

## **Participation - all part of Resident Focus**

Many of our consumers at the Aged Rights Advocacy Service ask what is meant by Resident Focus in Residential Aged Care. This article will discuss the residents right of **Participation** in decision making and is the third article to explore that question, the other two being **Information** and **Consultation**, both of which are available on our website.

A good question to ask oneself is how does the residential facility communicate with, and get information from residents or their representatives. There are a number of areas where people can expect to be assisted to participate in decision making, for example:

- Resident and relative meetings/groups/committees
- Focus groups to discuss particular issues - for example Food Focus Groups
- Interviews

There will be entry and exit interviews for example, where the provider is expected to explain and help the resident or their representative to understand all the terms of the agreement, as per the User Rights Principles 23.85 (e). This includes the resident's rights and obligations, the services to be provided, and the fees and other charges. The residential facility will have interview guidelines for staff to ensure the intention of the legislation is adhered to.

- Other feedback systems including Quality Assurance processes

The Standards for Residential Care state that a residential facility should consider undertaking quality improvement activities that may be useful in obtaining a consumer perspective and feedback. These activities would include surveys, questionnaires, suggestion boxes and other means of encouraging formal feedback to management.

Another Standard (4.8 – Catering Cleaning and Laundry Services) states that the dining room is to promote and encourage a social environment, and that residents are to be encouraged to contribute ideas and feedback, and are consulted in relation to seating arrangements.

The Code of Ethics and Guide to Ethical Conduct for Residential Aged Care identifies those values that form the basis of an effective relationship between the providers and the consumers of aged care. One important aspect of the Code of Ethics talks about residential facilities providing mechanisms that enable residents to offer feedback, as above, or make complaints without fear of reprisal.

Making a complaint is another form of feedback. The Standards state that the residential facility, as well as seeking feedback on all aspects of the services provided, will ensure that issues raised by residents or their representatives will be dealt with fairly, promptly, confidentially and without retribution.

The Code of Ethics also states that the residential facility will facilitate access to external agencies, such as advocacy services and the Complaints Resolution Scheme (CRS). ARAS assists people to resolve problems use the internal complaints process within their facility and will also help people approach the external complaints process, the CRS. We are available to help people speak for themselves or we can represent them with their permission. We provide information about rights and entitlements, and assist people to speak up about any aspect of their contact with an aged care service.