



Consumers at the centre of care

The flipbook guides have been designed as supplementary supports for the learning modules. The guides include key messages and insights for your continued reflection.

Disclaimer: The new Aged Care Act 2024 (the Act) starts on 1 November 2025. The Act replaces existing aged care legislation. The Aged Care Rules (the Rules) are expected to be finalised before the Act starts. The Rules give more information about how the new Act will work. This resource is in draft. We will update it when both the Act and the Rules come into force.

Need to know: Consumer-centred care

Consumer-centred care is care and services designed around an individual's needs, preferences and background. It includes a partnership between consumers and providers, where consumers are front and centre of care and service design, delivery and seeing the consumer as a person and not just a recipient of care or services.

When consumers are partners in decisions about their care, benefits include:

- increased knowledge and empowerment
- consumer loyalty and accountability
- increased mutual respect and enhanced relationships
- flexibility and innovation in care delivery
- achievement of best outcomes in care and financial stability.

To achieve this goal, providers must strengthen their partnerships and foster open, collaborative relationships with consumers in all aspects of planning, delivering and evaluating care and services.

Obligations for consumer-centred care

Older Australian's deserve an aged care sector that they can have confidence in, with a stronger focus on the quality and safety of care a person receives. Under the *Aged Care Act 2024* and subordinate legislation, aged care providers have a range of requirements in relation to placing consumers at the centre of care.



Strong and authentic partnership with the older person is a foundation of the **strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards**.

Providers are required to demonstrate how older people are involved in the planning, delivery and review of their care and services under the standards.



The **Statement of Rights** is grounded in Human Rights and focuses on empowering older people to play an active role in understanding and exercising their right to express their needs and direct their care. Providers are required to support consumers to understand their rights and make their own decisions to ensure they are at the centre of care.

Obligations for consumer-centred care



Restrictive practices

Aged care providers have specific responsibilities under the ***Aged Care Act 2024*** (the Act) relating to the use of restrictive practices in relation to an individual.

The Act outlines that a restrictive practice is used only as a last resort to prevent harm to the individual or other persons, and after consideration of the likely impact of the use of the practice on the individual. It also requires that restrictive practices are:

- used in the least restrictive form and for the shortest time needed
- used with the informed consent of the individual
- to the extent possible, used only after alternative strategies have been applied and documented
- Proportionate in response to the risk of harm to the individual or other people
- documented, monitored and regularly reviewed.

The **strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards**, Standard 3 – Care and services, outcome 3.2, reinforces how the provider must consider the rights of the consumer and minimise use of restrictive practices.

Tips for fostering consumer-centred care

Embed the consumer's voice in governing body meetings

- **Establish a consumer advisory body** to provide coordinated (and representative) input from consumers into all aspects of the organisation. Aged care providers must offer, in writing, to establish and/or review a consumer advisory body in their service at least once every 12 months. The governing body must consider all consumer advisory body feedback and respond to them in writing explaining how they have considered it.
- **Circulate a summary of meeting outcomes** to all older people and their representatives.
- **Invite consumers to contribute to strategic planning days** and work with them to prepare for the day, including communicating the day's events, the agenda and what is required from them.

Partner with consumers

Governing bodies should also ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to how consumers are engaged in making decisions about all aspects of their care and services. This can be achieved by:

- Understanding how management currently partners with consumers and where changes may be needed.
- Identifying how management plans partnership engagement activities with consumers and how these are implemented in a sustainable and ongoing way (in the context of broader governance and risk management systems).
- Understanding how management encourages the workforce at all levels to improve partnership with consumers.
- Continually monitoring and evaluating consumer's partnership through reporting and conversations with management.

Tips for fostering consumer-centred care (continued)

Implement and monitor systems and processes

Ask questions and obtain assurance from management about the relevant systems and processes in place to support better practice consumer-centred approaches, including:

- Provide education and training practices for the workforce to promote learning and skills development, care understanding and autonomy for consumers.
- Establish systems and processes to capture the consumer's voice, including complaints.
- Embed a culture that encourages consumers and their families to provide feedback and complaints.

Ensure that organisational policies and procedures have a focus on the consumer

- Table key organisational documents such as commitment statements, strategic plans, and policies in governing body meetings to demonstrate commitment to consumer-centred care.

Monitor that services and care align with the consumer's needs and preference

- Ask questions and obtain assurance from management about how the services and care provided in the organisation align with the needs and preferences of consumers.
- Actively review trends in relation to the consumer's feedback, complaints, and experience. Use this information to inform decision making and make improvements in how care and services are delivered.

Is your governing body placing consumers at the centre of care?

