

1.3 DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR CONSUMERS

All staff are provided with a copy of this section of the Policies and Procedures (see Staff Volunteer Orientation Checklist), and with opportunities to discuss the way we relate to and work with consumers, through meetings, training and ad-hoc interactions.

(See also 1.4.3 Fostering Choice and Independence.)

1.3.1 SERVICE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

Charter of aged care rights

The Charter of Aged Care Rights provides the overarching principles of Meracare service delivery, irrespective of program funding. (See 1.3.6 Consumer Rights and Responsibilities)

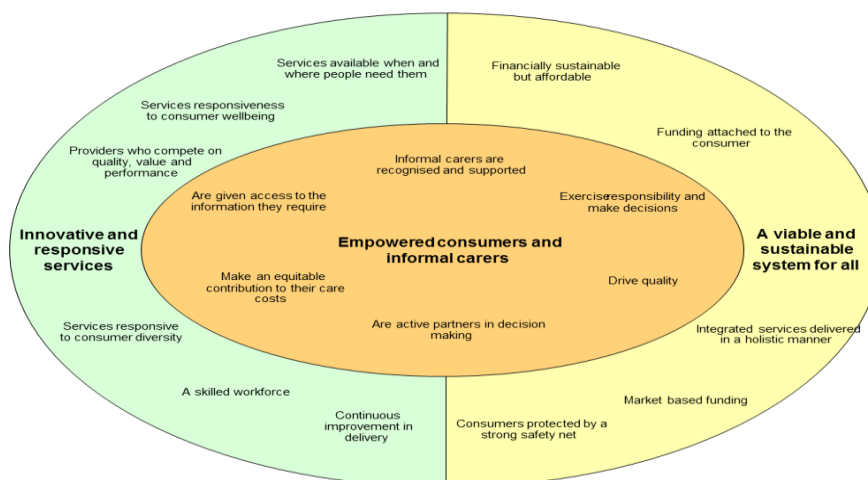
These principles are implemented and followed in practice by ensuring they underpin:

- Our policies and procedures in all aspects of service management and service delivery
- Position descriptions and other role specifications
- Checklists, forms and other documents
- Senior management and staff training
- Information to and engagement with consumers including working in partnership with consumers
- The implementation and evaluation of improvements to our services and organisation.

Residential aged care principles

Consumers who are provided support through Residential Aged Care have all their rights expressed in the Charter of Aged Care Rights. We support the Aged Care Sector Statement of Principles outlined in the Figure 1: Principles of Australia’s Future Aged Care System¹ below.

Figure 1: Principles of Australia’s Future Aged Care System



¹ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care Aged Care Sector Committee [Aged Care Sector Statement of Principles 2015](#) Website accessed November 2020

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Aged Care Voluntary Industry Code of Practice²

Meracare pledges our support for the Aged Care Voluntary Industry Code of Practice (the Code). The Code outlines seven principles:

- **Principle 1** Consumer-led and community shared value - from A Matter of Care.

Consumers are central to care decisions and outcomes.
- **Principle 2** Living well and integrated models of care - from A Matter of Care

Focus is on the consumer’s quality of life and realising their choice through holistic and integrated models of care.
- **Principle 3** Governing Body governance - from A Matter of Care

Strong governance underpins performance, mitigates risk and drives culture.
- **Principle 4** Best-practice sharing and industry benchmarking - from A Matter of Care

Sharing lessons learnt and better practice supports continuous improvement and contributes to improved care and support for consumers.
- **Principle 5** Education and training, including workforce accreditation - from A Matter of Care

Appropriately skilled and qualified staff deliver improved support and care for consumers.
- **Principle 6** Workforce planning - from A Matter of Care

Holistic and innovative care practices and improved care outcomes require enhanced workforce planning.
- **Principle 7** Proactive assurance and continuous improvement - from A Matter of Care

High performance is built on information, transparency and a culture of continuous improvement.

