



palliAGED Aged Care Standards Brief

July 2019

Supporting implementation

Standards communicate the [performance expectations, processes and structures that should be in place](#). In health and care environments standards ensure that care is consistent and safe for providers and recipients. They also guide us towards improved care and symptom management, better experience of care and quality of life, and better system management.

Care standards can help to bridge the gap between carer knowledge and experience and the person's needs by providing guidance on what is expected.

Comparison between organisations based on indicators derived from standards helps us to identify where quality care is being provided and hence the approaches to care delivery that support this achievement. It also demonstrates where on the spectrum of care a given organisation sits and where performance might be improved. Since early 2018 three sets of national standards have been released that are relevant to the aged care sector. The standards are: the [new set of aged care quality standards \(Single Quality Framework\)](#), the new

Aged Care (Single Quality Framework)	National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards	National Palliative Care Standards
Consumer dignity and choice	Clinical Governance	Assessment of needs
Ongoing assessment and planning with consumers	Partnering with Consumers	Developing the care plan
Personal care and clinical care	Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infection	Caring for carers
Services & support for daily living	Medication Safety	Providing care
Organisation's service environment	Comprehensive Care	Transitions within and between services
Feedback and complaints	Communicating for Safety	Grief support
Human resources	Blood Management	Service culture
Organisational governance	Recognising & Responding to Acute Deterioration	Quality improvement
		Staff qualifications & training

National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards, and the National Palliative Care Standards. They are relevant because most older Australians require both health and care supports, and many have life-limiting chronic conditions and/or are approaching the end of life and could benefit from palliative care. While responding to all standards might seem a daunting task, in many instances the standards overlap.

In the table above, we have highlighted areas of overlap between the content and guidance within these three sets of standards. In addition to the intersects shown, the NSQHS standard 6 intersects with the Single Quality Framework standards 1-6, and standards 1-7 of the National Palliative Care Standards.

Clearly the overlap between these standards is substantial and serves to highlight critical and common areas for attention. For those working with older Australians, “there are critical skills which are needed even if they vary according to role and scope of practice including: recognising change(s) which could suggest that death is foreseeable; providing care responding to the person’s needs within the individual’s scope of practice; being able to communicate with the person compassionately around death and dying; and supporting planning including advance care planning and terminal care planning for the actual [death](#).”

The NSQHS standards aim to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision. They do not provide clinical guidance on providing care, but they are complemented by the Clinical Care Standards program of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). This is important because the standards describe the minimum performance expectations and used together with the clinical standards on ‘how to provide care’ they drive us towards safe, high quality appropriate care for everyone.

The ACSQHC Clinical Care Standards are based on clinical care guidelines for specific conditions but differ in that they focus on a key area of practice rather than all aspects of treatment and care. An important element of this inter-linked set of standards and

clinical guidance is research evidence. The evidence underpins clinical care guidelines by establishing the most likely outcome for most people with a given approach to care. This supports delivery of consistently high quality care, and gives us confidence in care decisions because to the best of our ability we understand the potential benefits and harms. Together with the person’s preferences we can then use this knowledge to guide choices that are appropriate and safe for them.

The Single Quality Framework performance standards for aged care similarly do not provide instruction on ‘how to’ provide clinical care but rather provide guidance on expected performance and outcomes for [consumers](#). They reflect the level of care and services the community can expect from organisations that provide Commonwealth subsidised aged care services. How to provide care is up to the provider. The National Palliative Care Standards also do not provide instruction on ‘how to care’ but are complimented by other initiatives funded by the commonwealth Department of Health.

Prior to 2017, the Guidelines for a Palliative Approach in Residential Aged Care (APRAC) and the Guidelines for a Palliative Approach for Aged Care in the Community Setting (COMPAC) provided the aged care sector with guidance on care issues. In 2017, with support from the Department of Health these guidelines were integrated and updated into what is now palliAGED. To our knowledge, palliAGED is currently the only project engaged with the identification, synthesis and distribution of evidence informed guidance on palliative care specifically for the Australian aged care sector. Maintaining the currency of this evidence and providing it in formats appropriate for Careworkers, health professionals and others is core business for palliAGED.

As noted above, although the three sets of standards discussed here are aimed at specific populations or services, they share considerable overlap in target, content and intent. Providing online access to evidence based information and practical guidance on caring for older Australians, palliAGED is likely to be an invaluable resource for the aged care sector as the new standards are implemented.