



Dear Approved Provider

I am writing to you in relation to providers' responsibilities in residential aged care to prepare for emergency events.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored for everyone in the aged care sector the critical importance of planning and preparing for potential high impact events to reduce the risk of their occurrence, and to respond quickly and decisively when they occur.

Recent experiences of bushfires and flooding events across a number of states and territories have provided a further demonstration of the value of this advance planning and preparation. This is also highlighted in key findings in the final report of the *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*.

Emergency events are likely to present high risks for aged care services, particularly when accompanied by:

- a requirement for short notice evacuation of services
- staff shortages as staff are unable to travel to work due to their own personal circumstances
- critical infrastructure issues including power and information communication system failures
- restricted access to essential supplies.

Preparing and planning for emergency events can lessen the impact on consumers and staff, especially in geographical areas which are more prone to bushfires and flooding. All approved providers of aged care services are responsible for effective planning for emergency events, and these responsibilities are particularly critical in residential aged care where consumers will have higher care needs.

The Aged Care Quality Standards require approved providers to demonstrate effective risk management systems and practices including the management of high-impact risk associated with the care of consumers (Standard 3 and Standard 8). The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission monitors approved provider preparation for emergency events through our assessment and monitoring processes.

The Australian Government Department of Health has published several resources to assist service continuity and provide guidance to approved providers in preparing for emergencies, and these are available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/working-in-aged-care/service-continuity-and-emergency-events-in-aged-care>

As we move into summer and the holiday season, I would encourage all approved providers to familiarise themselves with relevant state or territory and local government emergency management arrangements as part of your preparation. Please also draw on the published resources available to you, and ensure that your service(s) are fully prepared and well-drilled to respond effectively in the event of an emergency.

Yours sincerely

J. M. Anderson

Janet Anderson PSM
Commissioner

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