



# Improving quality of care in residential aged care – case study – Coinda Coonabarabran

Continuous quality improvement is the systematic, ongoing effort of regularly reviewing and refining processes to improve the quality of care and services, to achieve better outcomes.

Continuous quality improvement is for everyone involved as a partner in the decisions and delivery of care to older Australians.

By sharing and publishing these case studies, the Department hopes that this webinar will help to build a community of practice to support continuous quality improvement across the sector.

There are a number of quality improvement models used in health care delivery. The PDCA Tool – Plan, Do, Check, Act is the model featured in the [Star Ratings Improvement Manual](#) and [Quality Indicator Program Manual Part B](#) to support continuous quality improvement in quality indicator outcomes, compliance, resident experience and staffing, and can be used across all aspects of care delivery.

## Aged care provider information

**Service name:** Coinda Coonabarabran.

**Aged care provider:** Coinda Coonabarabran.

**Location:** Coonabarabran.

**Service characteristics:** Rural/Remote, Dementia.

**How long has the service been in operation?** Over 40 years.

**Is there something that you feel makes your service unique?** We are unique in terms of our remote location, and the challenges we need to overcome that other facilities may not need to consider. We are the only aged care provider and largest employer in our town.

## **Plan, Do, Check, Act approach to quality improvement**

### **Plan**

**What quality outcome/s were you trying to achieve? What did you identify needed improvement, and what key tasks were identified to address the intended goal/s?**

Through observations from the Management team, CEO morning tea meeting with consumers and staff meetings, we identified that our food & dining experience needed improvements to increase our consumer and staff satisfaction. Our kitchen had started to become dated, and the physical space was too small to deliver innovative changes and comply with the growing food standard requirements. The quality outcome we wanted to achieve was to design, build and operate a new kitchen for our facility that allows for a high-quality and safe food and dining experience for our consumers, which in turn will enhance staff morale and future proof operations for growth.

**What barriers and/or enablers did you discover to the proposed activities?**

The initial barrier was financial, where we needed to seek financial assistance. We were successful in obtaining a grant through the Building Better Regions Fund – Infrastructure Projects Stream – Round 5 which allowed us to implement our plan and support this project.

**What methods were identified to collect, analyse and measure success and areas for improvement?**

The data to identify areas of improvement were through observation, staff feedback and consumer feedback. This was done through paper surveys at the time.

**How did your service ensure that they had enough staff and staff with the appropriate skills and experience to support the quality improvement activity?**

We secured experienced construction services company Paynter & Dixon who ran the design and construction project alongside our CEO, Leanne Redfern and Operations Manager at the time, David Cholson. It was important to support our executive team with a complete project team provided by Paynter Dixon. This allowed the executive team the time to devote to the project as well as the day-to-day operations.

## Do

### How did your service:

- **assign key tasks and carry out planned activities?**

The key tasks were assigned through project meetings and a project plan with Paynter & Dixon to ensure the project was on track. Post-build quality improvements were tracked through our documented Continuous Improvement program to ensure the quality improvement was agreed upon, action steps and accountabilities attached.

- **monitor the implementation of these activities/ document relevant findings/data?**

Again, through our Continuous Improvement program we were able to monitor improvements which included an evaluation process.

## Check

### How did your service:

- **collect and document information and evidence to check improvements were being made?**

Throughout our improvements, we were able to collect and document information and evidence to check improvements were being made. We did this through consumer feedback via our CEO morning teas, consumer meetings, Feedback options including our new QR codes and staff pulse surveys, where we were able to collect data on how our newly implemented food service operations were impacting on consumers, families and staff.

### Did your service:

- **analyse the identified measures and steps taken to determine if the quality improvement activities were achieving the desired outcomes?**

We did, more informally along the way however, we also documented. Food is a very subjective area, however using the assistance of speech pathologists and dietetics, this gave us more definitive data.

- **find that there were any unintended consequences?**

- Increased levels of communication and encouragement from care staff to kitchen staff
- Increased community engagement on our social media platforms

- Increased job applications for our kitchen by 35%.
- **find the planned activities resulted in improvement? If not, why not?**  
Our planned activities have resulted in an overall large improvement to our facility, for our staff but more importantly for our consumers.

## Act

### If the improvement steps were successful:

- **why do you think they worked?**
  - Passion and buy in from key staff and management.
  - Breaking down each small project into a documented quality improvement process. Action points numbered and allocated to those who are responsible.
  - Celebrating the wins together as a team.
  - Hearing feedback and compliments directly from consumers and family members where possible.
- **were there any hurdles? And how did you respond to any challenges?**
  - Skills shortages in chefs/cooks – we leant on the equipment technology including our automated food safety program that guides and directs kitchen staff on workflow, cooking times, temp checks, cleaning duties and any other safety checks required of them on shift.
  - We also conducted quality checks and actioned any speech pathology and dietician recommendations or requirements, to ensure timely and safe information was given, educated to and understood by the kitchen staff.
- **how did you celebrate success with consumers and staff?**
  - We have celebrated with staff along the way, and by celebrating our new building. We further celebrated our improvements with consumers, staff and the community at our Grand Opening on 18 November 2023.
- **Can you share any key learnings from your quality improvement initiative?**
  - Be clear with what you are wanting to achieve and the 'why' behind it.
  - Ensure to bring your team along for the journey and explain the 'why'.
  - Keep consumers and families updated – they get just as excited as what we do sometimes about new initiatives!
  - Be realistic in our resourcing and skills your team can bring to the table.
  - Design and over manage food and dining processes – (the sweet spot between not under manage or micromanage) – make sure these are spot on.
  - Don't forget to pull on the hand break every now and then to celebrate with your team. In a time of resource challenges, they are your biggest asset.
  - Maintain good association with consultants, industry bodies and listening to their expertise and advice

- Maintain accurate financial oversight.

## **Next steps**

**What is your service considering as the critical next steps to continue to maintain successful quality outcomes or further improve the quality outcomes for your consumers?**

We recently attended the IHHC national conference in Adelaide this month which focussed on embracing transformation in the aged care food & dining space. We will be now focusing on the proposed new food standards which will help guide us on further improvements and quality outcomes for our consumers.