



Provider roundtable

Early experiences of the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) and support resources

June 2021

This document provides a summary of the key issues, ideas and comments that emerged from the virtual provider roundtable hosted by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on 9 June 2021.

Ten residential aged care providers of varying sizes participated in the event from regional and metropolitan Australia. Provider peak organisations were also represented. The organisations represented are listed in Appendix A.

The roundtable provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the SIRS implementation challenges, suggest ideas for improvement and note the benefits the SIRS has achieved. Direct quotes from roundtable attendees are presented throughout this summary document.

Challenges and ideas

Over-reporting

Providers considered that:

- A sense of urgency to report an incident within 24 hours is making it hard to determine whether it is a Priority 1 or 2 incident, before a proper evaluation, including the impact on the resident, is carried out.

- ‘Neglect’ is the most challenging category to interpret and it is an emotive term. Some providers were frustrated they were not able to obtain advice on specific scenarios.
- There are cultural differences that need to be understood in some settings.
- Clarity and support are needed regarding the circumstances in which an exemption would be provided from reporting when someone with dementia is a repeat offender, despite behaviour management strategies being in place (e.g. resident on resident).

‘It’s a Saturday night and managers are calling operation managers to ask “Is it Priority 1 or 2?” rather than taking time to collect information and figure out what is happening. Rather than having the mindset of complying with the reporting process, people need to focus on safety first and question “Was there harm, did we provide comfort?”’

‘Our facility clinical leadership team take carriage on-site – having a discussion with me or our business operation managers to talk through what occurred. It is a coaching session if there is uncertainty around reporting.’

Workload and staff retention

Providers reported that:

- The requirement to report Priority 1 incidents within 24 hours is leading to managers working out of hours including on weekends to receive calls from staff and to investigate and lodge reports.
- There has been an increase in workload since the introduction of the SIRS with some people who have left the sector indicating that the requirement to work out of hours is a contributing factor.

‘We have about 20 registered nurses – 6 of whom are part-time – many have picked up more hospital shifts. We have a problem recruiting over here.’

Education, support and feedback

Providers asked for further support with:

- a flow chart/decision support tool to help with decision making about whether incidents are reportable, and whether reportable incidents are Priority 1 or Priority 2
- fact sheets and guidelines that provide clear examples and case studies of incidents, with unreasonable use of force and neglect being the highest priority

- gaining feedback from the Commission about their notifications to help them understand reporting requirements and reduce out-of-scope reports
- increased phone assistance and guidance, including on weekends.

‘There needs to be a two-way conversation between the Commission and providers – senior leaders who are taking time out of hours to make decisions and resolve issues.’

‘We want to support a no blame culture with staff but at times it doesn’t feel like that.’

My Aged Care provider portal and follow-up reporting

Enhancements requested by providers include:

- positioning the 5-day follow-up form within the reporting portal rather than externally so records are kept together
- sending follow-up report requests to the approved provider (in the same way finalisation notices do) – not the individual who made the report – to avoid them being missed or not actioned in time
- making available a step-by-step guide for the administration process until the portal upgrades are introduced in March 2022.

Benefits of the SIRS

Providers reported:

- updated SIRS guidelines, fact sheets and Alis online education have improved decision making and helped the workforce understand why the scheme is important
- the first SIRS insight report is ‘fantastic’
- the roundtable event itself was ‘very useful to be able to collaborate on such an important topic’ and was ‘a really beneficial conversation’.

When asked to identify positive outcomes for their facilities under the SIRS, providers made the following comments:

‘SIRS didn’t just take on industry and workers but brought in the families. This is a huge issue for us in aged care – what happens when a family member slaps someone over the face. There was no avenue before to advocate for the resident – it’s a great thing to bring that into a reportable event.’

‘Removal of the dementia exemption has been a positive. All incidents are treated the same regardless of whether the offender has dementia.’

‘SIRS has encouraged us to review our own systems. Our own investigations are improving, and we are taking more effort to understand why incidents have occurred.’

‘It changes the way older people are viewed; the way we support people... More reporting doesn’t equal bad practice – it builds trust and transparency and shows what’s working and not working.’

Next steps

The Commission will:

- review all feedback provided during the roundtable and use it to improve supports provided to the sector
- provide an update on timelines for the release of the 8 new Alis training modules (one for each reportable incident type) and the online decision tool
- convene a follow-up roundtable later in 2021 to share experiences and gain further valuable provider insights.



Appendix A

The following organisations were represented at the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's SIRS provider roundtable on 9 June 2021:

Providers

- Elderbloom
- HammondCare
- Masonic Care TAS
- Our Lady of Consolation
- Ozcare
- Resthaven
- Southern Cross Care
- The Sisters of Our Lady of China
- Uniting
- Wintringham

Provider peaks

- Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA)
- Catholic Health Australia
- Leading Age Services Australia (LASA)

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.



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