



Strong foundations

Using collaborative regulatory design to develop a new aged care assessment methodology

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Abstract

The Australian aged care system is undergoing significant reform. This includes a new Aged Care Act, a new regulatory framework and a strengthened set of aged care Quality Standards (the Standards) – all scheduled for introduction on 1 July 2024.

As the national regulator of aged care, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Commission), must develop a new methodology for assessing the compliance and performance of aged care providers against these new Standards.

The Commission is using collaborative regulatory design and constructive stakeholder engagement to shape the assessment methodology and prepare the aged care sector for the upcoming changes.

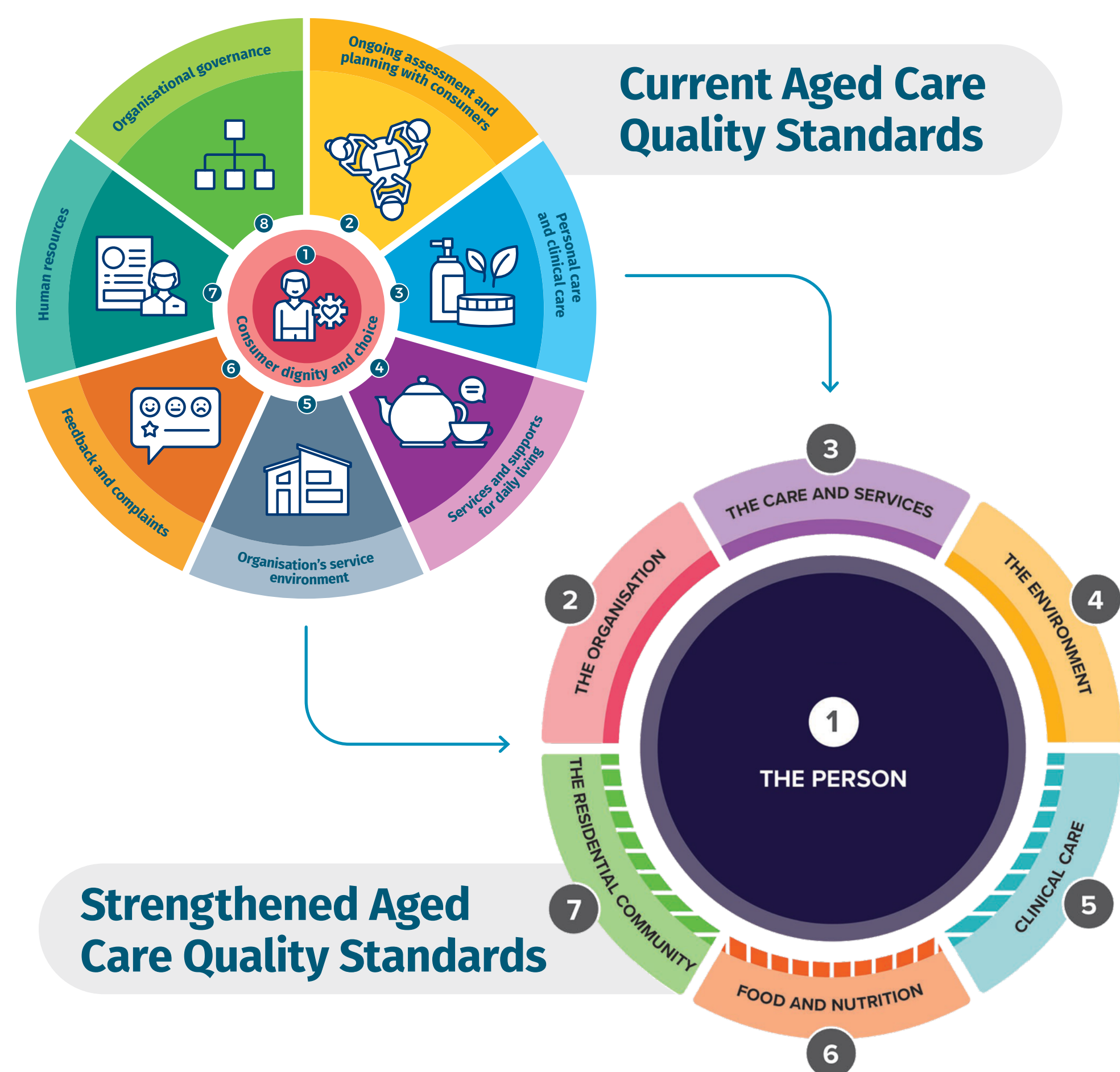
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The Standards are changing

