



FACT SHEET: COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION SCHEME

Background

In April 2007, legislation was introduced to establish the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme to manage complaints about aged care services that are subsidised by the Commonwealth Government. The legislation also established the role and functions of the Aged Care Commissioner and as well as a regime of reporting certain types of assault and protections for those who report such assaults.

The legislative basis for the Complaints Investigation Scheme and the Aged Care Commissioner is contained in the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the *Investigation Principles 2007*.

Complaints Investigation Scheme (The Scheme)

All aged care services are required to have an internal complaints system and in many cases this is an effective way of dealing with people's concerns. If however people are uncomfortable discussing a problem directly with the service provider they can contact the Complaints Investigation Scheme located within the Department of Health and Ageing in their State or Territory.

The Scheme is a free, unbiased and accessible service that accepts oral and written complaints regarding Commonwealth Government subsidised aged care residential services, flexible services and community aged care packages. The Scheme is available to anyone who wishes to provide information (by way of a complaint or otherwise) in relation to anything that may be a possible breach of the approved provider's responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act 1997* or the Principles.

The Scheme has the power to investigate concerns raised and to take action where an approved provider has breached its responsibilities. The investigation process has a number steps or decision points; however, in practice many of the steps may be undertaken concurrently or in very quick succession.

Complaints often involve more than one issue. Some issues may be referred to other statutory bodies such as police, medical and nursing registration boards, health services commissioners etc.

Complaints can also be made confidentially or anonymously if required. For maximum accessibility the Scheme has offices in every State/Territory and may be contacted on a national free call number **1800 550 552**, or in writing to:

Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme
C/- Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848
In your Capital City

The Scheme can also assist people by providing an interpreter or arranging access to a TTY (Deaflink) telephone.

Advocacy Services: If you feel you require additional assistance in managing your complaint the Scheme can provide information about the Aged Care Advocacy Service in your State/Territory.

Satisfaction Surveys

A satisfaction survey is sent to both the complainant and service provider as each complaint is finalised. Potential respondents are provided with a reply paid envelope and completed survey forms are returned directly to the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance in Canberra for analysis and reporting.

Office of the Aged Care Commissioner

The Aged Care Commissioner is a statutory appointment and the Commissioner is independent from the Department of Health and Ageing and the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency. The Commissioner's functions are set out in the *Aged Care Act 1997* and include the capacity to examine certain decisions made by the Scheme, to examine complaints made about the Scheme's processes and the conduct of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency as well as the conduct of persons carrying out audits or making support contacts under the *Accreditation Grant Principles 1999*. The Commissioner also has the power to conduct an own motion investigation, that is, to conduct an investigation even when a complaint has not been received.

The Commissioner's Office is based in Melbourne and can be contacted by calling **1800 500 294** or in writing to:

**The Aged Care Commissioner
Locked Bag 3
Collins Street East Victoria 8003**

Note: For a broader understanding of the role and functions of the Complaints Investigation Scheme please visit the website of the Department of Health and Ageing at www.health.gov.au or use the link provided through the Commissioner's website. You may also contact the Scheme by calling **1800 550 552**.