

**Submission
No 162**

INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NEW SOUTH WALES NURSING HOMES

Organisation: Australian Aged Care Quality Agency

Date received: 5/08/2015

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05 AUG 2015

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INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NEW SOUTH WALES NURSING HOMES

– SUBMISSION BY THE AUSTRALIAN AGED CARE QUALITY AGENCY

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Aged care Quality (Quality Agency) was established on 1 January 2014 and is the Commonwealth statutory agency with the responsibility for managing accreditation for residential aged care services in Australia. The Quality Agency has other functions also that include:-

- conducting the quality review of home care services
- registering quality assessors of residential aged care services
- promoting high quality care, innovation in quality management and continuous improvement amongst approved providers of aged care
- providing information and education and training to approved providers of aged care
- advising the Secretary of the Department of Social Services about aged care services that do not meet the Accreditation Standards or the Home Care Standards.

The Quality Agency assumed responsibility for managing the accreditation of residential aged care services from the former Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd from 1 January 2014. The former Agency operated the accreditation arrangements from their commencement in 1999 until 1 January 2014. Accreditation for residential aged care services has thus been in place for almost 16 years.

A NATIONAL APPROACH TO QUALITY

The Quality Agency is a national agency. We have offices located in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Hobart, Geelong, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Darwin.

The Standards that residential care services must meet throughout Australia, in order to receive Australian Government subsidies, are the Accreditation Standards.

All quality assessors used by the Quality Agency to carry out assessments of residential care services are recruited against the same criteria, undertake the same training course and follow the same guidelines and processes to make assessments and report on them.

There are a small number of delegates in the Quality Agency who make accreditation decisions and decisions about whether or not services meet or fail to meet the Accreditation Standards and they undertake the same training and follow the same guidelines.

The Quality Agency applies the Accreditation Standards in the same way in every State and Territory noting that, in each State and Territory, there may be differences in applicable state legislation and regulation of matters such as workplace health and safety, food safety, fire safety, infectious disease reporting.

Education and training is central to our role in promoting quality care. We provide a comprehensive program of education, and training to the aged care sector.

ACCREDITATION OF RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SERVICES

To receive Australian Government subsidies, each residential aged care service must be accredited by the Quality Agency. The arrangements for accreditation are set out in the Quality Agency Principles 2013 and a description of the arrangements follows.

Initial accreditation

An approved provider may apply for accreditation of a commencing (new) residential aged care service before the service commences providing care. The application includes information about how the provider intends to deliver care and services in a way that meets the Accreditation Standards and undertake continuous improvement. Accreditation for a commencing service is for one year. Soon after a commencing service begins to provide care and services to residents, the Quality Agency arranges visits to the services (called assessment contacts) in order to monitor and assess the quality of the care and services against the Accreditation Standards. It may also provide information and education to personnel at the service to assist with continuous improvement and/or to meet the Standards.

Re-accreditation and further assessment

Shortly before the expiry of its period accreditation, each service must apply for re-accreditation. Assessment of an application for re-accreditation involves a comprehensive audit of the service's performance against the Accreditation Standards. The Quality Agency appoints an assessment team made up of at least two registered quality assessors to perform the audit and to prepare a report about the service's performance. The way in which the audit is carried out is set out in the Quality Agency Principles 2013 and is described in more detail in the Quality Agency's *Assessor Handbook*.

In conducting a re-accreditation audit, the assessment team must:-

- assess the quality of care and services being provided against the Accreditation Standards
- consider any relevant information given to them by care recipients or former care recipients of the service
- consider any relevant information given to them by representatives of care recipients or former care recipients
- consider any relevant information given by the Secretary of the Department of Social Services
- consider any relevant information given by the approved provider, including self-assessment information.

The process for the audit involves:-

- interviews with management personnel and other staff about how care and services are provided and managed,
- interviews with care recipients and/or their representatives,

- observations in the service's premises including observations of care, services and assistance being delivered and interactions between staff and care recipients, observations of the availability and condition of goods and equipment
- examination of documents such as policies, procedures
- examination of care recipient records such as assessments and care plans and other records care and services given and of care recipients' progress.

A sampling process is necessary during an audit as it is not practicable to interview every care recipient or staff member or examine the records of every care recipient. An assessment team must meet with a minimum of 10% of care recipients (or their representatives) during an audit but on average 15% of care recipients are interviewed.

More particulars of the audit process are described in the *Assessor Handbook*.

