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## Media Release Data shows sector improving but more gains needed

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has released its latest **Sector Performance Report for the April to June 2024** quarter.

For the first time, the report includes performance data for the last two financial years, showing growing evidence of improvements in the quality and safety of aged care but also shining a light on areas of underperformance by providers.

In Q4 2023–2024, 81 percent of residential care providers were fully compliant with all requirements of the Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards). This is a big improvement from the 58 percent compliance at the beginning of the previous financial year (2022–2023).

In Q4 2023–24, 65 percent of home services providers were fully compliant with the relevant Quality Standards, compared with a 46 percent compliance rate at the beginning of the previous financial year. While this is an improvement since last year, compliance rates in home services still lag well behind those for residential care.

Home services include both home care packages and services delivered under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (including delivered meals and community transport).

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner Janet Anderson said that the improvements are noteworthy, reflecting the hard work that many providers are putting into lifting the quality and safety of their care.

“The improvements we have seen in overall sector performance are welcome, and I commend providers who are putting in the effort to lift the quality and safety of their care.

“At the same time, the lower rates of compliance found in home services continues to be concerning,” the Commissioner said.

As part of its efforts to lift home services provider performance, the Commission increased its audit program for home services in 2023–24 and is continuing that stronger focus in 2024–25.

The Commission’s recently released **Regulatory Strategy 2024-25** outlines how the Commission is working to drive improvement across the sector and the delivery of high-quality aged care for older Australians.

### **Further information**

The Sector Performance Report is part of the Commission's commitment to keep improving the experience of older people receiving government-funded aged care, and to protect them from harm.

The report gives an overview of the data used by the Commission to assess the performance of the sector and to monitor risk to older people receiving aged care. The information is used to work out where to focus attention to improve provider and sector performance.

The report can support providers to keep improving. It is most useful when providers compare the data with their own and act on it.

An extract from the report, 'At a Glance' (pages 5 and 6), is attached.

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# At a glance



**Residential care** providers' compliance with the 8 Quality Standards has stayed fairly stable this financial year, although we saw a drop of 3 percentage points to 81% compared with Q3. This is an improvement compared with Q1 2022-23, when only 58% of providers were fully compliant.



Compliance with the Quality Standards is still much lower in **home services** than in residential care. Only 65% of home services were fully compliant with the relevant Quality Standards in Q4. As with residential care, compliance among home services providers has improved compared with the start of the previous financial year, when less than half (46%) of providers were fully compliant.

We see issues with **clinical governance** reflected in the complaints we receive. Complaints about clinical issues still account for 3 of the top 5 issues complained about in residential care. In Q4, complaints about falls and post-fall management increased significantly. This risk warrants closer scrutiny by providers.



Compliance with **Quality Standard 8** (Organisational governance) fell in Q4, to 88% in residential care and to 70% in home services, compared with the previous quarter. This drop follows an improvement from 73% compliance with this Quality Standard in residential care and 52% in home services at the start of last financial year. Even though there was considerable uplift this year, there is still room for improvement in corporate governance and clinical governance frameworks. This is an area of ongoing focus for the Commission.



**Fees and charges**, and **management of finances** still account for 3 of the top 5 most complained about issues in home services. Issues with consultation and communication are still the most common concern in complaints about home services. Providers need to have clear and transparent pricing statements. They must consult with, and get consent from, people receiving care or their representatives before making changes to their home care package.

# At a glance (continued)



We see the effect of poor clinical governance in lower compliance with **Quality Standard 3** (Personal care and clinical care). Compliance with this standard in residential care fell by 3 percentage points to 89% in Q4 compared with Q3. This result is still a clear improvement from the 70% compliance we recorded at the beginning of the previous financial year. In home services, compliance with Quality Standard 3 fell 9 percentage points in Q4 from the previous quarter, to 81%. Of concern, the compliance rate among home services providers is now lower than it was at the beginning of the previous financial year.



The number and rate of **serious incidents** in residential care reported to us has increased since the start of last financial year. However, the rate has stabilised over the past 2 quarters. We have also seen a steady increase in serious incident notifications in home services since the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) was extended to home services in December 2022. However, the number of notifications in home services has stayed much lower than in residential aged care. We are working with home services to make sure they understand their reporting responsibilities and the need to have in place an effective incident management system.



For the first time we have seen non-compliance with **Quality Standard 6** (Feedback and complaints) as one of the top 3 issues in home services. In Q4, compliance with the requirement to have an accessible and fair system to resolve complaints fell by 9 percentage points from the previous quarter, to 80%. One in 5 providers is not complying with this standard. Specifically, providers are not meeting their obligation to use feedback and complaints to improve quality. The Commission will be taking action on this.



**Quality Standard 7** (Human resources) now has the third lowest rate of compliance in residential care and the highest number of requirements that are 'not met'. To comply with this standard, providers must have skilled and qualified workers to deliver safe, high-quality care. Residential providers must also have a registered nurse onsite and on duty 24 hours per day and meet their care minutes target. As of June 2024, 92% of providers complied with this responsibility. Concerns about the number of staff, however, are still the fourth most complained about issue in residential care in Q4.