

From: Rachael Wass [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 8 March 2024 5:08 PM
To: Aged Care Legislative Reform
Subject: Responses to the draft Act, ACQS and Reference materials

Categories: ACTION REQUIRED

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Dear ACLF Team,

Thank you for the extensive work you have done in consulting widely with many stakeholders on the draft Act and revision to the ACQS for older people in Australia.

One overarching point we would like to note is that it is pleasing to see the prominent inclusion of cultural diversity and spirituality in both the Act and the revised ACQS.

It is also particularly noteworthy that the broadest sense of spirituality is part of the definition of high-quality care. We believe offer the following brief comments on the draft Act:

- That diversity includes cultural diversity, **spiritual diversity** and **the concepts of identity and individual preferences and neurological differences**.
- That if we are to place importance on individuals' cultural diversity and spirituality (**which does not necessarily include faith and religion**), then this must also be **reflected explicitly through AN-ACC and in funding for spiritual care** in the 200 minutes of care.
- That references to spiritual care, and spirituality, **does not rely on faith or religion** but rather how we can support older people to **have purpose in their lives, to help them reflect and create connections (with themselves, others, nature, creativity, something bigger) and to foster peace of mind**.

In addition, we offer the following inclusions in the reference materials and supporting documents for the revised ACQS and the Act:

- That it would be very helpful for providers to have the [National Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Aged Care](#) (published by Meaningful Ageing Australia, 2016) referenced as supporting materials in both the Act and the ACQS.
- That an evidence based, [validated](#) and flexible assessment tool such as [ConnecTo](#) is referenced to help providers to operationalise the aspects of diversity of spirituality including First Nations and other special need cohorts.
- That establishment of a professionalisation body for spiritual care practitioners is an important step for safe and effective delivery of spiritual care in aged care.

Who is Meaningful Ageing Australia?

We are the National peak body for spiritual care and emotional wellbeing of older people. Our vision is for every older person to feel at ease in their life, so they know and feel belonging, connection, and a sense of wholeness.

We are not a faith-based organisation. We work inclusively with a range of aged care service providers and partner organisations who are united around a common goal of full quality of life and emotional wellbeing for the older people they are serving.

National Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Aged Care 2019

This guideline was a world first for aged care and is continually referenced as a seminal document nationally and internationally.

Opportunity: We would be very grateful and keen to work with you on a short project to revise the National Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Aged Care to incorporate the new Act and revised ACQS and include a specific reference to First Nations spirituality.

Healthy Ageing - Emotional Wellbeing is healthy ageing

Our organisation is increasingly responding to the need for awareness of spirituality and emotional wellbeing as part of a proactive wellbeing approach to help people navigate the changes and opportunities of living their lives with meaning and resilience. Particular aspects of the spiritual dimension become more important for many older people. These aspects or tasks of ageing are: Finding final meanings in life (What has my life been for? Where do I find meaning now as I grow older?); learning to transcend the disabilities and losses often experienced; affirming relationships (old and new); finding hope in the face of physical and mental deterioration and frailty.

The goal of spiritual care of older people is to affirm the older person in their life journey, to strengthen resilience and support flourishing in whatever circumstances of life the person experiences. This will be particularly important as the rates of returned servicepeople from Vietnam veterans, stolen generations and home leavers begin to enter care.

Opportunity: We would therefore welcome discussion with you on how this might be supported through programs, research or awareness about health ageing that includes body, mind and spirit.

Establishment of a non-faith based Spiritual Care/Wellbeing Registration body

As demand increases for spiritual care and older people require individual spirituality needs to be met, there is a need for professionalisation of Spiritual Care Practitioners and Pastoral Care (volunteers or paid) as well as Social Workers, Wellbeing officers or others who wish to offer dedicated support for spiritual care.

Opportunity: Meaningful Ageing Australia would like to discuss establishing an independent registration body to provide trained, safe and trauma-informed spiritual care practitioners into aged care or across healthcare systems and continue to support education and understanding for and need for a broader sense of [spirituality](#).

We are currently working on a survey of member organisations to gauge time and impact of spiritual care, and the work has already been done on a building a competency-based framework to measure and meet the [pervading and enduring significance of spirituality in Australian society](#), among First Nations peoples, immigrants and settlers.

Once again, we value being able to contribute to this important milestone in aged care and for older people in the future.

In friendship & harmony,
Rachael

Rachael Wass | Chief Executive Officer
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The Australian peak body for
championing the spiritual care &
emotional wellbeing of older people



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Meaningful Ageing Australia acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we conduct our work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise their unique relationships to the land and waters and are grateful for their spiritual resilience and cultural wisdom.



Meaningful Ageing Australia supports person-centered care that is inclusive for all people. The intersex-inclusive Progress Pride flag is a reflection of recent conversations around inclusivity underneath the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella.