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the aged care voluntary industry code of practice

Code

The Aged Care Workforce Industry Council would like to thank Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) for their leadership in developing this version through the consultation process they have led.

The Council also acknowledges the support of the members of the project reference group which included representation from LASA, Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA), The Aged Care Guild, Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission, Commonwealth Department of Health; and National Seniors, Bluecare and United Workers (who are also Directors of the Council).

The Council would also like to acknowledge the immense amount of input received from provider peak organisations, consumer organisations and unions. We note that not all parts of the aged care sector have expressed support for the Code as it currently stands. Over the coming months we will work with the entire sector to engage on any issues, develop the Code and its supporting documentation further, and hopefully gain support from all parts of the sector on this important initiative.

INTRODUCTION

The Aged Care Workforce Industry Council (the Council) was tasked with implementing the Voluntary Industry Code of Practice for Aged Care providers and workers.

This Code had been developed by the Aged Care Workforce Taskforce based on community, workforce and provider consultations in 2018 and published in [A Matter of Care](#). A voluntary industry code of practice was proposed to:

- enable the aged care industry to get ahead of consumer and community expectations, and
- demonstrate that the industry was taking responsibility for shifting mindsets from a compliance-based mentality to proactive industry-led commitment, accountability and improvement.

The concept of an Industry-led Code is not new and industries are supported by the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) in developing them. The ACCC notes that: “Effective codes potentially deliver increased consumer protection and reduced regulatory burdens for business. To achieve this, they must be well designed, effectively implemented and properly enforced.” It is the Council’s intention to work with the aged care sector including providers, consumers and workers, to ensure this operates as an effective code.

In October 2019, the Council sought Leading Age Services Australia’s assistance in socialising and re-drafting the Code with organisations representing consumers, workforce and providers.

Following these consultations in September 2020, LASA delivered a draft Code to the Council, which incorporated feedback and key elements from the consultations to better reflect current sentiments.

The Council has further modified that version, taking on advice from the seven sector provider leadership organisations as well as from worker and the consumer representative organisations. The Code now includes much of the wording from A Matter of Care with some adjustment:

- a preamble
- seven principles
- a statement explaining each principle
- a description of each principle
- a definition of intent of each principle.

As such, the structure of the Code is set out as follows:



THE CODE

PREAMBLE

‘Because how we care for our ageing is a reflection of who we are as a nation’¹

The expectation of the community is that the value we place on our older Australians, and those who care for them, should be demonstrated in the quality and safety of the services which are provided.

The Aged Care Voluntary Industry Code of Practice (the Code) provides a roadmap for developing and delivering high quality consumer centric aged care – care that reflects the rights and needs of Australians as they age.

The Code is designed to establish an aspirational framework that supports good governance and innovative, high quality care and engagement through which:

- providers of aged care services aim to perform beyond the expectations of the communities they serve and the consumers for whom they are accountable,
- workers in aged care are supported to realise this level of performance, and
- older Australians, their families, carers and advocates, who access and engage with aged care services can know that the measures and activities put in place aim to achieve quality, safe and personalised aged care services and supports.

Importantly, the Code identifies seven key principles that underpin proactive industry-led improvement to meet and exceed community expectations. The Code seeks to engage providers to aspire to offer the best services and supports, to recognise the needs and value of older Australians and their families and carers, and to support their workforce to deliver exceptional outcomes.

The Code’s focus is to make clear the **outcomes organisations and workers need to achieve to meet and exceed community expectations** – not how they are to do it.

Given the diversity of needs and preferences of individuals and communities – and the complexity of different care arrangements used by older Australian, both home care and residential – this makes sense. It allows all aged care organisations, regardless of size, tax-paying status, location or mission, to commit to the seven key outcomes in a way that suits their community and the funding and capacity to do it.

The Aged Care Workforce Industry Council (the Council) is responsible for overarching administration, governance and monitoring of industry commitment and accountability to the Code. The Council will also advise on transition plans, ongoing planning and self-reporting by organisations on the Code.