1.3.2 CULTURAL SAFETY OF CONSUMERS

Culturally safe care can be defined as care provided in an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.³

To ensure that consumer assessment, planning and service delivery for consumers is conducted in a culturally safe manner the following strategies are utilised:

- All staff receive training in ensuring cultural safety from an individual perspective and an organisation perspective

² Aged Care Workforce Industry Council (ACWIC) [The Aged Care Voluntary Industry Code of Practice](#) Website Accessed February 2020. Note: this code is voluntary

³ Williams, Robyn Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. 23(2): 213-214 2008. Cited in Aged Care Quality Standards Standard 4: Services and Supports for Daily Living June 2018 p 82

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- Cultural considerations that may apply to the consumer are identified from the referral and from the consumer in the Service Commencement Meeting and ongoing, and from other people the consumer has identified as involved in their care including family or others
- Explore for any other key issues that may be relevant to the consumer’s cultural background
- Requirements to ensure cultural safety are implemented as appropriate during assessment, support planning and service delivery
- Information is provided to support staff and
- Service delivery is monitored to ensure cultural safety.

1.3.3 SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

We are committed to providing spiritual support to consumers through our understanding and adoption of the principles outlined in the National Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Aged Care.⁴ We understand that spirituality is not just religion or pastoral care, but a philosophy that supports the delivery of care and support that provides:

- Respect and acceptance
- Compassion and empathy
- Inclusion and diversity and
- Dignity.

We explore consumer’s spiritual needs in the assessment and planning process, and where we can, we support people to access resources that promote spiritual comfort and development such as audio-visual resources, churches, other places, groups and other contacts. (See also 2.3.6 Assessment and Support Process.)

1.3.4 EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Meracare believes that emotional and psychological wellbeing of consumers is facilitated through the provision of safe and effective services through:

- Providing access to services that support consumers to develop their confidence, make social connections and participate in their community (see 4.3 Programs and Services/Social support - group)
- Seeing consumers as a partner in the service (see 2.3.2 Partnering with Consumers)
- Recognising a person’s spiritual needs and supporting them in their achievement (see 1.3.3 Spiritual Support)
- Recognising a person’s emotional and psychological needs and supporting them in their achievement.

All staff involved in direct contact with consumers participate in discussions at staff meetings on strategies to promote consumer’s emotional, spiritual and psychological wellbeing. We believe emotional and psychological needs include the need for:

- Recognition
- Self-esteem
- Connection
- Security
- Variety
- Growth and

⁴ Meaningful Ageing Australia [National Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Aged Care 2016](#) Website accessed January 2023

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- Sexuality (if expressed by the consumer).

We explore consumer’s emotional and psychological needs in the assessment and planning process, and where we can, we support people to fulfil these needs through our interactions and through the provision of care and services in ways that respect these needs. For example, recognition of a person’s strengths can enhance self-esteem, make a person feel recognised and facilitate connection. Our service delivery supports security and variety and our focus on independence supports growth.

1.3.5 SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Meracare recognises the crucial role that carers play in supporting consumers to live in the community and has adopted the principles incorporated in the *Statement for Australia’s Carers* under the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*, including the following:

- All carers have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians, regardless of age, race, sex, disability, sexuality, religious or political beliefs, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, cultural or linguistic differences, socioeconomic status or locality.
- Children and young people who are carers have the same rights as all children and young people and are supported to reach their full potential.
- Carers are acknowledged as individuals with their own needs within and beyond the caring role.
- The relationship between carers and the persons for whom they care is recognised and respected.
- Carers are considered as partners in the provision of care, acknowledging their unique knowledge and experience.
- Carers are treated with dignity and respect.
- Carers are supported to achieve greater economic wellbeing and sustainability and, where appropriate, and are provided with opportunities to participate in employment and education.
- Support for carers is timely, responsive, appropriate and accessible.⁵

These principles underpin all of our care and interaction with carers.

1.3.6 CONSUMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Consumers are the focus of Meracare operations and it is important that their rights are acknowledged and promoted at every opportunity and that they are aware of their responsibilities as consumers. Consumer rights are implemented in the same ways within Meracare as are the service delivery principles. (See 1.3.1 Service Delivery Principles.)

