



Every hero needs
a villain: shaping
a new narrative
for aged care.

Susan Sullivan-Green
Gold Coast
Aged Care Symposium

phn
GOLD COAST
An Australian Government Initiative

**Great storytelling needs
a great villain.**

**Without a proper villain,
a story has no power.**

**Which side do people think
you are on?**





Plot twist

Meet the players

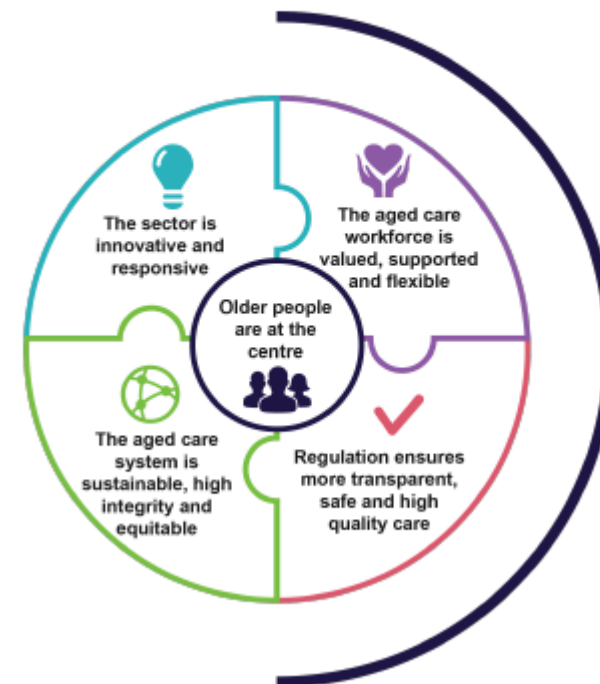
New Aged Care Act – Sector Change Plan

Opportunity for a new narrative

Aged care's transformation vision

Older people are at the centre

We have a vision to transform aged care to improve the quality of life for older people and ensure they are at the centre of all we do



How it usually works:

1.The Fall: The character does something wrong or harmful.

2.The Struggle: They face consequences or feel guilt, and start to question their actions.

3.The Change: They try to fix their mistakes or do something good.

4.The Redemption: They earn forgiveness, respect, or peace—sometimes even sacrifice themselves for others.



The Hero





The Villain

The Mentor or Enabler



Character roles:

- **Connect, inspire and mobilise**
- **Move beyond metrics and compliance into meaning**
- **Reminder – why this work matters.**

The hero gives us

purpose

**The villain gives us
urgency**

The mentor gives us
hope

**These characters
provide the foundation
of the story and you need
all three of them.**

Mentor

Magic
Beans

Hero

We provide X to Y

Villian

to help them deal with Z.

The
business

Your
product/
service

Your
audience

What your
audience is
struggling
with.

**How do we shift the
narrative?**

Some familiar stories



Margaret's Maze: The Confused Consumer

Margaret is overwhelmed by the new Support at Home program. She doesn't understand the co-payment structure or how to choose a provider. She has spent countless hours trying to navigate the system. It's all too hard and too confusing. Margaret gives up.

Outcome:

Margaret delays care, risking her health.



Characters:

- **Hero:** Margaret, 82, recently widowed, trying to access home care services.
- **Mediator:** A care coordinator named Leila, who works at a local aged care provider.
- **Villain:** The complex and unclear funding system under the new Act.

Message:

Even with good intentions, unclear policy hurts the very people it aims to protect.

Frank's Fight – The Rights-Based Reformer

- **Hero:** Frank, 76, a former union organiser in aged care, now a resident in a facility.
- **Mediator:** A nurse named Carlos, who supports Frank's advocacy.
- **Villain:** The old system that ignored residents' voices.



Story:

Frank uses the new Charter of Rights to challenge restrictive visiting hours and food choices. Carlos helps him file a complaint and supports a resident council. The facility updates its policies, and other residents feel empowered.

Message:

The new Act gives consumers real tools to shape their care, and workers can be allies in that change.





