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OUT IN FRONT

CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FOR AGED CARE CONSUMERS



Image Source: Australian Government Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Where are we going wrong?

TIME TO LEAD CHANGE

Making the New Standards Matter

BY JUDI COOMBE AND CAROLINE KIRIGA

It has been six months since the implementation of the new Single Set of Aged Care Quality Standards across Australia and the cracks in aged care compliance are continuing to increase.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (Royal Commission) report “A Shocking Tale of Neglect” released on 31 October 2019, challenged the Aged Care sector and Regulatory Agencies to address the current system, which they suggest “does not deliver uniformly safe and quality care for older people”.

The Commissioner’s Interim Report described a damning litany of failures which were presented to the Royal Commission. While these examples are not reflective of the entire sector, they should certainly give us all cause to critically and objectively examine our systems, our values, our failures and the real outcomes being experienced by our consumers.



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On the whole, residents of aged care facilities generally have little knowledge of the aged care system, or what quality care really looks like. They are at the mercy of the knowledge, competence and kindness of strangers. We are those strangers.

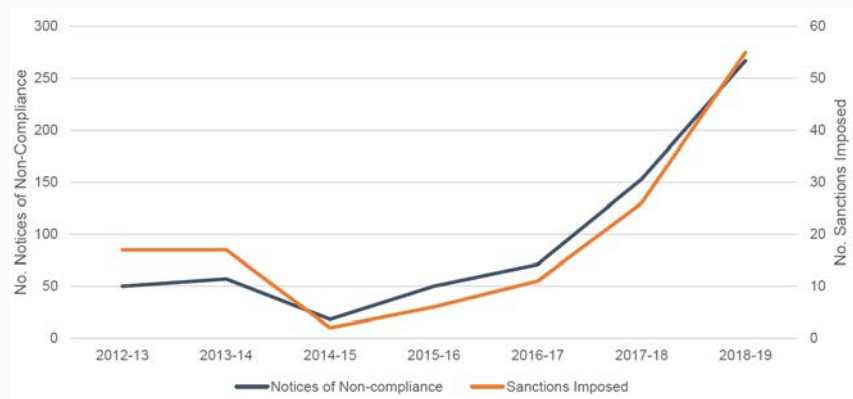
Working in the aged care industry, the questions we must ask are:

1. Would we really be happy if we were the vulnerable older person in our home or receiving our services?
2. Would we be happy to have our operations broadcast on Reality TV, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?

What the Department of Health requires of us, and the community expects of us, is that we comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards.

Aged care services in Australia should all be at a point where we are beyond compliance. We should be thinking about innovative and exciting care. However, in the past year the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission have handed down more non-compliances and sanctions than ever before. *In the five months since the implementation of the New Quality Standards (1 July 2019 to 17 December 2019) 59 non-compliances and 6 sanctions were issued.*

NOTICES OF SANCTION AND NON-COMPLIANCE TRENDS 2012-13 - 2018-19



Source: Report on the Operation of the Aged Care Act 1997

Aged care services in Australia have the potential to be world-class. However, *providers must have a thorough understanding of the intent of the Quality Standards.*

The new single set of Aged Care Quality Standards has enacted a mandate for change. The older population is experiencing greater complexities and higher acuity levels than in the past and the new Standards recognise this. Differing from the Standards of the past, they do not prescribe a one-size fits all approach but a flexible assessment and care delivery approach built around each individual person and their needs. Understanding this, we recognise that using the pre-July 2019 care delivery frameworks will not and is not working. As Bill Clinton once said, **“The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change”.**



THE NEW STANDARDS ARE NOT A RESHAPE OF THE OLD

Understanding the intent of the new Standards is critically important to delivering care and services which comply with them. There are many factors contributing to the spike in compliance issues and sanctions across the sector. Our operations team are specialists in assessment and remediation of operational compliance and re-alignment. Throughout the past 12 months, we have recognised several key issues impacting providers' delivery of compliant, consumer-centric care. These include:

