

7 December 2018

Standing Committee on Community Affairs
References Committee

Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Supplementary submission to the:
Inquiry into the effectiveness of the aged care quality assessment and accreditation framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised

Thank you for notifying LASA that the Committee is continuing its inquiry by focussing on Term of Reference a).

LASA made a submission to the inquiry in August 2017 but would like to provide a supplementary submission to raise issues with the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency's (AACQA) (1) standards of auditing and (2) the training and professional development of AACQA auditors.

Standards of auditing

Members have been reporting to LASA that AACQA assessors interpret and apply the Aged Care Quality Standards (the Standards) in an inconsistent way, making it difficult for providers to be certain about the level of quality required to maintain Approved Provider status.

This inconsistency may also contribute to an increased incidence of residential aged care facilities achieving a perfect score of meeting 44 expected outcomes across the four Standards and a short time later (e.g. 2 months) being sanctioned for failing as many as 16 expected outcomes.

Many LASA Members' experiences of assessors is positive, with the assessors' experience, expertise and insight being respected and valued. However, some Members report instances where the behaviour of some of the AACQA assessors is punitive and/or aggressive. Notwithstanding this issue being raised by LASA in the past and remedial actions having been put in place, it appears as though these actions have not fully addressed the problem.

Incidents of the nature detailed above contribute to undermining aged care providers' confidence in the AACQA's work. Further, providers perceive that the unpredictable

outcomes of the AACQA's auditing processes deny them natural justice and procedural fairness.

Training of AACQA auditors

Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy *A matter of care* notes that the training and professional development of the Australian Government's aged care workforce could be improved:

'The entry courses for quality assessors and complaints and compliance officers would all benefit from a review of VET qualifications such as Diplomas of Quality Auditing (for the Quality Assessment workforce) and Government Investigation (for the Compliance and Complaints workforces). The bottom line for consumer safety is that training packages for customer-facing and decision-making staff must support regulatory purposes and meet appropriate job design standards.' (p.77)

LASA considers that the improved training and professional development proposed by Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy would assist the quality assessor workforce to enhance their auditing processes.

LASA is writing to the Minister for Senior Australians and the Aged Care Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to make them aware of the issues raised in this supplementary submission.

In the 2018 Federal Budget the government announced the creation of an independent Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission from 1 January 2019. The Commission brings together the functions of the AACQA and the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner.

LASA would be pleased if the Committee include in its report a recommendation for the new Commission to undertake steps to urgently address these issues.