Burnout – The Worker’s Dilemma

- **Hero: Nina, a 79-year-old woman with dementia, who thrives on routine and familiar faces.**
- **Mediator: Priya, a personal care worker who has looked after Nina for 3 years.**
- **Villain: Workforce shortages and rushed implementation.**



Story:

Priya is overwhelmed by new documentation requirements and staff turnover. She has less time for Nina, who becomes anxious and withdrawn. Priya considers quitting, but worries about leaving her residents behind.

Message: Workers are the bridge between policy and care—but they need support, not strain.

Issues with 3 characters

Hero

Villian

Mediator

Overreach – doing too much too fast or without enough support

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers lose personalised care due to rigid, centralised rules.	Workers are forced to follow top-down mandates that possibly ignore local needs.	Bureaucracy that overrides community-based care.

Burden on providers

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers face reduced access as small providers close.	Workers are stretched thin, trying to maintain quality under pressure.	Overregulation that punishes good providers.

Lack of clarity

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers are confused about their rights and options.	Workers can't confidently guide families through the system.	Ambiguous legislation and delayed regulations.

Moral Imperative

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers are finally recognised as rights-holders, not passive recipients.	Workers become advocates and allies in delivering person-centred care.	The old system that allowed neglect and invisibility.

Accountability

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers are protected from harm through stronger oversight.	Workers are empowered to speak up and uphold standards.	Rogue providers and systemic neglect.

Consumer Rights

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers gain voice, choice, and control over their care.	Workers support informed decision-making and respect autonomy.	Paternalistic models that silence older people.

Long term vision

Hero's Struggle	Mediator's Role	Villain
Consumers benefit from a safer, fairer, more sustainable system.	Workers are part of building a future-ready care model.	Short-term resistance to necessary change.

**Additional character
archetypes can deepen
your storytelling and
expand angles**

The Policy Architect

- **Role:** A government official or policy advisor
- **Narrative Function:** Represents the **intentions behind reform**—justice, equity, and systemic change.
- **Conflict:** Struggles with the gap between policy ideals and real-world implementation.
- **Use:** Humanises the government's role and shows that reformers are not villains, but people trying to fix a broken system.





The Family Advocate

- **Role:** A daughter, son, or spouse of an aged care consumer.
- **Narrative Function:** Represents the **emotional and logistical burden** of navigating aged care on behalf of a loved one.
- **Conflict:** Torn between gratitude for care and frustration with system complexity or cost.
- **Use:** Adds emotional stakes and shows how reforms affect not just individuals, but entire families.

The Ethical Provider

- **Role:** A CEO or manager of a not-for-profit or values-driven aged care organisation.
- **Narrative Function:** Represents the **moral tension** between compliance, care, and financial sustainability.
- **Conflict:** Wants to do the right thing but is constrained by funding, workforce shortages, or red tape.
- **Use:** Counters the stereotype of providers as profit-driven, showing the **nuance and diversity** in the sector.





The Frontline Trainer

- **Role:** A workforce educator or mentor helping staff adapt to the new standards.
- **Narrative Function:** Bridges the gap between **policy and practice**.
- **Conflict:** Faces resistance from overworked staff or confusion about new requirements.
- **Use:** Highlights the importance of **education, leadership, and support** in successful reform.

The Digital Innovator

- **Role:** A tech specialist introducing digital tools to improve aged care.
- **Narrative Function:** Represents **hope and innovation** in a sector often seen as outdated.
- **Conflict:** Struggles with adoption, funding, or integration into traditional care models.
- **Use:** Adds a forward-looking dimension to the story—**what aged care could become.**



