

Let's talk about quality

Join the conversation

We want to start a conversation about quality within the aged care community.

This discussion is all about the concept of 'quality' in relation to aged care. It is about new or different concepts of quality that are beyond mere compliance with standards and outcomes.

The aim is to get people thinking, asking questions, debating and exploring the best possible ways to define, encourage, measure and monitor quality in aged care services.

We are exploring five themes. You are welcome to respond to any or all of the themes. Each theme includes a few questions as a starting point, if you have any other thoughts, suggestions or comments we would also like to capture them.

Theme 1 Putting consumers front and centre- we need to better understand and capture the expectations that consumers have of quality;

Theme 2 Safety is essential but not enough– we are seeing a shift from perceptions of quality of care based on compliance with minimum standards to broader notions of high quality care;

Theme 3 Integration across the aged care experience - consistency in quality across the continuum of aged care is important to families and consumers navigating multiple services in aged care and to service providers who must meet the required standards;

Theme 4 A quality culture that encourages excellence - successful aged care services know that meeting minimal requirements will not necessarily encourage excellence nor will this spell success in the market place over the long term;

Theme 5 Leadership and innovation – government is not the final arbiter on quality. Competition will challenge traditional service models and encourage providers to innovate their services and systems to drive quality improvement.

You can read more about the themes in our discussion paper on our [website](#) or just jump in here and join the conversation.

If you have any questions please email us on education@aacqa.gov.au

Your input, along with feedback received through broader engagement, will

- help inform the review of the current standards, supporting an evidence based co-design of a single quality framework that will measure high quality care and quality of life.
- enable different perspectives of quality across aged care services from a range of stakeholders perspectives
- identify ways in which the Quality Agency can better understand the consumer experience and quality issues and themes for further engagement and education.

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Theme 1: Putting consumers front and centre

We need to better understand and capture the expectations that consumers have of quality.

In health and aged care services - quality has been traditionally decided by experts and measured and 'certified' by government authority. This is now being challenged. The power of consumers and influence of consumer opinion has surged, enabled by accessible digital and media platforms. Consumers are now more empowered to determine for themselves what constitutes quality; and more adept at accessing and sharing information about the quality of such services.

We are seeing a shift from the authority of *experts* to the authority of *experience*.

"At home we have the right to smoke, have pets, get fat and have sex if we want; but in aged care facilities we become captive in a controlled environment where we are 'protectively disciplined'... Shouldn't we be able to have the small aspects of our life considered? Whose schedule is it? Whose choice? I might like to sleep until eight or nine and have soft poached eggs on toast for breakfast. I'd like to think I could get out on the golf course. I don't want to conform to a set schedule and set activities decided for me without my wishes and choices being considered and I wouldn't put up with it."

HammondCare's CEO (and AACQA Advisory Council member), Dr Stephen Judd

For example:

Nancy wants to spend less on personal care and more on support to attend carpet bowls with her group of friends in the community. Her aged care service has found a way to enable this choice and support her priorities to attend the community centre weekly. Service delivery meets her own goals, focused on what is important to her.

1. From a consumer point of view, what do you look for in choosing an aged care service?

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations. FECCA highlights that 20% of Australia's total population of people aged 65 and over were born in non-English speaking countries. By 2020, 30% of the population aged 65 and over will be from CALD backgrounds¹.

Feedback by Members of the FECCA Healthy Ageing Reference Network (HARN) shows that most older people from CALD backgrounds would like to receive services that are responsive to their individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity

CALD consumers need to be adequately supported to allow them to make informed choices about their care. This involves ongoing support as people navigate the CDC process, and strengthening CALD consumer capacity. Minimum quality standards can be raised by empowering CALD consumers to seek appropriate support.

2. How do you measure whether one service is better than another?

The level of consumer choice and control is key when measuring quality of services. It is suggested that aged care service providers encourage quality reviews by consumers and their families. Service providers should have a holistic understanding of the consumer and their needs and have the capacity to respond to the person's cultural diversity.

The redesign of aged care in becoming a free market place should focus on equality of access and equality of consumer experience. A range of safeguards need to be in place for CALD people who may be vulnerable to market

¹ FECCA 2015, *Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*

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Theme 1: Putting consumers front and centre

failure. It includes strengthening and modernising market safeguards and protections. Service practices should be benchmarked against access and equity principles.

3. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this theme?