The [Standards](#)¹ were developed in 2019 to help ensure that older persons receive consistent quality care and services.

In 2021, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended that the current Standards be reviewed and include key areas such as food, dementia, governance and clinical care². In response, the Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department) drafted a [strengthened set of Standards](#)³ after an independent review and [consultations](#) with older people, their families and aged care providers⁴.

The Department also drafted a [new regulatory model](#) which outlines the future obligations of providers related to the draft strengthened Standards⁵. The final strengthened Standards will be implemented from 1 July 2024. Our role at the Commission is to support everyone to prepare for the changes and develop a new methodology for assessing aged care providers against the strengthened Standards⁶.



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Conclusion

With less than a year before the strengthened aged care Standards are implemented, we recognise the work ahead.

We are expanding the relationships and pathways we use to engage with the sector, listening and responding to what we hear. We are partnering with providers and older Australians to help us to deliver engaging and impactful learning products and activities that assist aged care providers to raise capability and people receiving care to understand and exercise their rights.

Our pilot project will help us deliver a transparent assessment methodology supported by an evidence framework that will drive continuous improvement and more consistent regulatory decisions.

Our aim is to enable older Australians to have a better aged care experience.

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References

1. Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Quality Standards consumer measures. [Internet]. Canberra: ACT AGCQ; 2019 [cited 15 November 2022]. cited 15 July 2023. Available from: <https://www.agedcarequalityandsafety.gov.au/standards/consumer-measures>
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The Stronger Standards Better Aged Care program

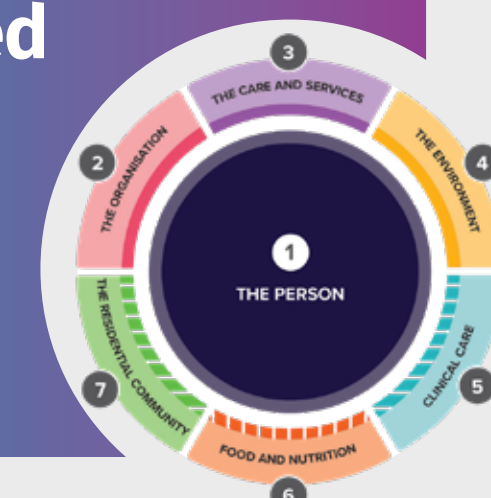
The strengthened Standards will guide aged care providers in lifting performance to deliver the care that older Australians need and expect.

To prepare ourselves and the sector, we are implementing the Stronger Standards Better Aged Care (SSBAC) program⁷.

- 1 Older Australians are confident about their rights and what to expect from providers
- 2 Providers understand new Standards and are ready to apply them
- 3 Providers understand how the Commission will assess performance
- 4 Providers can accurately self-assess their performance and understand how to self-correct based on our guidance and feedback
- 5 Our communication and guidance are accessible, clear, concise and fit-for-purpose

Older Australians, aged care providers and the Commission are ready for the strengthened Standards

Figure 1: SSBAC Program aims



Engagement approach

To help us better support Australia's aged care sector, we are working with older Australians, their families and carers and aged care providers to develop resources, training and tools that are appropriate and effective.