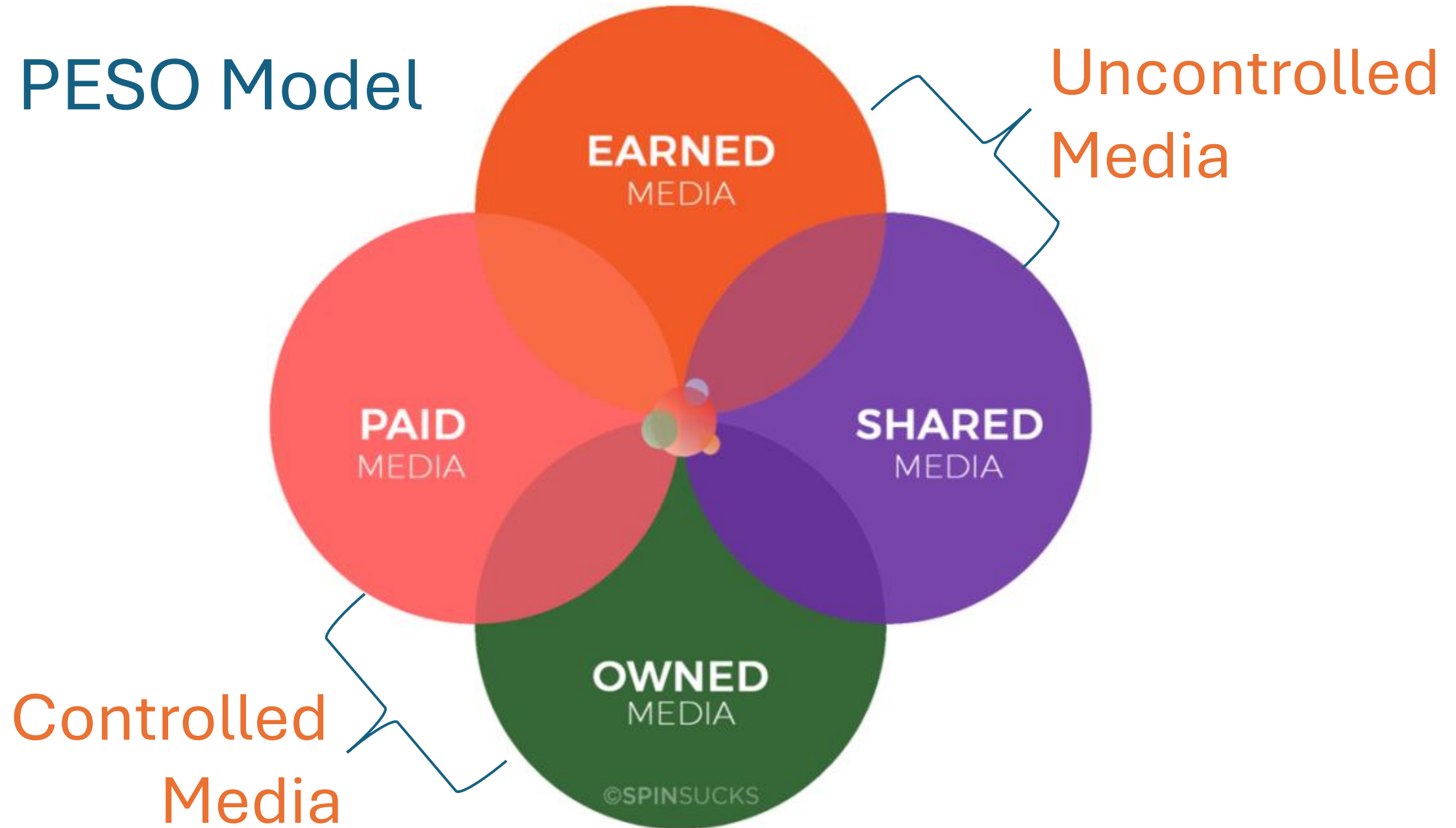


The Forgotten Elder

- **Role:** A consumer who is isolated, culturally diverse, or living with a disability.
- **Narrative Function:** Represents those most at risk of being **left behind** in reform.
- **Conflict:** Faces barriers to access, language, or culturally appropriate care.
- **Use:** Reminds the audience that **equity must be central** to reform.

**How can you
tell your story?**

The PESO Model





Before you set sail on your corporate storytelling, pack a couple of takeaways ...

1. You need at least three characters in your story.

2. The hero to give us purpose.

3. The villain to give us urgency.

4. The mentor to give us hope.

5. The secret formula ...

Mentor

Magic
Beans

Hero

We provide X to Y

Villain

to help them deal with Z.

The
business

Your
product/
service

Your
audience

What your
audience is
struggling
with.

A graphic featuring a series of concentric red circles, resembling a target or a bullseye. The circles are centered on a dark red background. In the middle of the target, the words "The End" are written in a white, elegant, cursive script. The text is slightly offset to the right and top, with the "E" and "n" overlapping the dark center of the target.

The End