



Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) insight report

May 2021

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) is a new initiative that aims to help prevent and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect of older Australians in residential services.

It complements existing provider obligations under the Aged Care Act and strengthens responsibilities for providers to prevent and manage incidents, focusing on the safety and wellbeing of consumers. It requires providers to use incident data to drive quality improvement, and to report serious incidents.

This is the first of a series of reports drawing on information from serious incident notifications. We encourage providers to examine their own reporting patterns and arrangements in comparison with sector averages. Information about the SIRS will also be included in the Commission's quarterly Sector Performance Report.

By systematically recording and assessing incidents, providers are better placed to understand risks to consumers, identify trends and issues, and to pursue continuous improvement at the service.

Since 1 April 2021, residential aged care providers have been required to report Priority 1 reportable incidents to the Commission within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.

From 1 October 2021, residential aged care providers will also be required to report Priority 2 reportable incidents to the Commission within 30 days of becoming aware of the incident.

Detailed guidance about Priority 1 and Priority 2 reportable incidents is available on the Commission's [website](#).

Providers notify the Commission of reportable incidents by completing a notification form on the My Aged Care Provider Portal.

How many notifications?

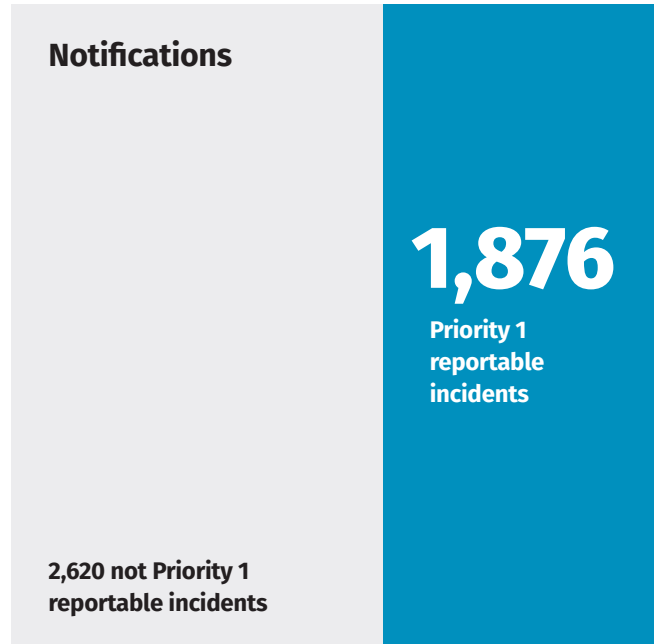
During the period 1 April to 12 May 2021, the Commission received 4,496 notifications from residential aged care providers.

Of these notifications, 1,876 (42%) were considered by the Commission to meet the criteria for a Priority 1 reportable incident (that is, were in-scope).

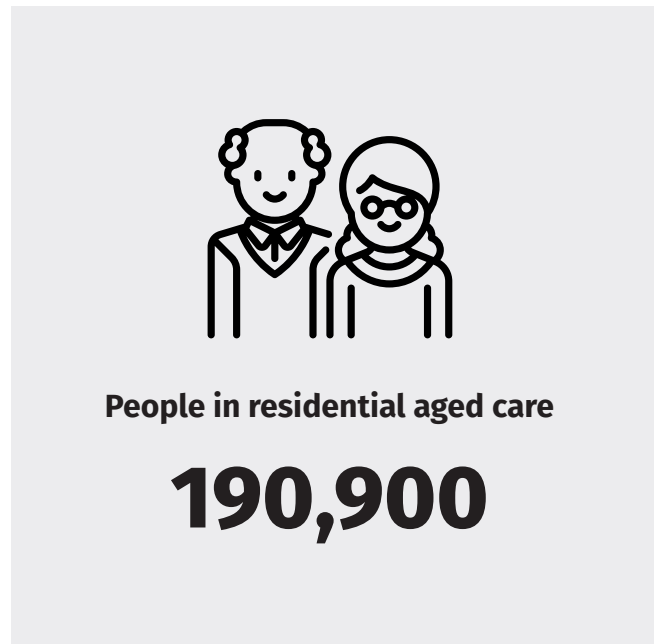
The balance of 2,620 incidents notified to the Commission by providers did not meet the criteria for Priority 1 reportable incidents (that is, were out-of-scope).

Many of these out-of-scope notifications would be classified as a Priority 2 reportable incident from 1 October 2021 and are currently not required to be reported to the Commission.

Some of the out-of-scope notifications were not reportable incidents under the SIRS and therefore did not need to be reported to the Commission. An example of this kind of incident is one where a resident fell when walking in the garden of the service. They did not fall due to the use of force and there was no indication of neglect or that the service failed to provide care or support in line with the resident's assessed needs and preferences. The provider is still required to record this incident in their incident management system, to take all necessary action to mitigate the immediate and any ongoing impact on consumer/s, and to pursue options for reducing the risk of reoccurrence.



1 April to 12 May 2021 (6 weeks).



May 2021.

What kind of incidents?

Table 1 shows the number of in-scope reportable notifications, for each of the 8 incident types under the SIRS, that were made to the Commission between 1 April and 12 May 2021.

The most common type of incident was unreasonable use of force, followed by neglect. The Commission will provide further analysis of the issues included within these reportable incident types in future reports.