We are leveraging our connections with our stakeholder groups. These include aged care industry and older Australian peak bodies, advocacy groups, unions and organisations representing First Nations, LGBTQIA+ and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

We are collaborating with our Older Australians and Families panel (over 300 members) and a provider panel (over 120 members) in testing our ideas and developing new content.

We are conducting discussion groups and webinars and using our website, social media and other channels to engage with our stakeholders.

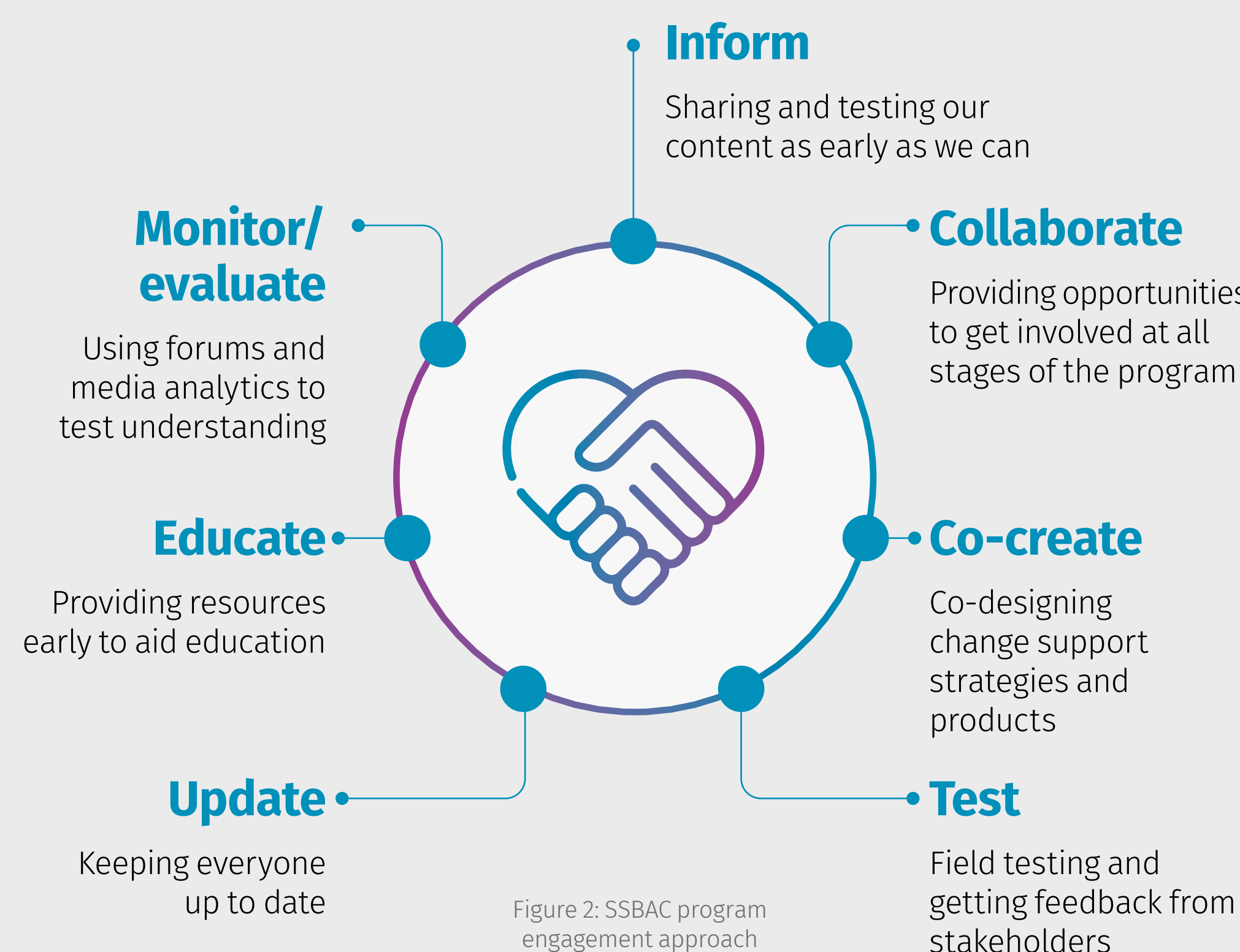


Figure 2: SSBAC program engagement approach

Program deliverables

Strengthened Standards pilot

To test how our draft assessment methodology and audit process will work in practice, we are conducting a pilot involving a sample of 40 providers representing diverse service types, sizes, locations and people receiving aged care⁸.

