



Consumer advisory body guide

Consumer advisory bodies are a way for you to have a say about your care and services.



Australian Government
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Engage
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About this guide

This guide can help you be a part of a consumer advisory body.

This guide covers:

- what consumer advisory bodies are
- your role and your provider's role in consumer advisory bodies
- a checklist for your first meeting
- tips for working with other members and your provider.




Becoming a member of a consumer advisory body

Why consumer advisory bodies matter

Being a consumer advisory body member gets your voice heard.

Your feedback can change the way your service provides care and services.

What consumer advisory bodies do

	Connect with people at your service to understand their needs, goals and preferences.
	Review information, think, discuss and share feedback about care and services.
	Get your voice heard by giving feedback to those who can improve care and services.





Your role as a member

A consumer advisory body is mostly made up of people who receive care and services from your provider. As a member of a consumer advisory body, you help your provider improve their care and services.

You collect feedback from people in your service. Your feedback goes directly to your provider's governing body, so they can hear about what matters most.

Your governing body must respond to the feedback you give them in writing.

Your provider's role

	<p>Offer to set up a consumer advisory body at least once every 12 months.</p> <p>When your provider regularly asks you to join a consumer advisory body, you are more likely to get involved. This helps the consumer advisory body keep a good number of members and continue to represent all people receiving care and services.</p>
	<p>Make the offer to start a consumer advisory body in writing.</p> <p>Your provider can write to you in different ways to tell you about consumer advisory bodies. They can send emails, newsletters or personal letters, put up posters and pamphlets, and give workers calling cards to get people involved. Tell your service if there is a way you prefer to get information.</p>
	<p>Think about feedback from consumer advisory bodies when making decisions.</p> <p>Governing bodies must consider the feedback the consumer advisory body gives them. They must genuinely think about the feedback and how they can use it to improve services and care.</p>
	<p>Write to the consumer advisory body to explain how they've used the feedback.</p> <p>Governing bodies must tell you in writing how they considered and used your feedback. They may not always be able to give you what you ask, but they will need to explain what they can, can't and will do.</p>

If your provider is a government organisation or a local government authority, they don't have to offer to start a consumer advisory body.

You can still share your thoughts, ideas and give feedback about your care and services. Talk to your provider today!

Get started

Set up a consumer advisory body

Ask your provider how you can set up a consumer advisory body. Work with them to start the process and get their help along the way. Your provider can help connect you with other older people at your service so they can also get involved.

Join an existing consumer advisory body

Ask your provider to connect you with the chair or a member of the consumer advisory body. Then you can find out more about how they work and decide if you want to get involved.

Access resources to help members

We have a [Consumer advisory body toolkit](#) on our website to help you get started. It has information to help with meetings, guide discussions and support members to take part.

Consumer advisory groups are just one way you can give feedback. Not everyone will want to join a group. Your service has other ways you can give feedback. Ask them how.



Everyone is welcome!



Consumer advisory bodies are successful when they include different voices and represent all the people receiving care.

Think about the people in your service and who could be involved. For example, people who:

- have a disability
- have mental health conditions
- are from different backgrounds
- are LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, asexual)
- are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- speak different languages or were born in different countries
- are from different cultures
- have different work histories, education and qualifications.

Being a member of a consumer advisory body

Tips for members

	Get to know the other consumer advisory body members.
	Reach out to people in your service to get their views about the topics you discuss.
	Check that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities.
	Confirm the goals and expectations of the consumer advisory body.
	Allow everyone's voice to be heard in meetings and respect their opinions.
	Keep personal information private, people feel safe when they have their say.
	Have open lines of communication. This means your provider knows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• who is on the consumer advisory body• when you meet• when and how you give feedback to the governing body.
	Decide how you'll report your suggestions and recommendations to the governing body. It could be through a discussion with someone in the governing body or putting your feedback in writing.
	Find out from your governing body when they'll tell you how they have used your feedback.

