

Public consultation summary report

A report on the outcomes of our public
consultation on draft guidance documents
on the new strengthened Aged Care
Quality Standards

August 2024



Australian Government
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Engage
Empower
Safeguard



Introduction

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission is Australia's aged care regulator. We support and oversee aged care providers to ensure older people receive the care and services they want and need.

Two key developments have shaped our approach to future regulation:

1. [The 2021 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.](#)

The Royal Commission's report told us some ways to improve aged care services to older people.

2. [A proposed new Aged Care Act and regulatory model.](#)

The proposed new Aged Care Act and regulatory model are being written by the Department of Health and Aged Care. The new Aged Care Act will have strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards (strengthened Standards).

Strengthened Standards and draft supporting documents

The current Aged Care Quality Standards were introduced in 2019. They ensure that the care and services provided by aged care providers are:

- safe
- high quality
- meet the needs and preferences of older people they care for.

In 2023, we worked with the Department of Health and Aged Care to help develop new strengthened [Standards](#). They will help improve care and services to older people. The strengthened standards are expected to be introduced with the new Aged Care Act.

Sector support

We prepared several draft supporting documents (documents) to help aged care providers to get ready for the strengthened Standards. We worked with many providers to develop these documents.

These documents help explain the strengthened Standards to aged care providers and the sector. They help providers understand what has changed, what to expect and give some practical examples of what providers can do to comply with the strengthened Standards.

The documents we have developed include:

- provider, governing body and worker guidance (guidance materials)
- audit methodology
- evidence mapping
- pre-audit preparation tool
- request for information templates
- glossary of terms

We also released a framework analysis that shows the difference between the current Standards and the Strengthened Standards.



Public consultation in 2024

From 6 February to 19 May 2024, we asked aged care providers, government, and other stakeholders for their thoughts on the documents to ensure they will be useful to the sector.

We called this process the *Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards guidance consultation process* (public consultation). We would like to thank everyone who took the time to give feedback.

How we collected feedback

During the public consultation, we collected feedback in four different ways:

1. We received written submissions.

18 written submissions were received from individuals and organisations with an interest in aged care, including providers, advocacy groups, healthcare professionals, community members and government.

2. We hosted a 1-hour webinar for the aged care sector.

This was called *Supporting sector readiness for the new strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards*. It took place online and over 3,500 people joined including providers, aged care workers, advocacy bodies, and government officials. A recording is available on YouTube for people to watch. During this session, we explained the strengthened Standards. We told attendees where they could find more information. We gave attendees a chance to

ask questions. We also told attendees how they could share their views with us.

3. We ran a public survey.

This was called the *strengthened Quality Standards Guidance Feedback Survey*. It was mostly aimed at aged care providers, but anyone could respond. We received just over 350 responses to the survey, including from older people.

4. We had conversations with 70 aged care providers.

We held seven online roundtable talks with different provider groups. These took place during March and April 2024. The groups of providers were:

- from rural and remote areas
- delivering care in residential or home and community care settings
- caring for First Nations people
- caring for culturally and linguistically diverse people.

We talked about the strengthened Standards and our documents with each group.

We also spoke to a group of Industrial Associations about the guidance materials we had developed for aged care workers.

We asked people how to make our guidance materials and other documents easy to understand and follow.



Reviewing feedback from the public consultation

The Commission took the following steps to review feedback from the public consultation.

1. Review of written submissions received by the Commission.

We looked for common themes, and for specific ideas about how to improve our documents.

2. Review of responses to the public survey.

We collected and organised all the survey data to find common themes in people's responses. We also looked for specific ideas about how to improve the documents.

3. Review of roundtable talks.

We reviewed information from the roundtable talks. We found themes were consistent with the written submissions, and the survey responses.

Feedback themes

Most of the feedback was about the guidance materials. There was also a lot of useful feedback about the audit methodology and the other documents. This feedback helped us to understand how to make the documents better and more relevant.

We learnt five key things:

1. Many people found the information hard to understand. This was because the language and layout were too

complicated. We need to make the documents simpler.

2. The documents could better explain what providers need to do. Clear steps and real-life examples are needed.
3. Some of the information isn't relevant to both home and residential care settings. We need to give more examples of the differences between these two settings.
4. Aged care workers come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The information could be made more accessible, including by providing translated versions.
5. Aged care in rural and remote areas can be different. We need to consider these differences in our documents.

Updating the documents

We are using the feedback to make changes to the:

- guidance materials
- audit methodology
- pre-audit preparation tool
- request for information templates
- evidence mapping.

To make these changes, we took three main steps:

1. We made a list of potential changes.

This list was based on the five feedback themes. We made sure we considered all feedback carefully and potential changes were designed to improve the documents.



2. Checked the list with other Commission staff.

We did this to confirm which changes would be made. We are recording the reasons why a change could be made, or not.

3. Updated the guidance materials and audit methodology.

Using the list, we will make updates in line with what we agreed should change. As much as possible, the documents will match the feedback we received.

Outcomes

The main changes to the **guidance materials** will be simplified language and the addition of more examples.

The guidance material will have more information for providers in different settings such as home and community care, rural and remote services and services that care for older people from different cultural or language groups.

We will make it more accessible, by including translated versions, learning videos and transcripts.

The guidance material will be much clearer, giving practical steps for providers, governing bodies and workers to follow. This will help them meet the strengthened Standards.

We are also developing 'key topic fact sheets' to help providers understand new or expanded topics in the strengthened

Standards and how they can demonstrate they comply with Outcomes.

We are working on case studies to give practical examples of good practice.

The draft guidance material has been put in a digital guidance tool (<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/standards-guidance/intro>), which offers easy navigation and a print option for providers or workers seeking this function. We will update this tool when we have finished making the changes to our guidance.

To support the guidance material, we are developing a Quality Standards Resource Centre with resources that are evidence based and relevant to the aged care sector.

The main changes to our **audit methodology** will be changing the information to better explain to our staff how to audit providers.

The updated methodology will help us ensure that providers are delivering care and services that meet the strengthened Standards. From this, we will develop guidance for providers on how to prepare for audit.

The **pre-audit preparation** tool and the **request for information** templates will be added together into one tool. This will help providers at the start of the audit process.

The **evidence mapping** will be updated with clearer information, more questions relevant to different care settings and the duplication will be removed.



Next steps

We have listened to feedback and will take a step-by-step process to make improvements.

We are committed to helping the aged care sector get ready for the strengthened Standards and being clear about our regulation approach. This includes providing documents that are clear and useful.

We will include the updated versions of the supporting documents on our [digital guidance tool](#) for providers and stakeholders to read.

We plan to do this by the end of 2024.