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Media Release

Aged care providers must act now to be ready to report serious incidents

Action is required now by aged care providers to get ready for the introduction of new requirements relating to their management and reporting of incidents affecting consumers in residential aged care.

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS), which commences on 1 April 2021, will require aged care providers to have an effective incident management system, and to report a range of serious incidents to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission within 24 hours of becoming aware of them.

The Commission has new powers to hold providers to account in relation to their response to incidents, including actions they take to prevent and reduce the risk and impact of serious incidents on consumers.

Commissioner Janet Anderson PSM said, "Successful implementation of SIRS will lift provider performance and boost community trust and confidence in our aged care system. It will do more to protect older Australians from harm and will empower them by reinforcing their right to be safe."

To meet their new obligations under SIRS, providers are required to report a broader range of allegations and suspicions of serious incidents to the Commission than is currently the case. Providers must also have an effective incident management system in place to reduce serious injuries and other incidents, and to respond appropriately to incidents when they occur.

Ms Anderson said, "Good incident management brings a range of benefits for consumers and their families, staff and organisation. Adopting a systematic approach to incident management enables providers to identify and address any weaknesses in their current care arrangements and to put in place measures and strategies to minimise the risk of potential harm to consumers or others at the service. Importantly, an effective incident management system can help aged care organisations to collect and use incident data to build a learning culture, help prevent similar incidents from occurring and better protect the health, safety and well-being of consumers."

Ms Anderson said the Commission was supporting aged care providers in preparing for the new scheme with online education modules, fact sheets, guidance, videos and a series of webinars to support providers to understand their new obligations and be ready for the introduction of SIRS on 1 April. The Commission has a dedicated page on its website with information about SIRS:

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sirs

Ms Anderson said, "We are providing a range of opportunities for providers to enhance their knowledge, skills and capabilities, and the level of engagement from providers has been very encouraging. For example, more than 2,500 people participated in our first two webinars on SIRS and there has been a strong increase in enrolments for our online learning programs with the introduction of new SIRS modules."

In addition to administering the SIRS, the Commission manages all complaints received about aged care services. If anyone has a concern about an aged care service, complaints can be made via the Commission's website: **www.agedcarequality.gov.au** or by calling 1800 951 822.

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