



The improved Aged Care Complaints Scheme: what does it mean for you?

This fact sheet outlines the reforms to the Aged Care Complaints Scheme and what this means for aged care consumers, providers and stakeholders.

The Aged Care Complaints Scheme's (the Scheme's) improved complaints management framework started on 1 September 2011.

The improved framework is a result of the Australian Government's decision to implement recommendations to improve the Scheme's operations, timeliness and transparency following an independent review.

As of 1 July 2012, the Scheme can also respond to complaints about services offered under the Commonwealth HACC Program in all states and territories excluding Victoria and Western Australia. To learn more about HACC complaints visit our website at agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au

At a glance

We have implemented a range of measures to deliver an accountable, transparent and customer-focused complaints service. We are working towards our vision: *To improve and protect the safety and wellbeing of aged care recipients.*

The improved Scheme offers:

- support for resolution by the service provider where possible
- a focus on timely and proportionate resolution of concerns
- a more flexible approach to resolving concerns using a range of techniques
- risk assessment of individual complaints throughout the process
- evidence-based decisions where all parties are afforded natural justice
- regular consultation with parties throughout the process
- better explanations of advice and outcomes in the final letter to complainants and services
- broadened review rights
- improved information about our processes for consumers and providers
- greater transparency and consistency in how we operate through a national approach.



We have implemented a range of measures to deliver an accountable, transparent and customer-focused complaints service.



Encouraging resolution within the service

Under the improved framework, we encourage people to resolve their concern directly with the service provider. Working with service providers can achieve a faster and more sustainable outcome for care recipients through building relationships between all parties. Many concerns can be resolved quickly, without needing further action.

Timely resolution and a flexible approach

Not all complaints can or should be resolved through a formal investigation process. The improved framework offers a high degree of flexibility in deciding how to resolve concerns, allowing us to select relevant, practical and efficient approaches. We aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. However, complex or more formal resolution processes may take longer.

A risk-based approach for managing complaints

We look at the level of risk in every complaint to ensure we manage it appropriately. We consider factors such as safety, dignity and choice of the care recipient; the quality of care and services being delivered and the service provider's responsiveness to the complaint.

Natural justice through improved procedures

We have improved national processes to ensure that the principles of fairness, responsiveness, efficiency, sound judgment, accessibility and accountability are applied to every case. All parties to a complaint have the opportunity to provide information and be heard, and we make decisions based on available information.

Broadened review rights

Under the new framework, the parties to a complaint have several rights of review. We can conduct an internal review and undertake a new resolution process. Parties can also request the Aged Care Commissioner to conduct an independent review of our decision and the Commonwealth Ombudsman may also be asked to conduct a review.

Improved communication

We have strengthened our communication approach throughout the complaints process. This includes early written confirmation of the issues being examined, consultation at regular intervals, and regular opportunities to provide more information. We will write to both parties at the end of the process to advise the outcome, any required actions and their review rights.

Ongoing information and support for industry, including 'Industry feedback alerts', 'What we can learn?' reports and an 'Industry toolkit' are available on our website agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au/toolkit

Transparency

We have published our national complaints guidelines on our website, improved the data we publicly report, revised our service charter, and published our performance measures in the Department of Health and Ageing's Annual Report 2011-12. We also measure and report on customer satisfaction to help us evaluate and improve our service. In addition, people can provide feedback about the process, our service or staff, or ask for a review of a decision, at any stage in the complaints process.



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 at April 2013

D1035 April 2013

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