



Partnering with people living with dementia

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: Partnering with people living with dementia

As Australia's ageing population continues to grow, there has also been an increase in the number of Australians living with dementia. In 2025, there are an estimated 433,300 Australians living with dementia. Without a medical breakthrough, the number of people living with dementia is expected to increase to 812,500 by 2054.

According to Dementia Australia, dementia has been called the second leading cause of death for Australians, and the leading cause of death for women. Dementia comes in many forms.

Governing bodies and executives need to be focused on delivering safe, quality care to all consumers. Additionally, 68% of aged care residents have moderate to severe cognitive impairment, highlighting the need for providers to ensure delivery of dementia care is consumer-centred and of the highest quality.



**Workforce and
organisational
development**



**Inclusive
physical and
social
environments**



**Meaningful
engagement and
partnership in
care delivery**



**An empathetic
approach**

Best practice partnering with people living with dementia

An essential aspect of improving dementia care is ensuring that quality dementia care forms part of an aged care provider's core business. It's readily known that aligning operating and service models design to care recipients provides better outcomes.

The following three elements should be considered by governing bodies and executives when looking to improve the delivery of care for people living with dementia.



Best practice partnering with people living with dementia (continued)

01 Capability:

There are two capability elements essential to the delivery of best practice dementia care



Workforce

Staff at all levels of the organisation should regularly receive explicit competency-based training in caring for people living with dementia, including:

- the delivery of consumer-centred, rights based and culturally safe, trauma aware and healing informed care
- the fundamentals of caring for people living with dementia
- psychosocial approaches to addressing the consumer's needs
- behaviour and clinical management.

Leadership

Governing bodies and executives should:

- Promote a positive culture around ongoing learning in the workplace
- Develop and fund education and career pathways to enable their workforce to better deliver care to people living with dementia.
- Ensure there is an effective system to identify and review the strengths of people living with dementia and encouraging their use on a day-to-day basis.

Best practice partnering with people living with dementia (continued)

02 Environmental considerations:



What are environmental considerations?:

- The environment we are surrounded by in our daily lives gives us resources for presenting ourselves to the world around us. While people living with dementia may have an altered perception of time and space, they remain in a world where relationships, objects and situations matter.

What are best practice design principles?

- The experience of a person living with dementia should frame the design of residential and respite facilities. This involves seeing the world through the eyes of people living with dementia. To be dementia-friendly, facilities need to:
 - Enable the person – Support older people to live in a place that maintains their health, wellbeing and a sense of identity.
 - Cultivate a home – Create a familiar environment in which older people have privacy and control, and feel they belong.
 - Access the outdoors – Support older people to see, access and spend time outdoors, in contact with nature.
 - Connect with community – Encourage older people to connect with family, friends and community, and continue to participate in meaningful activities.
- View the National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines fact sheet from the Department of Health, Disability and Aging for more information on better practice design for dementia.

Best practice partnering with people living with dementia (continued)

03 Organisational culture:



Delivering safe, quality and inclusive care

- Governing bodies are required to demonstrate there is an organisational culture in place that focuses on partnering with people living with dementia and their representatives.

Partnership in care

- The engagement of consumers in partnerships is most successful when the principles of partnerships and consumer-centred care are embedded within the organisation's culture.
- View the Partnering with Consumers Standards for more information on creating partnerships in care.

Minimising the use of restrictive practices for people living with dementia

- Restrictive practices are often used on people living with dementia, particularly in residential aged care facilities. It is the responsibility of the governing body to ensure the minimisation of restrictive practices across an organisation by:
 - ensuring the workforce is appropriately skilled and has a clear understanding of the clinical aspects of dementia and the disease trajectory
 - providing a holistic, consumer-centred approach, which includes high quality communication and empathy.
- Ensuring that consumers who experience cognitive impairment whether acute, chronic or transitory should receive comprehensive care that optimises clinical outcomes and is aligned with their needs, goals and preferences.
- Identifying and understanding situations and events that may lead to changes in behaviours.

