

A “ONCE SIZE FITS ALL” APPROACH TO CONSUMER FEEDBACK GOES AGAINST THE CONCEPT OF “A FAIR GO”

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When seeking feedback from consumers within aged care a “one size fits all” approach does not lead to a fair go. Only giving options to fill out a survey and leaving no room for alternative ways to give feedback, leads to the exclusion of valuable input from culturally and linguistically diverse older Australians and other older people who face barriers to accessing services.

Any survey seeking input from consumers within the aged care sector is important in shaping improvements to the aged care system. However, we need to ask ourselves:

- > Does the survey adopt culturally inclusive methods?
- > Is it available in multiple languages or plain English formats?
- > Does the organising committee actively engage with peak bodies and community leaders representing diverse communities to seek input and co-design the feedback approach?
- > Are flexible methods and approaches adopted beyond a survey or phone calls?
- > Does the process consider the needs of older people who are illiterate or who have faced discrimination and are reluctant to give feedback to government bodies?

The recent report by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia, a peak national body representing Australians from Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, entitled “If we don’t count...it doesn’t count! Towards Consistent National Data Collection and Reporting on Cultural, Ethnic

and Linguistic Diversity” highlights the need for the national collection of data on cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity that is consistent, comparable and compatible. Key recommendations from this report suggest that surveys should ensure collected data is inclusive and that social and health research should require applicants to demonstrate how the proposed research will be inclusive of people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This is a pertinent point as often older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are excluded from research in aged care such as dementia research.

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing has released its Culturally Inclusive Feedback Practice Guide. The guide highlights the importance of cultural awareness when it comes to seeking consumer feedback. Some older people from culturally diverse backgrounds are unaware of their right to give feedback to government services. In addition lack of processes and resources in multiple languages such as feedback forms and access to interpreters, create additional barriers. Some older people may come from backgrounds whereby they were not empowered to give feedback to government programs safely. In addition, some people who are newly arrived migrants may fear that a complaint to the government may have adverse implications for their immigration status.

To ensure consumer focussed approaches are adopted in line with the Aged Care Quality Standards, it is vital to have flexible approaches rather than a “one size fits all” approach. This includes providing information about how to make complaints and provide feedback as well as rights to privacy available in plain English and languages other than English. It is important to provide opportunities for feedback and complaints to be provided through multiple methods and channels such as face to face, groups, community consultations and assertive outreach. It means partnerships with community leaders and co-designing processes that are tailored to diverse communities.

Every opinion counts and we need an inclusive feedback mindset to ensure equity in feedback processes. Not everyone can pick up a phone and speak in English about their needs. Not everyone can fill in a survey and not everyone has had life experiences which makes them feel safe to give feedback.

To access the Culturally Inclusive Feedback Practice Guide visit <http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/service-providers/practice-guides>

