

Aged Care Complaints Scheme: Our Service Commitment

This fact sheet explains the Aged Care Complaints Scheme's service commitment to care recipients, people who raise concerns and approved providers.

What do we do?

We provide a free service for people to raise concerns about the quality of care and services provided to people receiving Australian Government subsidised residential or community aged care services.

We have a high degree of flexibility in deciding how to resolve concerns. This enables us to select the most relevant, practical and efficient approach.

We can support people to resolve their concerns directly with the approved provider. We can also examine complaints relating to an approved provider's responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act). This includes, for example, care, choice of activities, discrimination, catering, communication or the physical environment.

Aged care providers who receive funding from the Australian Government are called 'approved providers'. This term is used throughout this fact sheet.

We cannot:

- examine concerns about an aged care service that isn't subsidised by the Australian Government
- examine concerns that are not related to an approved provider's responsibilities under the Act
- say who should make financial, legal or health decisions on behalf of a care recipient
- comment on industrial matters such as wages or employment conditions
- provide legal advice
- ask approved providers to terminate someone's employment
- investigate the cause of death; this is the role of the coroner
- always determine whether or not a specific event occurred (especially if we receive conflicting accounts of the event)
- provide clinical advice about what treatment a person should be receiving.

We can refer complaints that fall outside of our scope to other organisations. If we can't help you, we will try to identify who may be able to help you.

Our vision is to improve and protect the safety and wellbeing of recipients of aged care.

Our commitment to you

- We aim to resolve concerns and achieve the best outcome for the care recipient.
- We can resolve concerns in a number of different ways, ranging from simple, relatively quick and informal approaches, to more formal and lengthy processes.
- Our role includes educating consumers and approved providers about the options available to resolve concerns; empowering people to make informed decisions; and helping approved providers identify opportunities for continuous improvement.
- We treat each complaint on its own merits. We will examine complaints regardless of a person's cultural background, disability, gender, sex and gender identity, sexual orientation or any other status.
- Our staff are required under the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct to behave at all times in a way that upholds the APS Values.
- Our staff are required to ensure the principles of fairness, responsiveness, efficiency, sound judgment, accessibility and accountability are applied to every case.
- We are impartial; we are not an advocate for the person making the complaint or the approved provider; we do not apportion blame; and we do not take sides.
- You can contact us at any stage of the process if you are not satisfied with a decision or process, or would like to provide feedback – positive or constructive – about our service. Call **1800 550 552*** and ask to speak to the complaints manager in your state or territory.

We strive to:

- listen to you and engage with empathy and understanding
- treat you with courtesy and respect
- act fairly, ethically and without judgment
- We aim to resolve concerns and achieve the best outcome for the care recipient
- treat your information seriously and consistently
- explain the process for examining the complaint
- write to you within seven days to acknowledge the complaint and confirm the issues (if we are examining the complaint)
- select the most appropriate option/s to resolve the complaint
- consult with you at regular intervals throughout the process
- make evidence-based decisions and give you opportunities to have your say
- resolve the complaint in a timely way—within three months where possible
- provide written feedback to you on the outcome of the complaint, including the reasons for any decisions and your review rights.

If you lodge a complaint

You can lodge a complaint with us by phone, in writing or online. The details are on the back page of this publication.

Anyone can make a complaint, including people receiving care, partners (including same-sex partners), family members, representatives, friends, advocates, staff and volunteers.

If you are raising a concern on behalf of someone else, make sure the person or his or her representative knows about it.

You can submit your complaint confidentially or anonymously, and we will respect your choice to do so. However, this can limit what we can do to help resolve your concern.

How can you help?

- Provide as much relevant information as you can, as early as you can
- Be specific about your expectations and tell us what outcome you are seeking
- Lodge a complaint openly or confidentially, in good faith
- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- Tell us if you have a special need, for example if you need an interpreter
- Provide feedback about our service

We strive to consult with you at regular intervals throughout the process.

How can advocacy help?

An advocate can provide you with information about your rights and responsibilities; help you to raise your issues with the approved provider or us; and support you at any stage during the complaints process. Advocacy is free, independent and confidential.

You can call the **National Aged Care Advocacy Line** on **1800 700 600***. With your permission, we can phone an advocacy agency on your behalf to explain your concerns and arrange for the agency to contact you.

If you are the approved provider

We recognise that approved providers do their best to care for older Australians. However, issues can occur so we need to ensure that people can raise their concerns in a constructive and supported way. Complaints can help providers assess and improve the quality of care and services they offer.

We will:

- contact you as soon as possible to discuss the issues
- refer certain complaints to you for resolution
- give you notice, where appropriate, if we will be visiting the service.

We may ask you to show how you have met, or will meet, your responsibilities under the Act. If we have ongoing concerns, we may issue directions requiring you to take certain actions or refer a concern for compliance action where appropriate.

How can you help?

- Have an effective complaints handling mechanism in place
- Ensure that the people you care for, their families and representatives, and your staff feel empowered to raise concerns
- Work with complainants, care recipients and their families to resolve concerns
- Meet your responsibilities under the Act
- Report alleged assaults and missing residents under the compulsory reporting laws

Disclaimer: Under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, the Aged Care Complaints Scheme can use any information it receives to help it perform its regulatory functions. The Scheme has procedures in place to ensure that personal information is protected against misuse and is not unlawfully disclosed.

Aged Care Complaints Scheme

Phone

1800 550 552*

Write

Aged Care Complaints Scheme
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848
In your capital city

Online

agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au

All information in this publication is correct as of August 2011

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* 1800 calls are free from fixed lines; however calls from mobiles may be charged.