

WHY LIVING NEAR YOUR KIDS IS BEST

Choosing where you'll live when you retire depends on many factors – but for many people, living close, but not too close, to their children is ideal



GOOD SIGN: Having close relationships is considered a pillar of health at any age, below, Bernice Bolton.



When Bernice Bolton was deciding where to live in her retirement, it was the draw of her family that prompted her to make the move.

Two years ago, the 77-year-old relocated from Hervey Bay to Brisbane, where her three children live, as well as most of her six grandchildren.

"I was ready to downsize and find something smaller with independent living," she said, choosing to move into Azure Blue Carina, a retirement village a few kilometres east of the city.

"All the family was here – the three children – they were all down here. And looking to the future, I thought it's not convenient if I'm in a retirement village in Hervey Bay. So, I moved down here."

Having close relationships is considered a pillar of health at any age, and for many people, the family contributes the strongest bonds.

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies'

report, Australia: Then and Now, most Australians were highly satisfied with their family relationships.

"While the size and shapes of families have changed over the past 40 years, they remain important sources of our closest relationships," the report said.

Of all the immediate family connections, parents indicated the highest level of happiness, with 82 per cent of people rating their relationship with their children between eight and 10 on a scale of zero to 10. While most people love their family and want to spend a lot of time with them, people still value their own space, with just one in 20 family households including multigenerational families.

Federation University School of Health Professor Collette Browning, an expert in healthy ageing and psychology, said humans were social animals.

"Social interaction can have positive effects on health and wellbeing if it is meaningful and welcome," she said.

"I however, more is not always better. Family social

interactions are not always positive. Older people may report that their family are not supportive enough while others feel that families are too interfering. The latter can occur when children believe they know what is best for Mum or Dad, challenging the older person's autonomy."

Living within a short drive of family members was often positive for each generation.

"If both parties agree it is a good idea, then this can be good all around," Prof Browning said. "Children may feel better about being able to assist and provide social support to their older parents and older parents may find meaning in providing social support to their children and grandchildren. It works both ways."

Mrs Bolton is a prime example of this happy balance: she now lives in proximity to her family, but doesn't live under the same roof as them and retains her independence.

She enjoys a close relationship with her children – they talk every day – and helps out when needed with her grandchildren. They range in age from two years to 24.

"I'm able to do it and I'm quite happy to do it," she said.

Asked how she feels after relocating to Brisbane on her own, Mrs Bolton said: "I loved Hervey Bay but once I got down here, I was fine."

She has friends from a career as a midwife and schooling, plus church and village social activities on the go. There was Christmas in July, monthly happy hours, weekly morning teas in her building, and special dinners every few weeks.

"I blow in and out like a butterfly," Mrs Bolton said.

"Sometimes I wonder what I used to do before I came down here."

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