Tips for partnering with people living with dementia



Tips for partnering with people living with dementia (continued)



Embed the consumers voice in governing body meetings

- Invite representatives for and/or people living with dementia to assist in setting the agenda for a governing body meeting.
- Establishing a reference group, subcommittee or advisory body of consumers, including (if possible) people living with dementia, or their representatives.
- Engage in strategic planning sessions that are focused solely on improving outcomes for people living with dementia.



Engage people with dementia

Ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to how people living with dementia and their representatives are engaged and embedded in decision making regarding all aspects of their care and service, including:

- Understand the steps management take to embed the voice of people living with dementia in day-to-day activities and where changes may be needed.
- Determine how the needs of people living with dementia can be better included in operational design.
- Develop a workplace plan to increase the workforce's understanding of partnering with people living with dementia and how to better deliver safe and high-quality care.
- Understanding how management encourages the workforce at all levels to improve care for those with people living with dementia.
- Continually engage with consumers and their representatives to monitor and evaluate the quality of they are receiving. Information gathered can be used to inform continuous improvement activities and ensure the voice of people living with dementia is kept at the centre of activities.

Tips for partnering with people living with dementia (continued)



Implement and monitor systems and processes

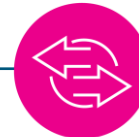
Ask questions and obtain assurances from management as to the relevant systems and processes in place to support better practice care for people living with dementia, including:

- Providing education and training for the workforce to promote learning and skills development, care, understanding and empathy for people living with dementia.
- Embedding a culture that enables continuous learning and improvement based off on feedback and complaints.
- A clear and consistent approach to monitoring and actioning feedback from consumers.



Ensure that organisational policies and procedures have been designed with people living with dementia in mind

- Regularly table and review key organisational documents, such as commitment statements, strategic plans, and policies, in governing body meetings to ensure that the requirements of people living with dementia are kept front of mind.
- There are established policies and procedures in place which specify how to identify signs of cognitive deterioration and what to do when these are identified.



Monitor that services and care align with the needs and preferences of people with dementia

- Ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to how the services and care provided in the organisation align with the needs and preferences of people with dementia.
- Actively review trends in relation to feedback, complaints and experience, and use this information to inform decision making and to identify where improvements in care and service delivery can be made.

Is your governing body effectively partnering with people living with dementia?

**Does this apply in your organisation?
What actions could be taken to ensure that the governing body and executives are making informed decisions that place people living with dementia at their centre?**



01 Have you ever asked your governing body...

- Do we effectively embed the needs of people living with dementia in our governing body discussions, and do these needs filter through into our strategic decisions and provider operations?
- Do we have the necessary knowledge to articulate the needs and preferences of people living with dementia in our strategic conversations? If not, what processes can we put in place to ensure we are representing people living with dementia effectively?
- Does our provider effectively incorporate dementia-friendly design in our residential care?
- Do we have strategies in place to ensure the continued education and training of our workforce on dementia care?

