



MEDIA RELEASE



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New standards to keep Australians safe when accessing local health care

Launched today by Minister for Health and Aged Care, The Hon Greg Hunt MP, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care's (the Commission) *National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards* aim to protect Australians from harm and improve the quality of health care that people receive in these settings.

The new standards provide a framework that can be applied to a broad range of healthcare services such as dental practices, allied health services (optometry, audiology, podiatry and physiotherapy), Chinese medicine clinics, community health services and skin clinics, to name a few.

The primary healthcare* sector is a significant part of Australia's healthcare industry, accounting for more than one-third (34%) or \$63.4 billion of Australia's total health expenditure in 2017–18.¹

Commission Chief Medical Officer, Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan, says the new standards will provide a clear framework for healthcare services across the sector to deliver safe health care.

"The *National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards* will be a game changer for the health sector in Australia, by giving practitioners the tools to be even better," she said.

"In time, Australians will have confidence that when they visit a primary or community healthcare service accredited to the standards, they are receiving safe and high-quality health care – no matter the type of health service they are using or where they access it.

"Each year, most Australians will visit a primary or community healthcare service in their local area. It is vital that these patients can trust the quality of care they receive and know they will be safe from harm."

The Primary and Community Healthcare Standards comprise three key standards: Clinical Governance Standard, Partnering with Consumers Standard and Clinical Safety Standard – each with different elements to be implemented by healthcare services.

Professor Duggan explained: "The new standards describe elements shared by all safe, high-quality healthcare services. That is, they should be well-managed, ensure that people who use their service will be safe from harm, and enable patients to be partners in their own health care and to know their opinion is valued by the healthcare professional.

"Australia has had nationally consistent standards in hospitals and day procedure services for 10 years. Since then, the *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards* have led to significant improvements in patient safety. In time, we expect these new standards to lead to improvements in health care provided by primary and community services," she said.

The new standards have the support of the Australian Government Chief Allied Health Officer, Dr Anne-marie Boxall, who has encouraged the sector to find out how to apply the framework to their services.

"The *National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards* are significant for the sector – and will benefit all Australians when they access health care in their local community," she said.

* **Primary health care** encompasses a range of services delivered outside the hospital that generally do not need a referral. This includes unreferral medical services, for example, general practitioner (GP) visits, dental, other health practitioner, pharmaceutical, and community and public health services [Source: AIHW 2019c. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/primary-health-care>]

“It is important that people feel safe when they access a healthcare service, that the care patients receive is tailored to their needs, and that they are supported to make informed decisions about their own care.

“Now is the time for healthcare services to become familiar with the new standards, ahead of voluntary independent accreditation being introduced next year. Healthcare providers may identify areas that need some attention, while many will find that they are already addressing elements described in the standards.

“By implementing these standards, healthcare services will be well positioned to demonstrate to their patients that they are providing safe, high-quality care.”

Dr Boxall added: “I am delighted that these standards are now available to primary and community healthcare services, so that all people accessing care can trust that accredited health services are accountable and striving to improve their practice.”

The Commission is developing comprehensive resources to support healthcare services to implement the new standards and to help consumers understand what the standards will mean for them.

All Australian primary and community healthcare services directly involved in patient care will be encouraged to implement the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards.

From mid-2022, healthcare services will be able to be independently assessed and become accredited to the new standards. Over time, Australians will be able to ask their healthcare service if they are accredited and look for an accreditation certificate or badge at the healthcare service or on their website.

The Primary and Community Healthcare Standards were developed following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Australian Government, state and territory partners, primary and community healthcare services, consumers, peak bodies and interest groups.

The standards will be launched today via an online event. Speakers include: Minister for Health and Aged Care, The Hon Greg Hunt MP; Commission Board Chair, Professor Willis Marshall AC; Commission Chief Medical Officer, Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan; and healthcare providers and consumers who were involved in the development of the standards. SBS News Presenter Janice Peterson will host the online event.

Tune in at 1:00pm AEDT today, Tuesday 12 October. To register for the webcast and find out more information about the standards, visit: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/pchs>

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Media enquiries

Angela Jackson, Communications and Media Manager, (02) 9126 3513 or 0407 213 522
angela.jackson@safetyandquality.gov.au

About the Commission

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is an Australian Government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in the safety and quality of health care based on the best available evidence. By working in partnership with patients, carers, clinicians, the Australian, state and territory health systems, the private sector, managers and healthcare organisations, the Commission aims to ensure that the health system is better informed, supported and organised to deliver safe and high-quality care. www.safetyandquality.gov.au

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. *Primary health care*. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 01 October 2021, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/primary-health-care>