Findings from FECCA ageing and aged care consultations 2014-15 showed that many older people from CALD backgrounds have a preference for food that is culturally appropriate, particularly those in residential aged care. They also spoke of the importance of activities such as music and songs from their homeland, and being in the company of others from the same culture².

² FECCA Ageing and Aged Care Consultations 2014-15.

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Theme 2: Safety is essential but not enough

We are seeing a shift from perceptions of quality of care based on compliance with minimum standards to broader notions of high quality care.

The accreditation and quality review processes and related standards set a minimum test that all service providers must pass. This process does not currently measure performance above the minimum standard – that is, high performance beyond compliance.

"A nursing home director said it to me very poignantly: 'You know what, the children of the adult parents, of the aged parents, are the ones who actually decide which place they are going to choose, and they invariably want to know: "Is it safe for my mother here?"' They want to look at the safety ratings. They don't ask whether they'd be lonely here or whether they have real choices. They said, safety is what we want for those we love, and autonomy is what we want for ourselves."
Atul Gawande on facing death, ABC Health report, Monday 22 June 2015 4:43PM. edited transcript of a conversation between Atul Gawande and Norman Swan at the Sydney Writers' Festival

For example:

Alfred loves gardening. He lives in an aged care facility that has a beautiful herb garden for its residents but the door is kept locked so that residents do not wander out without a staff member. Aged care services are faced with such dilemmas every day such as the diabetic who wants to keep chocolate in their fridge or the older person at home who is at a high risk of falling who refuses to use a wheelie-walker.

1. Aged care should be based on individual choice. What aspects of quality care are essential and should never be compromised?

Some of the following aspects of care are essential and should not be compromised:

- Freedom of choice and to make one's own decisions;
- Duty of care within a human rights framework; and
- Informed consent by the consumer should be a priority.

Older people from CALD backgrounds need ongoing support to navigate and negotiate ageing and aged care services. Access to information on CDC and consumer choices among CALD communities needs to be improved significantly considering the size of the CALD population aged 65 and over (605,000). FECCA recommends communicating messages of consumer choice through channels of trust such as ethnic media and CALD organisations.

Community participation is an indicator of healthy and active ageing of older people from CALD backgrounds. Participation in ethno-specific seniors clubs, cultural associations or religious groups, helps to prevent and reduce loneliness and social isolation.

Quality care is also dependent on staff knowledge and their ability to be sensitive to culture-specific norms and to communicate effectively with CALD consumers. Speaking the language of the consumer is particularly relevant as some CALD people revert to their mother tongue as they age.

Ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers have invaluable expertise in servicing CALD communities. Older CALD people often have a preference for culturally appropriate services as many people encounter cultural and language barriers when accessing services. The service delivery capacity of ethno-specific and multicultural aged care providers should be strengthened in order to ensure the sustainability of ethno-specific services and to foster



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Theme 2: Safety is essential but not enough

consumer choices.

2. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this theme?

FECCA has been advised of the challenging situation of providers to weigh up individual choice and control against the imperative to provide professional and safe services. A personal care plan should be used to guide staff when needing to make decisions in situations where the consumer is at risk.

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Theme 3: Integration across the aged care experience

Consistency in quality across the continuum of aged care is important to families and consumers navigating multiple services in aged care and to service providers who must meet the required standards.

A common language for quality care across residential and home care services would help consumers and their families to better understand the quality of these services. To do this we need to consider whether people define and value quality in the same way in these different settings and how we might measure quality across the continuum of aged care services.

"Older Australians want an aged care system that they can understand and use."

Summary report on the conversations on ageing, COTA 2012

For example:

A large provider *We Care services Inc.* operates aged care services that support older Australians to receive care in their own homes. They also provide residential aged care services and often people will transition to their residential care service when they are not able to continue at home. People in their care may also be receiving palliative care or dementia support services. The provider currently has to meet several sets of aged care standards and demonstrate compliance against each set.

There is no integrated quality framework nor is a report on the quality of their services accessible to consumers in a way that they can understand.

1. What core aspects of quality care do you think apply to both residential and home care services?

Consideration needs to be given to consumers' individual care needs, including cultural, religious and social needs, respect for dignity of privacy, and freedom of choice and movement, wherever the care is provided.

2. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this theme?

FECQA supports the National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from CALD backgrounds. The Strategy emphasises the need to improve the interface between the health and aged care sectors to help address specific barriers encountered by CALD communities and to ensure seamless care services (Goal 4)³.

³ Department of Social Services (DSS), 2015, *National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*.

