

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

Inquiry into the current capability of the Australian Public Service

21 July 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000161

Average time for complaints resolution

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 44

Senator: Tim Ayres

Question:

CHAIR: What's the average length of time between the complaint being received and it being resolved on the system?

Ms Anderson: We have a benchmark performance indicator of 60 per cent of complaints being resolved in— gosh, I've got to get the numbers right—within 90 days, I think, but I'll need to double-check that. We are falling short of that benchmark. We have a number of complaints which are very complicated; they have a number of issues to them and take a lot of time to sort through. In that complexity, which the complainant is aware of and is kept up to date with, it may take a number of months. But the majority of complaints are resolved well within three months, and a significant number are resolved within two months. But we do have some which travel on beyond that because of the complexity of the issues. And it's not necessarily a provider's reluctance to engage; it might be that a complainant becomes unavailable for a period of time and we have to put the whole thing on pause until we can get access to them. There are a range of reasons that a complaint might run beyond that. Obviously, we are always working hard to close complaints and to minimise the length of time that they remain open.

CHAIR: Can you tell me on notice what the average time for resolution is?

Ms Anderson: Yes. Certainly.

Answer:

The Commission's 2020-21 Corporate Plan key performance indicator is that 80 per cent of complaints are resolved within 60 days. In 2020-21 the Commission resolved 67.6 per cent of complaints within 60 days.

For complaints received in 2020-21, the average time to resolve a complaint was 40 days and the median time was 25 days. This includes non-business days. The median days to resolve was lower than the average days due to a small number of complaints that took a significantly longer time to resolve. The median is therefore more representative of a typical complainant's experience.

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Inquiry into the current capability of the Australian Public Service

21 July 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000160

Complaints - January to March 2021

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 44

Senator: Tim Ayres

Question:

Ms Anderson: That's absolutely true. They are one of the inputs to our assessment of risk for a particular provider. Where we receive a run of complaints, or we receive a complaint which, on our risk matrix, puts that provider in the high or severe risk category, then that would be urgently moved to the quality assessment and monitoring team. Typically, they would undertake an unannounced site visit. Now, times are a bit different when we have three jurisdictions in lockdown and all of that becomes a bit more complicated for us, as you would appreciate, but that's the way we operate within the commission. We are an integrated commission and when we understand something about a provider, irrespective of the portal through which that information arrives at the commission, we are activated to respond to it on a risk basis.

CHAIR: So 100 per cent are finalised on your system. How many of those in the quarter that we're just talking about gave rise to it a site visit?

Ms Anderson: It's not possible for me to report on that today. I'm certainly happy to provide that information. Because of the earlier discussion around ICT systems, that's not straightforward. But we are able to identify that through a manual process and I'm happy to take that on notice.

CHAIR: How many will resolve with action taken against the aged-care provider?

Ms Anderson: I think that's the same question. You say 'action against the aged-care provider'; in most instances, the provider is willing to adjust their behaviour, their decision, their setting, in order to address the complaint. So we have a high success rate on behalf of the complainant to ensure that matters are resolved. It would be relatively rare—but certainly there is a frequency—that we receive a complaint which suggests unmitigated risk which needs closer attention, or where the provider is utterly reluctant and unwilling to adjust one of their settings and we consider in the circumstances that in fact they should or must adjust their setting. In such a case, we could deploy an action, which might be notice of intention to issue a direction or the issuance of a direction or possibly an escalation into a more substantial regulatory response, which could be a compliance enforcement response.

Answer:

The Commission takes a proportionate risk-based regulatory approach and considers all relevant information when determining its response to a particular quality, safety or prudential concern relating to an aged care service. Conducting a site visit is one option available to assess or monitor a service's performance against the Aged Care Quality Standards.

In the January to March 2021 quarter, there were 566 occasions where information from a complaint led directly to, or was used to inform, a site visit to assess and monitor a service's performance against the Aged Care Quality Standards. Not all of these site visits were conducted within the January to March 2021 quarter.

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21 July 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000157

APS Census Completion Rates

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 37-38

Senator: Claire Chandler

Question:

Senator CHANDLER: You also referenced the feedback that you've received from your workforce through the APS census. Do you know what the census completion rates are for the commission?

Ms Anderson: Gosh; I don't have that figure to hand, but it's at least 70 per cent.

Senator CHANDLER: If you could provide that on notice that would be very useful. Ms

Anderson: Yes, of course.

Answer:

The response rate for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to the 2021 APS Employee Census is 75 per cent.