Information on rights and responsibilities is included in the Consumer Handbook and the Consumer Agreement. These documents are updated as per 8.8: Regulatory Compliance, whenever advice is received from the Department of Health and Aged Care that the Charter has been revised. In addition, consumers are provided with a copy of the Charter of Aged Care Rights before they enter into an agreement.

The copy of the Charter that is provided:

- Is signed by a staff member providing it
- Includes the signature of the consumer or their authorised person if they have signed it
- Includes the date on which the consumer or their authorised person was given reasonable opportunity to sign the Charter, if they have not signed it
- Sets out the full name of the consumer

⁵ Australian Government Carer Recognition Act 2010 p 9

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- Sets out the full name of the staff member who was present at the time the copy of the Charter was given to the consumer, if relevant, and
- Sets out the date on which the copy of the Charter was given to the consumer.

Consumers/authorised representatives are encouraged (but not required) to sign an acknowledgement of receipt of the Charter of Aged Care Rights and are provided with information and support to ensure they are aware of their rights. If a consumer/authorised representative does not wish to sign an acknowledgement of receipt of the Charter of Aged Care Rights, we record in the consumer record:

- Signature of a staff member
- Date on which the provider gave the consumer a copy of the Charter
- Date on which the provider gave the consumer (or their authorised person) a reasonable opportunity to sign the Charter
- Consumer (or authorised persons)'s signature and date (if they choose to sign) and
- Full name of the consumer (and authorised person, if applicable).⁶

Consumer rights⁷

Consumers have the right to:

1. Safe and high-quality care and services
2. Be treated with dignity and respect
3. Have their identity, culture and diversity valued and supported
4. Live without abuse and neglect
5. Be informed about their care and services in a way they understand
6. Access all information about themselves, including information about their rights, care and services
7. Have control over and make choices about their care, and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk
8. Have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of their daily life, financial affairs and possessions
9. Their independence
10. Be listened to and understood
11. Have a person of their choice, including an aged care advocate, support them or speak on their behalf
12. Complain free from reprisal, and to have their complaints dealt with fairly and promptly
13. Personal privacy and to have their personal information protected
14. Exercise their rights without it adversely affecting the way they are treated.

⁶ Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission [Charter of Aged Care Rights \(information for providers\)](#) Web page accessed November 2020

⁷ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission [Charter of Aged Care Rights](#) (Effective 1 July 2019) Web page accessed November 2020

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Consumer responsibilities⁸

We value consumer input and participation in determining the services provided and how they are provided, and we also believe that all people involved in aged care including consumers, their families, carers, visitors and the aged care workforce, must respect and be considerate of each other. To support this principle, consumers are expected to:

- Provide us with the information we need to deliver quality care and services
- Comply with the conditions of your Agreement and pay the fees outlined in the agreement on time and
- Respect the rights of our workers to work in a safe environment. Any kind of violence, harassment or abuse towards staff or others is not acceptable.

Consumer rights under consumer law

In addition to our responsibilities under the Aged Care Act 1997 and other relevant legislation, we ensure the following under Australian Consumer Law⁹:

- We provide clear, honest and complete information about our services including information displayed on the My Aged Care website
- We provide time to consumers to make their decisions and ask for help if they need to
- We avoid pressuring consumers and adopting commission-based business models which might lead to pressure selling
- We make sure all the terms in our agreements are fair for all parties
- We provide a clear and easy dispute resolution process.¹⁰

1.3.7 CONSUMERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Special needs groups can encounter barriers that reduce the capacity of individuals and/or communities to access aged care services and receive care appropriate to their needs. All Meracare staff receive information and training, as appropriate, in understanding, valuing and working with people from special needs groups.

Special needs groups

People with special needs include the following:¹¹

- People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- People who live in rural or remote areas
- People who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- Veterans
- People who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Care leavers
- Parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or asexual (LGBTIQ+).

⁸ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission [Charter of Aged Care Rights](#) (Effective 1 July 2019) Web page accessed November 2020

⁹ Australian Government Competition and Consumer Act 2010

¹⁰ Taken from Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care advisory email: [Home Care Providers – Know your Rights and Obligations](#) 6 August 2018

¹¹ Australian Government Aged Care Act 1997 Section 11-3

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Other people whose needs Meracare believes need to be recognised and addressed include:

- People with dementia
- People with disability
- People with mental health issues.