The pilot will inform:

- > how we adjust the way we assess provider performance
- > how graded assessment will be introduced to better differentiate performance
- > what support providers will need to understand and meet the strengthened Standards
- > whether the Standards need any further changes.

Pre-audit preparation	Audit	Audit reporting	Pilot feedback
> Participant briefing > Survey > Request for information	> Opening meetings > Document review > Interviews > On-site observations > Closing meetings	> Drafting reports > Incorporating participant feedback > Finalising reports	> Debriefing sessions > Survey

Figure 3: Pilot process

Addressing diverse needs

Our aged care sector is diverse. Older Australians represent a rich mix of cultures. Many aged care workers speak English as a second language. Aged care services in remote areas work differently to city services. Single service providers lack the corporate resources of larger providers.

We are developing change support plans and resources to address the different needs of:

- > First Nations Elders and providers
- > Culturally and linguistically diverse Australians and providers for service specific groups
- > Regional and remote services
- > Single service providers



Australia is home to the world's oldest continuous cultures and Australians who identify with over 330 ancestries⁹.

1 in 6 of the total population are aged 65 and over¹⁰.

This number is expected to grow. By 2066, older people in Australia will make up between 21% and 23% of the total population⁹.

First Nations Elders¹¹

- > 1.5% of total population aged 50 and over are Indigenous Australians
- > The Indigenous population is ageing. By 2031, 1 in 5 Indigenous people will be aged 50 or over

Pilot evaluation framework

We have designed a framework to evaluate the delivery of our pilot project. It includes:

Evaluation criteria for new assessment methodology:

- > Is it flexible and scalable across diverse provider settings?
- > Does it provide for effective, consistent and accurate audits and decisions?
- > Is the process efficient, the steps of evidence collection clear and logical?
- > What guidance are required for audit teams and providers?

Evaluation criteria for the new audit process - provider and older Australian experience:

- > Were the requests for information clear and easy to understand?
- > Were the questions asked relevant to the aged care setting?
- > Was the audit process transparent and the findings consistent with expectations?
- > What guidance, resources and tools are required to support implementation of the Standards?

Customer experience project

To help us improve our service delivery for older Australians, their families and carers and aged care providers, we are conducting a customer experience project. It involves over 50 in-depth interviews to help us understand what our customers value and service mapping to show how our processes contribute to customer experience. This project provides an evidence base that will underpin the design of the SSBAC program change support program for older Australians and aged care providers.