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Theme 4: A quality culture that encourages excellence

Successful aged care services know that meeting minimal requirements will not necessarily encourage excellence nor will this spell success in the market place over the long term.

In a market where consumers have choice and control, successful aged care providers are likely to be those who can meet and exceed their customers' expectations for high quality care and quality of life. Service excellence is underpinned by a culture of high performance and leadership in relation to aged care governance, meaningful consumer engagement and an effective approach to quality improvement.

"This is a very different kind of work environment. I tell my people: You are coming to work in their home. You are invited to participate in their day. There needs to be a sense of warmth and love. When you walk into a place you want to feel that sense of genuine warmth and caring. That people are viewed as people; not just a job to do. Staff attitudes are so important."

Aged Care Leadership Development Project Strategy Paper 30 June 2013., ACSA, Commonwealth Government through the Department of Industry

For example:

Person-centred culture is put into practice through practical measures such as dedicating staff to work with the same care recipients every time they come to work. They aim to put the person and care relationships at the heart of what they do. Whatever the job, first and foremost staff are there to connect with others through building relationships. It is made clear that the particular job role and task is secondary to this.

1. What attributes and behaviours do you expect from staff providing care?

Respect for the individual and their personal story is essential. Getting to understand people is the best way to establish trust and build relationships. FECCA also highlights that aged care staff and management should foster a culture of caring that focuses on a person's attributes rather than on a person's deficiencies.

Staff members need to have the skills to ensure that services are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner. This may include the following:

- Staff are sensitive to people's cultures and are trained to deliver culturally inclusive care;
- Staff include consumers from CALD backgrounds and their families in the decision making process;
- Staff understand the level of risk and appropriateness of using qualified interpreting services;
- Bilingual aged care and allied health workers are employed by aged care services⁴.

2. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this theme?

Consideration needs to be given to the Australian Government's National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. The Strategy incorporates principles that provide a framework for inclusion of older people from CALD backgrounds in the provision of aged care services.

The principle *Quality* stipulates that "care and support services are appropriate to the needs of older people from CALD backgrounds, their families and carers and are assessed accordingly"⁵.

⁴ Multicultural Aged Care (MAC), 2011, *Culturally Appropriate Service Provision 2/4*, Revised July 2013.

⁵ Department of Social Services (DSS), 2015, *National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*.

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Theme 5: Leadership and innovation

Government is not the final arbiter on quality. Competition will challenge traditional service models and encourage providers to innovate their services and systems to drive quality improvement.

Aged care organisations are navigating unprecedented challenges. The pace of change, meeting the needs and expectations of our ageing population and the demands of running a sustainable service require effective leadership and innovative approaches to service provision.

In a less regulated system aged care providers are open to more competition, challenging the traditional service models and encouraging better practice and innovation to be adaptive to consumer needs.

For example:

The SA Innovation Hub is one example of a group of providers who are engaged in discussion and testing of approaches for quality, high performance and leadership in aged care. A principle aim of the Hub is to develop a new model for collaboration (a Community of Practice) to support innovative models of care and services in line with the increasing demands of an ageing population. New approaches to collaboration and leadership can support networks of providers to collaborate on quality innovation.

1. What is an example of service delivery innovation that stands out to you?

One example can be the North East Multicultural Association (NEMA) Cultural Advocates program. This concept is based on a network of community leaders acting as advocates in the community on behalf of older people from CALD backgrounds who are less able to represent their own needs.

Community leaders have been trained on a range of skills such as communication and leadership. The Cultural Advocates are represented on local health and community advisory committees where they act as conduits between older people from CALD backgrounds and service providers. The leadership training was delivered across 5 rural and regional Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the North East of Victoria.

The aim has been to provide information on available services to CALD communities, increase linkages to health and aged care services, and advise service providers on culturally-specific care needs.⁶

2. What do you think is the greatest challenge for service providers in achieving quality?

FECCA has no comments to make on this theme.

3. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this theme?

FECCA has no further comments to make on this theme.

⁶ Winterton, R., 2015, *Influences on service and support decisions among ageing and rural ethnic populations*, Prepared for North East Multicultural Association.

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Is anything else you would like to say about quality in aged care?

If you have any other comments you would like to make please use the box below. You can also email us at education@aacqa.gov.au

1. Something else to consider

Thank you for your feedback. This discussion will be open for feedback until the end of October 2015.

You can expect to see a report summarising the conversation and themes from our engagement on the Quality Agency website in November 2015.

Note: we will be looking at responses to date in early September to inform current initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Social Services at that time.