Priority 1 reportable notifications by incident type

Incident type	Week 1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	%
Unreasonable use of force	192	145	121	115	72	133	778	41%
Unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct	30	25	33	27	15	19	149	8%
Psychological or emotional abuse	16	11	24	15	12	16	94	5%
Unexpected death	43	32	34	27	33	23	192	10%
Stealing or financial coercion by a staff member	8	3	6	3	6	4	30	2%
Neglect	67	94	91	83	58	55	448	24%
Inappropriate physical or chemical restraint	5	4	1	5	5	2	22	1%
Unexplained absence from care	26	27	20	35	23	32	163	9%
Total	387	341	330	310	224	284	1,876	100%

Table 1



Reflective Questions

- How many serious incident notifications has your residential service/s submitted since 1 April?
- Which of the 8 incident types have you submitted notifications for?
- What proportion of total notifications did each incident type represent for your service/s?
- How do your services' proportions compare with the sector-wide proportions?
- What conclusions (if any) can you draw from that comparison?
- How many incidents in total did staff at your service record in your incident management system over the same period?
- What proportion of total incidents did your serious incident notifications represent?
- What conclusions (if any) can you draw from this analysis?
- Has the governing body and senior executive of your service discussed the above analysis? If not, why not?

Protecting consumers

All notifications are reviewed by the Commission within 24 hours of receipt to assess the risk to consumers and determine whether escalation is needed. The Commission seeks further information from providers where needed as part of its assessment process. In some circumstances, the Commission may conclude that immediate action is required.

The Commission may investigate a reportable incident, including a provider's compliance with its responsibilities, where immediate action is required to respond to and mitigate risk to consumers. Between 1 April and 12 May 2021, the Commission conducted 16 investigations regarding reportable notifications.

The details of SIRS notifications by service and information obtained by the Commission through an assessment or investigation of the reportable incident provide intelligence that assists the Commission in relation to its other regulatory functions.

In other words, irrespective of the level of assessed risk of a particular incident notified to the Commission, the Commission will add the information in the notification to other information held about that residential aged care service. In this way, it becomes available to all Commission staff to inform decisions made about regulatory engagement with that approved provider (eg. when resolving complaints, undertaking monitoring, quality assessment or accreditation activities, or enforcing compliance).

Investigations conducted for



16

reportable notifications

Proportion of approved providers that submitted one or more Priority 1 notifications

The number of notifications submitted to the Commission by an approved provider in a given period will depend on the number of serious incidents that occur (or are alleged or suspected to have occurred) in a single residential aged care service, and the number of residential services operated by that provider.

Between 1 April and 12 May 2021 1,876 Priority 1 notifications were submitted. From the 835 active providers of residential care nationally, 392 (47%) are represented in these notifications. This number and proportion of providers is expected to increase over time.

On average, this represents 2.25 Priority 1 notifications per provider.

Number of approved providers that submitted Priority 1 notifications



Providers that reported a Priority 1 notification 47%

1 April to 12 May 2021 (6 weeks)

Average number of Priority 1 notifications per provider

2.25

1 April to 12 May 2021 (6 weeks)

Proportion of services that are represented in one or more Priority 1 notifications

There are 2,719 active residential aged care services (operated by 835 approved providers). Between 1 April and 12 May 2021, approved providers submitted Priority 1 notifications in relation to 954 of these services, or 35% of all residential services. This number and proportion is expected to increase over time.

On average, this represents 0.69 Priority 1 notifications per residential service during the scheme's first 6 weeks of operation.

Number of services represented in Priority 1 notifications



Services represented in Priority 1 notifications 35%

1 April to 12 May 2021 (6 weeks)

Average number of Priority 1 notifications per service

0.69

1 April to 12 May 2021 (6 weeks)



How is the Commission responding?

The notifications submitted by providers provide a rich source of information about risks to consumers and incidents occurring in residential aged care services. The Commission assesses each reportable incident to understand the risk to consumers and the response of providers, and escalates incidents for investigation and further action as required. Information from incident notifications also informs the Commission's broader regulatory actions.

The first six weeks of SIRS indicates that providers have been working hard to implement and fine-tune their approach to fulfilling their new obligations. It also indicates areas where the Commission can clarify and build on its initial SIRS guidance.

The Commission has revised the SIRS [guidance](#) to assist providers to understand what incidents need to be reported, and of these, which ones are Priority 1 reportable incidents (requiring notification from 1 April 2021), and which are Priority 2 reportable incidents (requiring notification from 1 October 2021).

Further resources, including fact sheets and new online learning modules will be added to the Commission's website in coming weeks.

Last updated: 3 June 2021 to reflect updated investigations data on page 5.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.

Further insights

This publication is the first in a series on SIRS that will aim to reflect back to the sector relevant data and information drawn from serious incident notifications and the regulatory treatment of these notifications. Providers will gain most benefit from these Insight publications if they routinely undertake analysis of their own SIRS data. Such analysis by providers can drive and support their active learning about risks to consumers in their service and help to identify areas of practice where more intensive/effective risk mitigation is required.

Providers with enquiries about the SIRS can:

- email the Commission at **sirs@agedcarequality.gov.au**
- call on **1800 081 549**

Data is extracted at a point in time from Commission systems. Reported figures may be superseded as database records are updated.



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