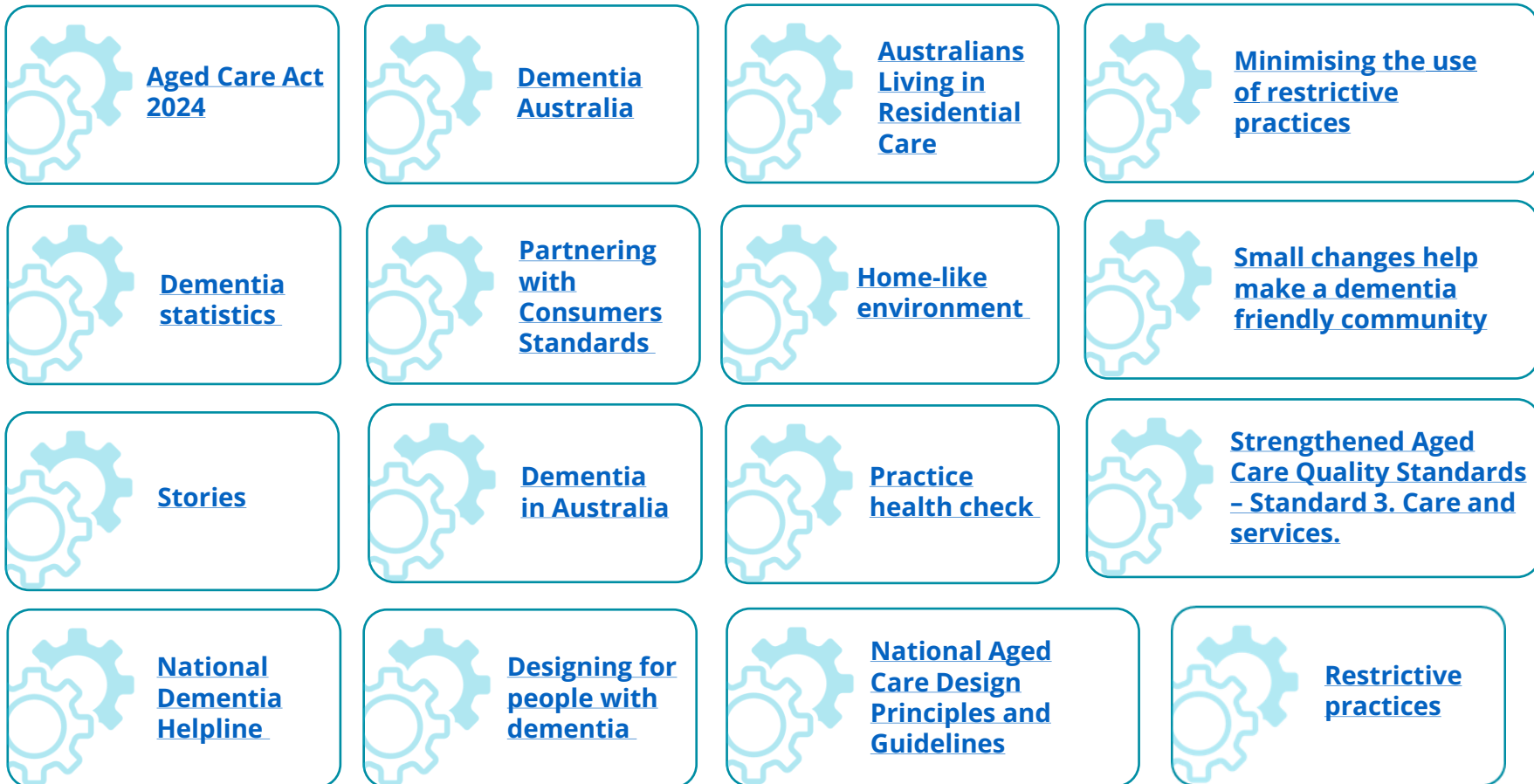
02 Have you ever asked...

- Can our management outline how the needs and preferences of people living with dementia are incorporated into the development, delivery and management of care and services?
- Can our management outline how operational practices have shifted to better support people living with dementia?
- Are our staff comfortable that they have the necessary skills and capabilities to provide high-quality care to people living with dementia?
- Can our staff provide examples of how the organisation has changed their delivery of care and services based on the needs and preferences of people living with dementia?

03 Does your organisation...

- Have records showing that the organisation has taken adequate steps to embed the needs and preferences of people living with dementia into the development, delivery and evaluation of care and services?
- Have evidence showing groups responsible for directing the development and the redesign of projects have emphasised the needs and preferences of people living with dementia?
- Have records of meetings, consultations or forums with people living with dementia or their representatives reflected on issues important to their needs and preferences (e.g. restrictive practices, quality of life and daily activities, arrangement of service environments)?
- Have evidence and examples of how the organisation shows, monitors and reports how it has improved its practices to better support people living with dementia?

Additional resources





Contact us:



www.agedcarequality.gov.au



[1800 951 822](tel:1800951822)



info@agedcarequality.gov.au