Consider the following questions:

Does this apply in your organisation?

What actions could be taken to ensure that the governing body and executives are engaging with consumers about key strategic decisions?



1. Have you ever asked your consumers to describe...

- How the organisation supports and encourages them to be involved in designing and improving care and services? They can also describe how this has made a difference to the quality of care they receive.
- A range of ways they can take part in influencing how care and services are developed, delivered, and evaluated? They could also say how these meet their diverse needs.



2. Have you ever asked your workforce and others...

- Can management describe the different ways the organisation involves consumers in developing, delivering and managing care and services? They can also describe how it has made a difference to their approach.
- Can staff demonstrate they understand the organisation's commitment to and processes for involving consumers?
- Can staff provide examples of how the organisation uses the results of consumer's feedback to improve how they deliver care and services?
- Does the orientation, induction, training programs or other records support staff in providing relationship-centred care to consumers?

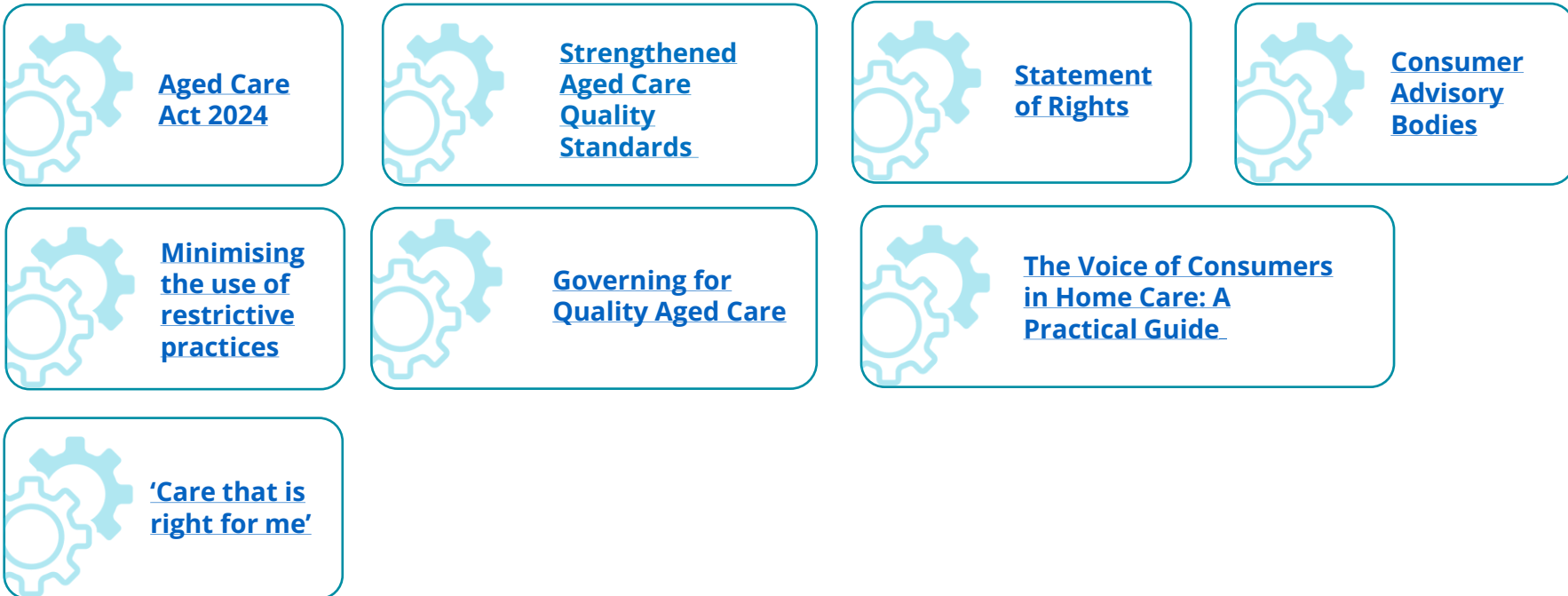


3. Does our organisation's...

- Records show the organisation involves consumers in the development, delivery and evaluation of care and services?
- Planning or budget documents identify effective times and places to partner with consumers?
- Evidence show that our groups responsible for directing development and redesign projects include consumer's representatives who can reflect what older people want and need?
- Records of meetings, consultations or forums with consumers and their community reflect the issues important to them? (This could cover any issues such as the cultural safety of care and service programs, quality of meals or the arrangement of the service environment).
- Evidence and examples of how the organisation shows, monitors, and reports how it has performed against this Standard? Examples of continuous improvement against this requirement.



Additional resources





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