How your service can support you

✓	Make sure everyone knows about your consumer advisory body and encourage people to get involved.
✓	Provide a place to meet that is accessible and comfortable, such as a room to meet in person or an online meeting app.
✓	Provide opportunities for everyone who is interested to take part and help reduce barriers to people attending.
✓	Coordinate meetings, so they are at a time that works for everyone, including your supporters.
✓	Find, print and share information for the consumer advisory body.
✓	Offer to send a service representative to your meetings when you want them.
✓	Confirm with the governing body how you want to receive reports from them about the feedback you provide.

Ask your provider to help you coordinate your consumer advisory body and run your meetings.



Your first meeting checklist

1. Decide how many consumer advisory bodies you need and what the focus is for each of them.

You could have more than one consumer advisory body if there are a lot of people who want to take part, or you have specific topics of focus. For example, you could have one for each of the following:

- food, dining and nutrition
- communication, feedback and complaints
- improving activities
- managing visitors.

2. Have a range of different members.

Consumer advisory body membership should represent the people in your service. Try to involve people with specific needs and different backgrounds. For example, people who:

- speak different languages
- are from different cultures
- have a disability
- are LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, asexual).

3. Set a meeting schedule.

Decide how often you'll meet and for how long. For example, you could meet every 3 months for 2 hours or every 6 weeks for an hour. If something is more urgent, you could meet weekly.

4. Assign roles.

Having clear roles and expectations can help meetings run smoothly. You may want to give people roles. For example:

- a chair to set up, run and finish the meeting
 - a minute taker to record actions
 - a timekeeper to keep the meeting to time.
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5. Decide the term for each role.

You could set a limit on how long people stay in their roles. This is called a term. For example, a chair may change every 6 or 12 months or the consumer advisory body may vote each year to change roles.

6. Set dates and the format for giving feedback to your governing body.

Agree with your provider how they will get your feedback to your governing body. For example, you could do it in writing or through talking directly to a member of your governing body. Your governing body must respond in writing, ask them how and when they will do this.

7. Develop a welcome pack for new members.

Work with your provider to create a welcome pack.
The pack could include:

- a welcome letter
 - a list of members and their terms
 - how often and where you meet
 - contact details.
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8. Set up a system for storing your records and documents.

Ask your provider how they'll help store and file your documents. Documents need to be secure, confidential and easy for members to access.

9. Set a schedule for inviting new members.

Your provider needs to offer or revise consumer advisory bodies at least every 12 months. Work with your provider to decide when and how you'll start new members and change or replace members when they leave.

10. Create an agenda for your meetings.

Form an agenda to share with members before your meetings, so everyone can come prepared.

11. Talk to your provider about accessibility.

Ask your provider about how they can make your consumer advisory body meetings more accessible. This includes finding a place for meetings that is convenient and comfortable for all members.

Your provider can help you make your meetings more accessible for people who:

- speak different languages
- are vision impaired
- are hearing impaired
- have physical disabilities
- are cognitively impaired or have dementia
- have mental health conditions.

12. Get to know the Consumer advisory body toolkit.

Check the [Consumer advisory body toolkit](#).

It can be useful in your meetings.

More information

If you don't receive an invitation to start or join a consumer advisory body, or have any questions, talk to your provider. If that's difficult or uncomfortable for you, contact us for help.

You can reach us on: **1800 951 822**

9 am – 5 pm Monday to Friday

Info@agedcarequality.gov.au

You can also get support or advice from independent advocacy services.

[The Older Person's Advocacy Network](#) (OPAN) Support Line offers free, independent advice.

OPAN helps fix problems that people have with Australian Government-funded aged care services.

Employees and advocates from OPAN organisations can't join a consumer advisory body. An advocate may be able to attend a consumer advisory body meeting to talk about what they do and your rights.

OPAN contact details: **1800 700 600**

8 am – 8 pm Monday to Friday

10 am – 4 pm Saturdays

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

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Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

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