Strategies for meeting the needs of consumers with special needs

Meracare meets the needs of people with special needs through a range of strategies including:

- Identifying the special needs groups in the community including: people with dementia, people with disability, people with mental health issues, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; people who live in rural and remote areas; people who are financially or socially disadvantaged; veterans; people who are homeless, or at risk of being homeless; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex; people who are care leavers; and parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
- Training staff in understanding and respecting the special needs of consumers
- The provision of written information in key languages/spoken word (through My Aged Care) the use of cue cards, electronic devices and other modes of communication appropriate to the person
- The use of interpreter services
- Ensuring family members are aware of key information and have a copy of written information (with the consumer's consent)
- Regular review and explanation of key service information from the Consumer Handbook, such as the assessment and review processes, services available, user rights, complaints and advocacy
- Referral to agencies who specialise in assisting particular people such as People with Disability for the provision of advocacy assistance or the Association for the Blind for people with blindness or vision impairment
- Arranging for relevant resources such as big number key telephones for people with impaired sight or the telephones suitable for people with hearing impairment
- Using specialist equipment where necessary
- Adjusting staff skill, numbers and staff times to best meet consumer needs.

To effectively understand and meet the needs of consumers with special needs the relevant team member spends the necessary time to fully explore with the consumer and/or their carer/representative, the needs of each individual throughout the assessment and support planning process.

In addition to the above Meracare has committed to trialling the strategies and action plans described in the Aged Care Diversity Framework¹².

Strategies for consumer groups

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers

Meracare endeavours to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers with culturally appropriate services, and where possible, services delivered by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. We work closely with local agencies including the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the

¹² Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care Sector Committee Diversity Sub-group Aged Care Diversity Framework December 2017 pp 9-10

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hospital to ensure that services are culturally appropriate and that consumers are supported whilst accessing and receiving support.

The relevant team member ensures that the information regarding reviews, support plan and services is clearly explained and understood by the consumer and their family.

Consumers who do not speak English

If a person does not speak English, the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is used. If the person has a family member with them, they may be used as the interpreter if this is acceptable to the consumer; however, external translation services are always offered (as this is good practice). A team member may also be used (as a last resort) if available and acceptable to the consumer.

We utilise Department of Health and Aged Care translated information brochures and translate other key documents to ensure our consumers are provided with information in a format understandable to them as applicable to their language.

In supporting consumers, we have regard for each individual's diversity, by considering their individual interests, customs, beliefs and backgrounds. We use the National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds to support our staff training and we ensure the cultural safety of people from CALD backgrounds (see 1.3.2 Cultural Safety of Consumers).

Consumers who do not read or write

In cases where the consumer does not read or write, the relevant team member makes sure that the information in the Consumer Handbook, and information regarding the assessment, reviews, service plans and services is clearly explained and understood by the consumer and/or their carer.

Consumers who are blind or vision impaired¹³

Consumers who are blind or vision impaired are asked what their support needs are in relation to their vision and when necessary we work with specialist agencies such as Vision Australia, with the consumer's consent.

Strategies we employ to support people with vision impairment include:

- The provision of information in large text
- The provision of information verbally
- Recorded information
- Large signage in bold contrasting colours
- Big print books
- Brail books and signs
- Brightly colored flooring with different colours to different areas
- Aids and equipment individualised in consultation with the consumer.

Our staff can also support consumers who have support from an assistance or guide dog.

¹³ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [Information for Aged Care Providers Newsletter Issue 12](#) August 2018

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Consumers with hearing impairment

We refer to the Deafness Forum of Australia Good Practice Guide in establishing and maintaining an effective hearing assistance program.¹⁴

Consumers with hearing impairment are provided with:

- Support in accessing hearing services, if required
- Support in accessing sign language interpreting services. Consumers who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing who are seeking to access or are in receipt of Commonwealth funded aged care services can access free sign language interpreting services. Face-to-face sign-language interpreting and Video Remote Interpreting services are available to support clients to engage with:
 - My Aged Care
 - Regional Assessment Services
 - Aged Care Assessment Teams
 - In-home aged care service providers
 - Residential aged care service providers, and
 - Other organisations involved in the provision of Commonwealth funded aged care services.