Each aged care organisation’s leadership is responsible for developing and publishing their transition plan on their own website within six (6) months of signing up to the Code. The transition plan is intended to give the Council and the public information about how and when that aged care organisation plans to demonstrate their commitment and accountability to the Code outcomes and the evidence they will provide. The Council will maintain a current list of all signatories to the Code who have demonstrated commitment and accountability through creating and implementing a plan

¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-matter-of-care-australias-aged-care-workforce-strategy>

to meet its principles. If an aged care organisation fails to develop or implement an annual plan or report on their own progress annually against their existing plan, the Council will remove them from this list until they have done so. The public can access this list at any time to see which aged care organisations have signed up and remain committed to the Code.

By 30 June 2021, signatories to the Code will need to be able to show how they plan to commit to and demonstrate progress against all seven principles.

The Code is designed to continually improve and evolve over time, reflecting changing community expectations, laws and regulations. The Council in consultation with consumers, industry and workforce, will review the impact of the Code annually to ensure continuous improvement. We will work with industry, consumers, workforce and government to understand the effect the Code is having in raising industry benchmarks for care and service delivery, and adapt the Code to continue to inspire providers in their goal to achieve higher levels of care and service across the industry.

The Code works in synergy with existing codes of conduct that regulate the legal requirements, professional behaviour and conduct expectations of workers participating in aged care.

The Code refers to consumers holistically to represent all older Australians where they are consumers of aged care, either as residents of residential aged care services, or clients of home care packages and services in the community or in their own homes. Where relevant this includes the families, carers, representatives, and advocates of older Australians in line with the Aged Care Act.

The Code Principles

Principle 1 <i>Consumer-led and community shared value - from A Matter of Care</i>	
Statement	Consumers are central to care decisions and outcomes.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	Consumers must be at the heart of care decisions and outcomes. The shift towards a more consumer-centric care in aged care is consistent with changing consumer dynamics across the broader economy. This principle includes consideration of the evolving and increasing expectations and needs of the consumer, who is living longer and demands quality of life. Aligned closely to the principle of living well, engagement with the community must reflect the evolving and increasing expectations of the consumer, their families and carers—particularly to age well ‘in place’. From a workforce perspective, this ensures the quality of consumer care and support is nationally consistent with and proportionate to the risk(s) being managed.
Outcome:	Care and services are designed and delivered in ways that reflect the needs and expectations of consumers and the community. Consumers, their families, carers advocates and communities have the opportunity to be actively engaged in the design and delivery of services to create outcomes that are consistently consumer-driven regardless of the locality, circumstances or financial resources of the individual.
Principle 2 <i>Living well and integrated models of care - from A Matter of Care</i>	
Statement	Focus is on the consumer’s quality of life and realising their choice through holistic and integrated models of care.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	Ageing well, with dignity and independence, is something that everyone deserves. It will be imperative to focus on each consumer’s quality of life and on living well Living well is more than just clinical care (which must continue to be delivered). It also includes the consumer’s physical, social, mental, emotional, cultural (environment and identity) and spiritual aspects. All of these are equally important and need to be captured in holistic care plans. It is founded on trust and respect between the consumer and those supporting them with care and requires the creation of a cohesive environment that supports individuals to optimise their choices to improve quality of life. Living well is underpinned by integrated care, which requires the provision of care needs to be aligned to the consumer’s journey along the ageing continuum.