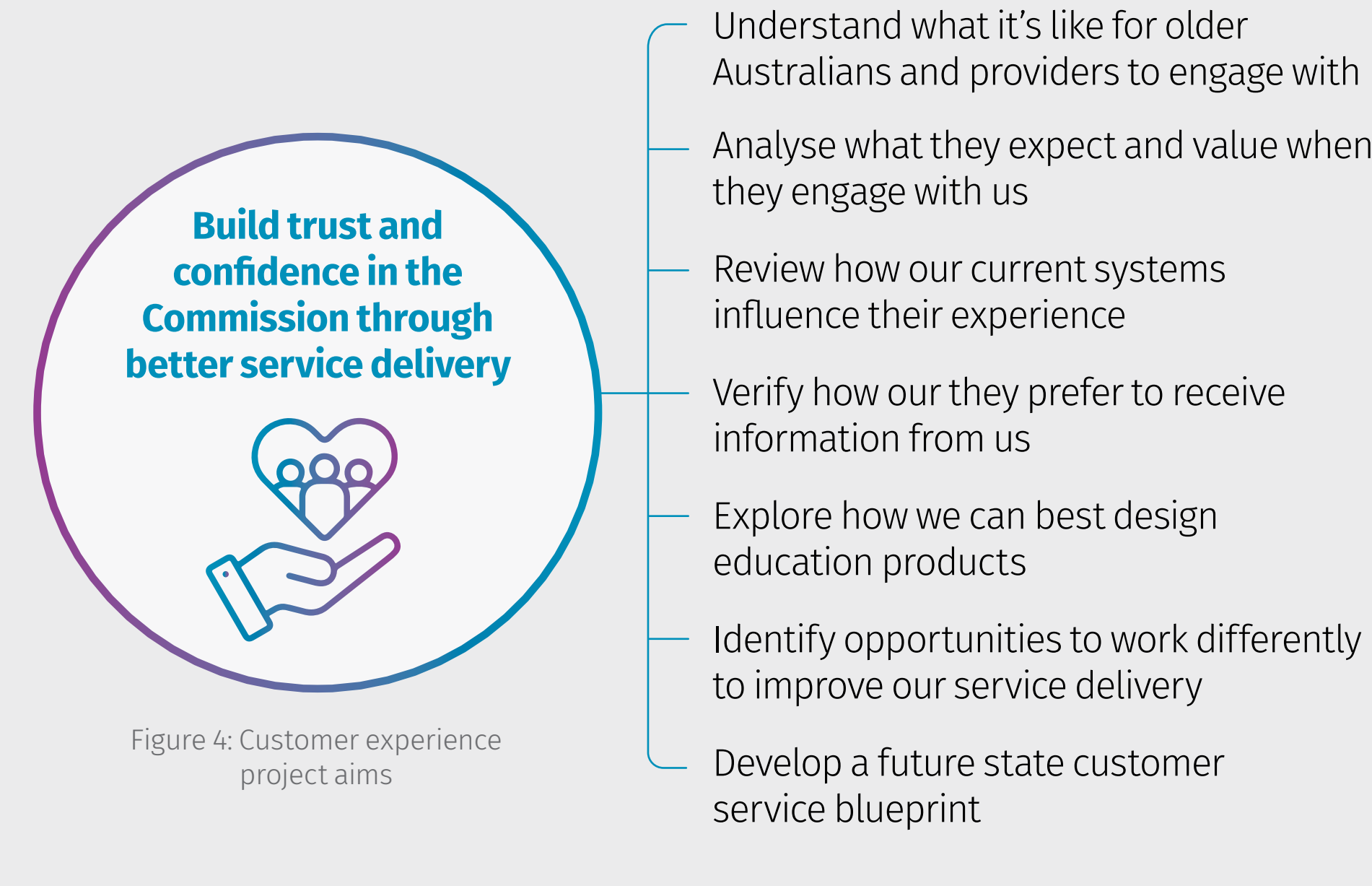


Figure 4: Customer experience project aims

Culturally and linguistically diverse Older Australians¹²

- > 1 in 3 Australians aged 65 and over were born overseas
- > 1 in 6 of older Australians speak a language other than English

Older Australians in rural and remote areas¹³

- > 1 in 3 older Australians live in rural and remote areas
- > 1 in 5 are receiving assistance from aged care home programs

LGBTIQ+ older Australians¹⁴

- > Data about LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia are currently limited
- > In the 2016 Census, there were almost 4,800 cohabiting older partners (aged 65 and over) in same-sex couples

Aged care providers and services in Australia¹⁵

- > 811 providers were delivering residential aged care through 2,671 services
- > 916 providers were delivering home care through 2,427 services
- > 1,407 providers were providing home support through 3,760 outlets