

A TRUSTED SOURCE OF TRUTH

2022 FINALIST

For Kerry Darton, being a finalist in the 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year award not only recognises her expertise as an aged care advice specialist, but also acknowledges her as a trusted source of truth for clients.

Jayson Forrest reports.



**KERRY DARTON
2022 FINALIST
ACS AGED CARE ADVISER OF
THE YEAR AWARD**

Looking back, Kerry Darton attributes the time her grandparents moved into aged care and the difficulty her father had in navigating the system, as the catalyst for motivating her to look more closely at the aged care sector.

“To be honest, I didn’t believe aged care could be that complicated but when I started to look more closely into it, I soon realised just how complicated it actually was,” says Kerry. “At the time, I was also at a juncture in my career as a financial adviser. I wanted to specialise in an area of advice where I could make a real difference in the lives of people, and I decided that was aged care advice. I haven’t looked back since.”

That decision led Kerry to set up Clarity Financial Advice in July 2021. And although she had been providing aged care advice within a broader financial planning business for a number of years prior to that, she knew it was the right decision to specialise in providing strategic aged care advice.

“Aged care decisions are not just financial, they are often emotional,” she says. “People often feel confused and guilty putting loved ones into aged care. By going out on my own, it enabled me to provide families with an impartial third party view on the issues affecting them, with absolutely no vested interest in the decisions they settle on.”



Strategic Advice

Today, Kerry specialises in strategic aged care advice. This type of advice specifically deals with the financial impact of decisions being made when a person – who is usually in the last 25 per cent of their retirement – requires additional assistance with everyday living and activities.

“The advice aims to provide clients with an understanding of the financial implications of government support, aged care costs, and the estate planning intentions of the person requiring residential care,” says Kerry.

“Aged care advice also provides an impartial explanation of the consequences of decisions being made for a loved one, based on their individual circumstances, as well as how the aged care system works. It enables people to cut through the white noise surrounding the aged care system and care options, and provides clients with a much clearer understanding of the most suitable options available to them.”

Kerry passionately believes aged care advice matters because despite the very best intentions of family members, wrong decisions can lead to unintended consequences.

“Aged care is incredibly complex, so without professional aged care advice, it is very easy to make expensive mistakes.”

Kerry Darton



ADVICE OFFERING

As an aged care specialist, Kerry tends to work with clients who already have a relationship with an existing financial adviser, which means they generally understand the value of advice. She prides her aged care advice offering on the assistance she delivers to her clients in helping them to understand the options available to their loved ones when independent living starts to become challenging for them.

“Many of the people I deal with have assets other than the family home. So, I look at the implications of using those assets versus selling the family home to fund their aged care needs. It’s really about helping them understand those decisions because quite often, it can be an emotional decision – not a practical one – based on preserving an asset, like the family home, for the next generation,” she says.

“My advice is focused on how to pay for care, the decision options and their impacts on the cost of care. We also consider the financial implications for retaining certain assets, like the family home.”

Kerry Darton

“Importantly, it’s about implementing a strategy that is in the best interest of the person requiring care and which is safest for them.”

Kerry explains that while she fully understands why people want to stay in their homes as they age, she is mindful that this decision needs to be balanced with the likelihood of increased isolation which they may experience as their mobility and health decline. “This means staying in the family home is not always a safe solution for an individual,” she says.

Not surprisingly, Kerry is a passionate advocate for aged care advice. She believes there are two main reasons why people should seek advice on aged care:

1. Best intentions can lead to unintended consequences. It's easy to make an irreversible and expensive mistake if you're not careful.
2. Often, residential care is not considered until a crisis happens. Getting specialist aged care advice allows families to spend more time, both emotionally and socially, supporting the person going into care, instead of devoting precious hours to making sense of the aged care system and the finances.

“For people needing aged care advice, my best tip for them is to stop, take a breath and get advice before they start this journey. That's because with aged care, if you make a mistake, it's very hard to unwind it. However, with the right help, you can get through this challenging and emotional time, and still have a great outcome,” says Kerry.



Awards validate specialist work

Kerry's decision to specialise in aged care advice is paying off, with clients valuing the peace of mind she provides them with her service.

“There is a lot of misinformation circulating around aged care,” says Kerry. “As a third party participant with absolutely no vested interests, I'm able to impartially listen to family members, and hear their competing ideas about what to do with mum or dad. I'm then able to help them understand what the reality actually is.

“Clients are reassured knowing I have their back throughout the entire process. They come to me confused and stressed, not knowing the costs of aged care and how to proceed, but with the right advice, they are now better equipped to find the right care facility for their loved one and spend their time settling them into care.”

It's fitting that Kerry's commitment to aged care advice has been recognised, with Kerry named a finalist in the 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year award. In congratulating Kerry, Assyat David – Director of Aged Care Steps – says the award is aimed at raising awareness of the highly valued and expert services that aged care advisers provide.

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“Aged care advice plays a critical role in ensuring that clients have more choices and greater control as they plan for all phases of their retirement. We believed it was time to recognise the great work advisers achieve in this increasingly important area of advice by launching the inaugural Aged Care Adviser of the Year awards,” says Assyat. “We congratulate Kerry on her achievements and for being named a finalist in these prestigious awards.”

Being named a finalist in the Aged Care Adviser of the Year award is not lost on Kerry, who believes it is validation that she is providing a quality and valued service.

“This award is not only great recognition for the advice I am providing to my clients, but it also acknowledges that I am an aged care advice specialist and a trusted source of truth for my clients,” she says. “The award also confirms I’m on the right track with what I’m trying to achieve with my advice at Clarity Financial Advice, and that is to help my clients live their best lives possible.”

ABOUT THE AGED CARE ADVISER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year award celebrates the outstanding achievements of financial advisers providing aged care advice. This award recognises Kerry Darton as demonstrating advice excellence and professional commitment to the provision of aged care advice to older Australians and their families.

The Aged Care Adviser of the Year award is sponsored by Aged Care Steps – a market leader in the provision of aged care resources and tools for financial advisers.

