



19 November 2024

Dear aged care provider

### **Preparing for the summer high-risk weather season**

Summer in Australia brings a range of foreseeable risks. The information in this letter will help you to plan for heatwaves and other extreme events during the coming high-risk weather and bushfire season. Being prepared is vital to make sure that older people receive continuity of care and services. It will also help streamline your response if an emergency happens.

Advice from the Bureau of Meteorology is that there is a high risk of heatwaves, bushfires, flooding and tropical cyclones during this summer. As a provider, you have an obligation to ensure that you are ready to respond appropriately to these events, should they occur. A poor response could threaten the safety and wellbeing of the people you are caring for. This is a particular risk when these events cause:

- short-notice evacuations
- staff shortages when staff cannot get to work because of blocked roads or their personal circumstances
- serious infrastructure issues including power and communication system outages
- limited access to essential supplies.

Planning and preparing for emergencies can reduce the impact of such events on older people receiving care. Aged care providers must have effective plans ready and must also have 'rehearsed' them. This is especially important for providers of residential aged care services. Compared with many older people receiving care and support in their homes, aged care residents are likely to be more dependent and have higher care needs that cannot be met without planning. Having said that, it is also the case that older people receiving home services and living alone may be vulnerable. We strongly encourage providers to plan for continuity of care and support for these people.

The Commission maintains regulatory oversight of how providers prepare for emergency events through our assessment and monitoring processes. Under the Aged Care Quality Standards, providers must show that they have effective risk management systems and practices. This includes managing high-level risk during emergencies (Standard 3 and Standard 8).

As part of your preparation, I encourage you to look up your state or territory and local government emergency management arrangements. The Department of Health and Aged Care has also published **resources** to help services ensure continuity of care and providers to prepare for emergencies.

In the event of an emergency, everyone will benefit if you make sure that:

- your service is ready
- your staff are trained, drilled and fully prepared.

If you have questions about how the Commission makes sure that providers are prepared for emergency events, please contact **info@agedcarequality.gov.au**.

Yours sincerely

*J. M. Anderson*

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Commissioner