



# National Design Principles and Guidelines

Factsheet for older people, their families and carers

On 1 July 2024, the Australian Government introduced National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines to improve quality of life for older people living in residential aged care.

## Why do we need Principles and Guidelines?

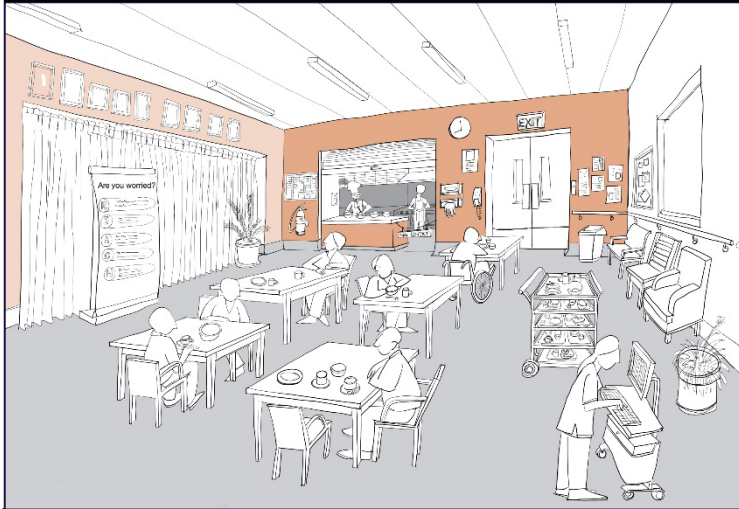
The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended the government guide the design of residential aged care homes to make them accessible and dementia-friendly.

To do this, we have worked with a broad range of stakeholders including older people, their families and carers, to develop National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines (Principles and Guidelines).

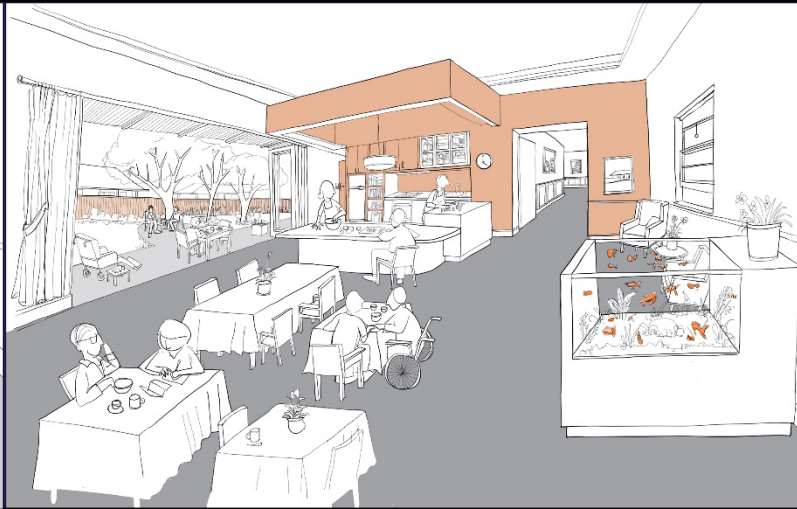
The Principles and Guidelines:

- Recognise the key role aged care homes play on a person's physical and mental wellbeing
- Represent a shift away from institutional design towards spaces that are familiar and supportive
- Provide clear, nationally consistent and practical guidance on what good design looks like in aged care homes.

## Principle 2: Cultivate a Home



**Before:** The environment is set up for people to be together in large numbers, with a set program of activities.



**After:** The same environment now encourages smaller group activities, giving people choice about how they spend their day.

## What does this mean for older people in residential aged care?

The Principles and Guidelines will support older people living in aged care homes by encouraging aged care providers and design experts to create more home-like environments. Older people, especially those living with dementia, will benefit from well-designed accommodation that creates a sense of home, provides access to the outdoors and ensures connection with the community.

The Principles and Guidelines will help to create environments that:

- Maintain a person's health and wellbeing
- Support a sense of identity, dignity and belonging; and
- Help people to stay independent as they age.

The department encourages people to familiarise themselves with this resource to learn more about what good design looks like in aged care.

## How are the Principles and Guidelines structured?

The Principles and Guidelines are in an easy-to-read format with 'before' and 'after' illustrations, scenarios and practical checklists. There are four main principles, supported by a series of guidelines:

1. **Enable the Person** - Support people living in a place that maintains their health, wellbeing and sense of identity.
  - This principle acknowledges that thoughtful design can reduce the impact of changing mobility, cognition, continence and frailty that residents may experience.
2. **Cultivate a Home** - Create a familiar environment in which people have privacy, control, and feel they belong.

- This principle reflects the evidence on the benefits of small household models, including reduced agitation, pacing and exit-seeking behaviours and improved social interaction, eating and infection control.
3. **Access the Outdoors** - Support people seeing, accessing and spending time outdoors, in contact with nature.
    - This principle highlights the evidence linking access to the outdoors with a range of health, psychological and social benefits, which have a cumulative positive impact that is hard to achieve in other ways.
  4. **Connect with Community** - Encourage people to connect with family, friends and community, continuing to participate in meaningful activities.
    - This principle acknowledges that many people in aged care homes are at risk of social isolation and exclusion. It highlights that creating opportunities for residents to connect with each other and with family, friends and the broader community is important for wellbeing.

## Where can I find more information?

If you would like to read more about the project on what makes good design, see [Improving accommodation in residential aged care](#)

If you would like more information about the process to move into an aged care home and what to expect when you are there, see [Resources | My Aged Care](#)

## Let's change aged care together

We invite Australians to continue to have their say about the aged care reforms.



Visit [agedcareengagement.health.gov.au](https://agedcareengagement.health.gov.au)



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