

Communique – July 2020

The Aged Care Workforce Industry Council is committed to creating a better, more sustainable aged care system. Over the last month we have significantly progressed the Voluntary Industry Code of Practice. The Voluntary Industry Code embodies the intent of the Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy **A Matter of Care**.

Providing leadership through a Voluntary Industry Code of Practice

As a \$17 billion contributor to Australia's rapidly growing health care and social assistance industry, the Aged Care sector understands the critical need to adapt and change.

Until now, the aged care industry has not had a code of practice which defines and promotes the expected industry behaviours and standards that we know consumers rely on more than ever.

The Voluntary Industry Code of Practice embodies the intent of A Matter of Care and defines our aspirations, collectively, to move ahead of community expectations.

The Aged Care Workforce Industry Council, with Leading Aged Services Australia (LASA), is leading a collaborative process to support the industry understand and adopt the Voluntary Industry Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice enables the aged care industry to define its consumer promises, required standards, workforce practices and commitment to quality and safety, and in doing so will make a clear and sustained difference to the industry.

The Voluntary Industry Code of Practice demonstrates progressive leadership and a commitment to transforming the sector into being the best that it can be for consumers, their families, for the workforce that supports it, and for the providers that lead it.

At the heart of transformation change there must be a recognition of why the industry matters. With older Australians having increasingly complex needs the sector needs to adapt in a way that not only enables the sector

to meet current expectations, but to set itself up to exceed future expectations.

The Council is committed to helping restore community confidence through demonstrable sector-wide collaboration. The Voluntary Industry code defines this consumer promise.

It allows the industry to advance a range of sector-wide improvements, which would sit on top of existing regulatory frameworks.

Under the Code, aged care providers will forge a path from compliance to **empowerment** – whereby service providers are entrusted to identify issues, solve problems and improve our collective performance; ably supported by a workforce that is proud and capable.

Expressing this commitment comes at a time when the industry aspires to build trust and shift culture through collaboration.

Underpinning the Voluntary Industry Code of Practice is a belief statement and 7 principles:

Belief Statement

Celebrating the journey of ageing is an investment in future generations and is the fabric of our society

Guiding Principles

1. Consumer-led and community shared value
2. Living well and integrated models of care
3. Board governance
4. Best practice sharing and industry benchmarking
5. Education and training, including workforce accreditation
6. Workforce planning
7. Proactive assurance and continuous improvement

The Voluntary Code will be formally announced in September 2020 and underpins a broader set of industry-wide transformation initiatives being driven by the Council.

The Aged Care Industry Voluntary Code of Practice

Principle 1: Consumer-led and community shared value

Consumers must be at the heart of care decisions and outcomes. The shift towards a more consumer-centric market in aged care is consistent with changing consumer dynamics across the broader economy.

This principle includes consideration of the evolving and increasing expectations 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—particularly to age well ‘in place’.

From a workforce perspective, this ensures consumer outcomes are nationally consistent with and proportionate to the risk(s) being managed.

Principle 2: Living well and integrated models of care

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 instead of the current compliance-based posture, which is focused on minimum standards of care.

Living well is more than just clinical care (which must continue to be delivered). It also includes the consumer’s physical, 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 by 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 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, 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.

Principle 3: Board governance

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 candour; 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 appropriate subcommittees of boards or managing bodies to address integrated care compliance, consumer and community expectations and commitments to serious major incident and missed care reporting.

Principle 4: Best-practice sharing and industry benchmarking

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.

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.

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.

Principle 5: Education and training, including workforce accreditation

Education and training is an area warranting attention. There is a pressing need for more active partnerships with the education sector, particularly with universities and vocational education and training organisations across the country. The competencies and skills of the existing workforce must be boosted, with a focus on practical skills and known competency gaps. People working in the industry should be able to see themselves as valued aged care professionals and the full range of their skills recognised.

Workforce accreditation (using a unique employee identifier) would allow employers to view each existing and potential employee’s skills and qualifications online (supported through the vocational education and training sector).

Principle 6: Workforce planning

The industry needs to commit to standards to approach 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 be used to define improved workforce allocation to deliver care outcomes.

Principle 7: Proactive assurance and continuous improvement

Proactive assurance requires an organisation to determine whether it is operating efficiently and effectively and meeting its stated overall business outcomes. Put simply, it is about defining ‘what must go right’ and then understanding the risks to achieving these outcomes (or ‘what can go wrong’).

High-performing organisations use assurance mechanisms (for example, management controls, audit and compliance) to help drive organisational improvement and support sustainable cultural change.

Assurance mechanisms (applying the three lines of defence (3LOD) model) can be linked with transparent feedback cultures to proactively drive continuous improvement across the industry.

Connect

LASA is leading the engagement process on behalf of the Council. Please feel free to contact Jane Bacot-Kilpatrick at JaneB@lasa.asn.au

Our ethos – Collaboration

Implementation of A Matter of Care underpinned by an active culture of collaboration.

The Council recognises collaboration is essential for the industry to be open to engagement with the parties that manifestly share in having a respected, skilled and well supported workforce. The Council brings together, for the first time, provider CEOs, an employee nominee and a consumer nominee – who together will lead structural change across the industry:

- Kevin McCoy, Australian Unity (Deputy Chair)
- Melissa Coad, United Workers Union
- Graham Dangerfield, Bapcare
- Sandra Hills OAM, Benetas
- David Maher, Catholic Healthcare
- John McCallum, National Seniors Australia
- Lucy O’Flaherty, Glenview
- Graeme Prior, Hall and Prior
- Cathy Thomas, BlueCare
- Ian Thorley, Estia Health

For more information please email: contact@acwic.com.au