	Integrated care refers to the care provided across the aged care, primary and acute health systems and other related systems and services, by considering the consumer’s needs in a holistic manner. Moreover, it clearly distinguishes safety and clinical needs from functional needs and quality of life considerations.
Outcome:	Each consumer is supported in ways that meet their physical, social, mental, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs, contributing to their overall quality of life. The services and supports an individual needs to live well as they age are coordinated and aligned according to their needs and preferences. The provision of these services is conducted by workers who have been supported in terms of time to engage in a feedback process and to be suitably skilled and trained.
Principle 3 Board governance - from A Matter of Care	
Statement	Strong governance underpins performance, mitigates risk and drives culture.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	Effective corporate governance by all organisations needs to be taken seriously, recognising that good governance increases business value. Good board governance cannot be legislated, but it can be built over time by creating a climate of trust and candor; following a culture of critical thinking and working outside the norm; ensuring individual accountability; and regularly evaluating the board’s performance. This includes the creation of mechanisms , such as subcommittees of boards or managing bodies that provide the appropriate level of oversight required to address integrated care, accountability consumer and community expectations and commitments to serious major incident and missed care reporting.
Outcome:	The aged care service is effectively managed and governed (at an organisational and local level) to deliver high quality care and services.
Principle 4 Best-practice sharing and industry benchmarking - from A Matter of Care	
Statement	Sharing lessons learnt and better practice supports continuous improvement and contributes to improved care and support for consumers.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	This principle recognises the need to draw upon innovative approaches and best-of-breed solutions that exist within the aged care industry—or, indeed, within others—and apply them in a way that supports the betterment of the industry as a whole. This principle recognises the need to share lessons learnt and better practices and, in particular, the role of higher-performing organisations to support innovation across the industry to ensure that economies of scale are not an impediment to overall industry advancement.

	<p>Aligned with best-practice sharing, it is also important to benchmark the industry to other sectors and high-performing organisations around the world, and to be more receptive to looking at other industries for better-practice thinking and innovative ways of operating.</p> <p>This would also involve adopting an approach to industry benchmarking that focuses on the consumer experience in order to inform workforce planning and proactive community engagement.</p>
Outcome:	The aged care service actively learns from consumer experience and shares good practice. The aged care services achieve ongoing improvements in service delivery, support and care for consumers and their communities.
Principle 5 Education and training, including workforce accreditation - from A Matter of Care	
Statement	Appropriately skilled and qualified staff deliver improved support and care for consumers.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	The competencies and skills of the existing workforce must be boosted, with a focus on practical skills and known competency gaps recognising consumer needs through an investment in education and training . There must also be recognition of skills and attributes, including interpersonal skills and compassionate qualities, that are not acquired through formal learning modalities. People working in the industry should be able to see themselves as valued aged care professionals and the full range of their skills recognised.
Outcome:	The aged care service invests in its workforce and creates an environment in which workers are valued, skilled and enabled to meet the needs of consumers. Accreditation of the workforce is sought where available.
Principle 6 Workforce planning - from A Matter of Care	
Statement	Holistic and innovative care practices and improved care outcomes require enhanced workforce planning.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	The industry needs to commit to industry practices for workforce planning and skills mix modelling, applicable to both home care and residential settings based on holistic care plans. This modelling would be part of a provider's business model. It would include guidelines and a framework that is scalable to the needs of any organisation, regardless of size, delivery mode or tax status. It would be used to define improved workforce allocation to deliver care outcomes, including time for the workforce to undertake engagement and enablement activities.

Outcome:	Consumer wellbeing benefits from workforce planning that aligns the workforce and their skills to the model/s of care, service delivery frameworks, and the needs and expectations of consumers. The aged care service adopts a strategic and consultative approach to build employee engagement.
Principle 7 Proactive assurance and continuous improvement - from A Matter of Care	
Statement	High performance is built on information, transparency and a culture of continuous improvement.
Description: <i>(from A Matter of Care)</i>	<p>An aged care organisation needs to establish policies and processes to determine whether it is operating efficiently and effectively and meeting its stated overall business outcomes, including risk management. Put simply, it is about defining ‘what must go right’ and then understanding the risks to achieving these outcomes (or ‘what can go wrong’).</p> <p>High-performing organisations use such policies and processes (for example, management controls, audit and accountability) to help drive organisational improvement and support sustainable cultural change.</p> <p>The governance of risk management such as applying the three lines of defence (3LOD) model) can be linked with transparent feedback cultures to proactively drive continuous improvement across the industry.</p>
Outcome:	The measured performance of the aged care service is transparent and accessible to workers and consumers. The aged care service undertakes performance reporting and risk and accountability measures as they seek to continuously improve services and outcomes.