Sign language services are available in Auslan, American Sign Language, International Sign Language, and Signed English for deaf or consumers who are hard of hearing, and tactile signing and hand over hand for deafblind consumers.

Information on how service providers and consumers can access interpreting services is available at My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 or [Deaf Connect](#): Bookings for an interpreter can be made at [Deaf Connect Bookings](#) or by calling 1300 773 803 or emailing interpreting@deafconnect.org.au.

Information on how service providers and clients can access interpreting services is also available at [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS National\)](#).

- Information in writing
- Subtitles on TV and movies

Consumers living with dementia or cognitive impairment¹⁵

To ensure effective services that meet a person’s needs are delivered to people living with dementia and/or cognitive impairment we:

- Provide access to specialised training to relevant team members through www.dementiatrainingaustralia.com.au or other appropriate specialist organisations
- Make available resources such as Caring for Someone with Dementia – My Aged Care and information from the [Dementia Australia](#) website
- Provide information to staff on early warning signs of dementia and request staff to report any suspected signs to their supervisor or a clinician
- Provide information on capacity and determining capacity, and obtain specialist support and advice as required
- Utilise the services of Dementia Australia to provide client focused information, assessment and advice. Staff are advised and encouraged to contact [Dementia Australia](#) (DBMAS) (1800

¹⁴ Deafness Forum of Australia [Good Practice Guide Reference resources for aged care hearing assistance programs](#) September 2019

¹⁵ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [Home Care Packages Program Operational Manual A Guide For Home Care Providers](#) Version 1.3 – January 2023, 12.2 What is changing cognition. This information can be applied to all programs

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699 799) or other specialist services if they have any questions about dementia or other special needs, or need some advice on the best way to support a consumer

- As with all consumers, but particularly with people with special needs, we work closely with the consumer and their representative/s to better know the person and develop some understanding of their needs and associated behaviours. Dementia is experienced differently by each person and we seek to recognise and respond individually to these changes. We make every effort to make sure that services are delivered in an appropriate and sensitive way to all people, and in particular, to people with dementia and cognitive impairment
- We maintain close links with the consumer’s representative/s and encourage them to provide feedback to us and offer them information on the supports available.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) consumers

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring services provided to older gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people are provided with appropriate supports and provided inclusive care and services in an environment free from discrimination, oppression and abuse.

We follow LGBTI principles:

- Inclusive and safe environment. We do this by:
 - Considering sexual orientation and gender identity during assessment and ongoing
 - Providing information to consumers and staff that outline our GLBTI inclusive environment
- Open communication. We do this by:
 - Avoiding assumptions of sexual orientation and gender
 - Encouraging open ended, non-gender specific, non-discriminatory questions and language
 - Including identified significant others in support planning as expressed by consumers
 - Speaking openly about GLBTI issues where appropriate
- GLBTI-sensitive practices. We do this by:
 - Including sexual orientation and/or gender (male, female, other) in assessment documentation and seeking permission to record this
 - Provide resources from GLBTI organisations and support groups
- Staff education and training. We do this by:
 - Providing staff with the Best Practice Principles and other resources as applicable
- We have GLBTI-inclusive organisational policies and procedures.

Ensuring the safety of special needs consumers

Strategies we employ to *ensure the safety of special needs* consumers include:

- Providing a safe and comfortable environment consistent with consumers care needs and staff/volunteer safety
- Making sure staff or volunteers are available who can effectively communicate with consumers with language or other communication issues
- Providing special equipment or facilities as required to meet individuals needs
- Monitoring the safety of consumer’s homes appropriate to the support they receive
- The identification and monitoring of risks to vulnerable consumers such as bush fire risks and risks associated with heat and cold (see Section 3.2.6 Monitoring Health and Wellbeing in Natural Disasters).

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