Sandy had eight children, and during the early years juggled boiling cloth nappies with cooking casseroles for her tribe, while walking and catching the tram to get around, as she's never driven a car.

Her truck-driver husband Owen died five years ago, and although Sandy has cancer, she refuses to complain about anything.

"What's the use of whinging? It doesn't change anything. I just grin and get on with things," she says.

Sandy is on a level two home care package through Uniting AgeWell and gets help with housework, gardening and has provision to get in some meals. She's also bought a new bed and lift chair through her package to make life at home a lot easier. Vision aids she acquired through her package mean she can carry on knitting and reading.

"Uniting AgeWell is marvellous, they're so kind," Sandy says.

"I get transport to medical appointments, and it's always great to have someone helping out with housework, especially during lockdown. My carer is great company."

Sandy says all this extra care makes it easy to remain upbeat.

"I chat to my family, one of my daughters lives close by, and of course I always natter to the cats," she explains.

The animal lover also has two birds, Cheeky and Smokey – and she talks to them too! Sandy says should she need higher levels of care one day, she'd be keen to move into Uniting AgeWell Kalkee Communities of either Murray or Nangatta.

"I don't want to impose on my family, they're so busy… Both these facilities are excellent, I'd be happy and well looked after there."

Pets are not only allowed but encouraged. Even fussy cats! Though bringing an entire menagerie of animals is another issue.

Sandy is one of many clients in the Geelong area living their best lives at home through Uniting AgeWell. Rebecca Smith, Home Care director, North West Victoria and Tasmania says Uniting AgeWell has a multitude of services in Geelong and that the "superb service and care" provided to home care package clients is what leads to so many word-of-mouth referrals, with business in the area growing.

Uniting AgeWell Kalkee Community Programs Care Advisor, Shell French, says there are more than 100 clients in the Geelong and Surf Coast areas currently receiving a Government-funded home care package with the organisation, giving them access to services from personal care and domestic assistance, through to nursing care and allied health services like physiotherapy, respite care, social connection and assistive technology. Services are also available at any time on a self-funded basis.

For more details on Uniting AgeWell's home care services in Geelong, phone (03) 5243 9566.

The care and assistance Sandra receives from Uniting AgeWell rivals the care that she provides to her pets! (Supplied)

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