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## Media Release

### Insights into complaints about aged care

In the first report of its type, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission explores information collected from thousands of complaints to give aged care providers key insights into complaints about their services.

Using data, case studies and guided questions, the report identifies learnings about good complaint handling that can be applied by aged care providers in their services. The report also includes questions for boards and senior leadership to help guide complaints handling.

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner Janet Anderson has emphasised the importance of good complaints handling for every aged care provider and the people they care for.

“Good complaints handling centring on the person receiving care helps aged care providers to meet the fundamental principles of fairness, transparency, inclusiveness and accessibility, and builds a culture of open disclosure,” the Commissioner said.

“Effective complaints handling requires visible leadership and commitment at all levels of an organisation, starting with the board and the entire leadership team, through to staff providing care and support to older people.”

A large proportion of complaints about residential and home care services were finalised by the Commission through early resolution. This indicates that many complaints can be resolved through meaningful conversation with consumers, or sometimes, through an apology and acknowledgement that something could have been done better.

“In many cases, if supported by good complaints handling practices, providers should be able to resolve complaints before they are lodged with the Commission. Providers who invite and act on feedback from those receiving care are much more likely to deliver a positive care experience,” Ms Anderson said.

“This is one of the key messages that our new Complaints Commissioner is keen to amplify in her work with the sector.”

In May 2023, Louise Macleod took up the role of Aged Care Complaints Commissioner and has been working hard to strengthen the Commission’s handling and reporting of complaints, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

“People using aged care services have a right to feel safe and supported to give feedback and make complaints, and for their provider to take action in response to their concerns,” the Complaints Commissioner said.

The complaints insights report highlights the importance of effective handling of complaints. This leads to better care for older people and also makes good business sense for providers who can fine-tune their services to meet individual needs and preferences.

“For providers, every complaint is an opportunity to make changes and address things that are important to people they are caring for,” the Complaints Commissioner said.

Good complaint handling can:

- fix problems before they escalate
- provide better care outcomes for people receiving aged care
- help providers to understand the people in their care and build positive relationships with them and their families
- increase staff and consumer satisfaction
- provide data and insights to help providers continuously improve
- inform decisions about future service offerings, and
- enhance a provider’s reputation and strengthen trust in the service.

When complaints aren’t handled well, providers can experience:

- staff disengagement and a poor workplace culture focused on blame
- more complaints escalated to the Commission
- missed opportunities to improve
- loss of valuable data, and
- reputational damage and loss of trust.

Better practice guidance on complaints handling in aged care services is available on the Commission’s website at: [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/better-practice-guide-complaints-handling-aged-care-services](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/better-practice-guide-complaints-handling-aged-care-services)

Complaints are a key source of intelligence for the Commission, complementing the information and findings made through the Commission’s other regulatory and education activities.

The next report in the series will be for people making complaints.

The ***Complaints about aged care services - Insights for providers*** report is published on the Commission’s website at: [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/news-publications/reports/complaints-about-aged-care-services-report](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/news-publications/reports/complaints-about-aged-care-services-report)

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