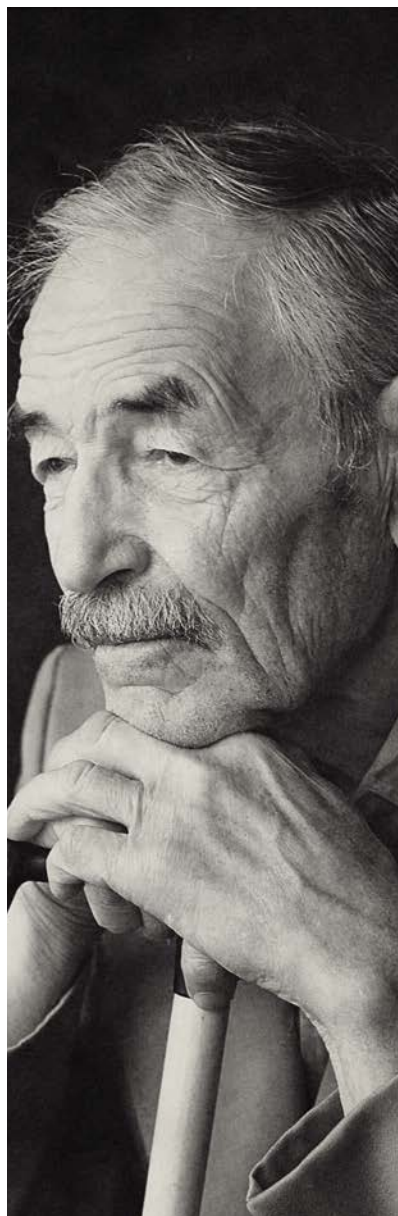
- Increased complexity of Resident needs;
- Under-qualified Workforce;
- Inadequate education and accountability;
- Funding based assessment tools (as opposed to individualised and care-based);
- Inadequate critical thinking applied to the Care Planning process;
- Lack of understanding regarding the appropriate Decision-maker;
- A lack of Aged Care Nurse Specialisation; and
- Inadequate assessment and management of high prevalence high risk issues.

A key issue detailed above concerning high prevalence high risk issues is a key challenge for providers as the new Standards do not prescribe a blanket assessment tool for the assessment of each individual. The new Standards call for critical clinical thinking to determine what is best and appropriate for each individual. We will be covering this specific issue in our next article.

The overarching issue we are noticing is the misconception that the new Standards are a reshape of the old. **In actuality, the New Standards have fundamentally transformed the guide for quality safe care, representing a shift of perspective from the provider to the consumer.** Understanding the intent of this shift and how to operate a model which supports this, is the key to success. Furthermore, the perception that this will negatively affect an organisation's bottom line is not necessarily the case.

The Royal Commission has spent more than a year exploring what is going wrong. The sector and the wider public are now questioning; have aged care services gotten worse? Or, are our consumers and the broader community standing up and saying; *we will not tolerate this any longer.* The transformation of aged care service delivery in our sector and in particular residential care, is long overdue, expected and needed, so we must not wait to follow, we must lead.

The new Standards are a regulatory representation of the transformational shift which is required. Providers must recognise and utilise this fundamental change in perspective to develop new and innovative ways to support older people, or they will be at increasing risk of failure.





TIME FOR TRANSFORMATION

There is mounting data to evidence the magnitude of providers who are struggling to comprehend and practice in a way that aligns with regulatory and consumer expectations and standards. These Standards should be the baseline, not the benchmark.

What is required is the critical, ongoing evaluation of care services and the development and implementation of a clear strategy. This strategy must articulate and promote the delivery of person-centred care to ensure not just compliance, but best practice care and services that support consumer well-being and joy in the last chapter of their lives. Providers must deliver services that are in line with both consumer expectations, demand and quality Standards. To do this, leadership and accountability must be considered.

Our experience working with providers across Australia has revealed ***there is a need for greater strategic leadership at the operational levels of the sector.*** Leaders willing to take the time to explore, understand and embed a new care approach in their organisation and more specifically, an approach which aligns with the new Quality Standards.

The sector's workforce needs strategic leadership to re-frame the delivery of care, to drive discussion, promote the questioning of old practices, undertake research and implement best practice. Aged care services should have high performing cultures which deliver excellent care and a valued consumer experience. Courageous Leadership and education must drive this.

Most critically, ***leaders must make sure their aged care workforce understands how the Standards, best practice guidelines and quality data should influence practices.***

JOIN US

Throughout 2020, Ansell Strategic Operations Team will be releasing regular newsletters focusing on operational challenges we are recognising across the sector. We will explore the intent of each Standard and consider the issues faced by providers, and how to overcome them. We will also share examples of best practice and innovation.

"Without change, there is no innovation or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable" – William Pollard

About Ansell Strategic Operations

Ansell Strategic Operational Advisory was created to assist aged care providers with operational challenges across all areas. Our team is comprised of specialist consultants who hold extensive experience in aged care services including highly clinical and managerial roles across all areas of operations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



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