The Quality Agency considers the audit report and any other information that may be relevant, to make a decision as to whether to re-accredit the service and, if so, what the appropriate period of accreditation should be.

Over 90% of services are re-accredited for three years so most have a comprehensive audit every three years.

Performance while accredited

Accredited residential care services are required to provide care and services in a way that meets the Accreditation Standards and to undertake continuous improvement.

There is at least one unannounced visit each year to every service to monitor ongoing performance. Additional visits are arranged case-by-case for example if there is any failure to meet the Standards, if there are changes at the service that may affect the quality of care or if information is received by the Quality Agency about the quality of care that should be followed up.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Accreditation Standards (Standards) are legislated – they form part of the Quality of Care Principles 2014 made under the Aged Care Act 1997. The Standards include 44 expected outcomes across four matters:-

- Management systems, staffing and organisational development
- Health and personal care
- Care recipient lifestyle
- Physical environment and safe systems.

The Standards include a number of expected outcomes that deal explicitly with staffing, qualifications and skills.

Expected outcome 1.6 - Human resource management requires that "There are appropriately skilled and qualified staff sufficient to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with these standards and the residential care service's philosophy and objectives".

Expected outcomes 1.3, 2.3, 3.3 and 4.3 - Education and staff development require that "Management and staff have appropriate knowledge and skills to perform their roles effectively" in relation to each of the above matters in the Standards.

The Standards apply equally for the benefit of each care recipient receiving residential care. They provide a structured approach to management of quality and represent clear statements of expected performance. However, they are not prescriptive as to how each service must meet each expected outcome.

The Quality Agency provides guidance for quality assessors about the matters to be considered in making assessments of services' performance against each expected outcome. This is contained in the *Results and processes guide* which serves as a universal reference to ensure consistent assessment of services against the Standards throughout Australia.

SPECIFIED CARE AND SERVICES

The Quality of Care Principles 2014 also set out (at Schedule 1) the care and services that must be provided by residential services to all care recipients according to their needs. The care and services specified must be provided in a way that meets the Accreditation Standards. The care and services specified includes a range of nursing services carried out by nurse practitioners, registered nurses, enrolled nurses or other professional appropriate for the service (eg medical practitioner, speech pathologist)

REGISTRATION OF QUALITY ASSESSORS

Assessments of residential care services must b

The Quality Agency maintains the register of quality assessors and manages the processes for registration and re-registration.

To be registered as a quality assessor a person must:-

- Be a registered nurse with at least two years relevant experience or at least four years full-time experience in a professional or management position.
- Have successfully completed the approved course of training conducted by the Quality Agency including passing the required assessments
- Have completed required orientation
- Have a current criminal record check
- Undertake at least 15 hours of professional development each year approved by the Quality Agency
- Undertake at least two audits each year
- Endorse and comply with an Assessor code of conduct.

SKILLS AND TRAINING OF QUALITY ASSESSORS

At 30 June 2015 there are 361 registered quality assessors. Of these, 197 are registered nurses.

There are 183 registered quality assessors on our staff – the others are mostly engaged in health and aged care sectors. 96% of quality assessors on our staff have tertiary qualifications and 41% have post-graduate qualifications. 83% are over 45 years of age.

The Quality Agency's assessor training course has been accredited by the International Society for Quality in Healthcare (ISQua).

There is a program of regular professional development sessions conducted by the Quality Agency on topics relevant to the conduct of accreditation assessments and participation in at least 10 hours of Quality Agency training each year is a requirement.

PERFORMANCE OF RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SERVICES

Performance has improved very significantly since accreditation commenced in 1999.

For the first "round" of accreditation assessments that ended in December 2000, 64% of residential care services were found to meet all of the Accreditation Standards. There were 193 that failed to meet or more than five expected outcomes.

The last "round" of comprehensive assessments ended in December 2012 and 95% of services then met all of the Accreditation Standards. There were 26 services that failed to meet more than five expected outcomes.

As at 30 June 2015, there were only 15 services with outstanding failures to meet the Accreditation Standards. Of these, six were in New South Wales.

Over the three years to 30 June 2015, 371 services were found with a failure to meet the Standards. Of these, 93 were in New South Wales.

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED WITH THIS SUBMISSION

- Accreditation Standards
- Assessor handbook, October 2014
- Results and processes guide, October 2014
- Quality Agency Principles 2013
- Quality of Care Principles 2014

