

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19: 26 May 2020 Public Hearing

Opening statement by Ms Janet Anderson PSM

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today.

The principal role of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, as the national regulator of Commonwealth funded aged care services, is to protect and enhance the safety, health, well-being and quality of life of older Australians receiving aged care services.

During the pandemic, we have continued to place the safety and wellbeing of aged care consumers at the centre of our approach and all our decision making. Our work as regulator has complemented the activities of other agencies in the pandemic response, and we have moved quickly to ensure that our regulatory approach is fit for purpose in these challenging times.

Crucially, we continue to use the full range of our regulatory powers to ensure that providers are meeting their obligations with respect to the Aged Care Quality Standards, and mitigating the risks of transmission of the virus consistent with the advice of health authorities.

Our monitoring and compliance activities are ongoing. We continue to conduct site visits based on identified risks, and are undertaking telephone contacts and online surveys of all approved providers to gain intelligence and monitor risk across the sector.

Through our complaints function, we are providing assistance to consumers and their families, and engaging with providers on the complainant's behalf to resolve issues and concerns.

Sector communication remains a high priority and we are providing clear and targeted advice, guidance and resources to aged care providers and consumers to support them at this time. We are also collaborating with industry bodies to address key issues impacting aged care services.

A strong focus of our efforts has been on working in close partnership to support the Commonwealth Department of Health and state-based public health units in responding to a suspected or confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 in an aged care service.

The pandemic is ongoing and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission remains vigilant and focused in undertaking our role. We are also learning and innovating as a regulator during these unprecedented times.

Thank you, Chair. I'm very happy to take any questions the Committee may have.