



Community Nursing BULLETIN No. 33

October 2021

FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ALL DVA COMMUNITY NURSING STAFF

This bulletin is being issued to provide an update to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Community Nursing (CN) providers on the alignment of regulation across the care and support sector and the review of veterans' care and support programs.

Aligning Regulation: making it easier for service providers and workers to deliver services across the sector

Care to support Australians remaining independent is currently provided under three different Government schemes that broadly cover veterans' care, aged care and disability care (the care and support sector). Each of these schemes has its own requirements for care workers and providers, standards and compliance frameworks.

The 2021-22 Budget measure

In recognising the additional burden this places on care providers, the complexity for the care and support workforce and the need to support consistent quality and safety, the Australian Government's 2021-22 Budget included measures to:

- Align provider regulation across Aged Care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and veterans' care;
- Align worker screening arrangements for the aged care and veterans' care sectors with those of the NDIS.

The measures take a staged approach to regulatory alignment of provider and worker regulation across the care and support sector.

DVA, the Department of Health, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the Department of Social Services are working together, through a Cross-Agency Taskforce, to align regulation of the care and support sector. This reform will seek to reduce the regulatory burden on providers while strengthening protections to ensure quality and safety for participants and consumers.

There will be a staged approach to implementation and consultation.

Implementation: Stage one

The Cross-Agency Taskforce is leading consultation with aged care, disability support and veterans' care stakeholders on the broader reforms that will apply across the care and support sector. While some alignment activities are being implemented in the short term, a longer term plan is to be brought back to the Australian Government for consideration.

Some of the immediate alignment activities include:

- Amending legislation to improve sharing of regulatory data and intelligence between regulators and align compliance and enforcement powers;
- A national care and support worker screening check to align processes with the NDIS; and
- A Code of Conduct for workers and providers.

Consultation on a roadmap for medium to longer term regulatory alignment and the Code of Conduct is commencing in October 2021. Peak aged care and disability bodies will be involved in the co-design of a roadmap for future alignment activities, noting that over 80 per cent of CN contracted providers and/or Veterans' Home Care (VHC) contracted providers are also approved providers under the aged care scheme and/or the NDIS.

Consultation is commencing

To progress this work, Australia's care and support sector is invited to have its say on efforts to align regulation in the sector. DVA contracted CN providers are encouraged to participate in the consultation processes to actively shape reform to the care and support sector.

There will be multiple ways providers can participate in consultation including registering for a workshop.

CN providers and staff are encouraged to:

- visit [Aligning Regulation across the care sector](#) to find out more information on alignment activities and consultation opportunities, including registering for workshops.
- register on the [Ageing and Aged Care Engagement Hub](#) to receive alerts on areas of interest to implement broader aged care reform, including the new Code of Conduct.

Implementation: Stage two

The second stage will be consultation specific to the veteran sector as DVA works towards implementing the alignment streams of work across relevant programs, taking into consideration how they have been implemented in aged care and the NDIS and how DVA can best support the reform agenda. We will be consulting with veterans and their families through forums established under DVA's National Consultative Framework, and with DVA contracted VHC and CN providers ahead of any proposed changes to give effect to the care sector reforms to ensure a smooth transition to any new arrangements.

Review of veterans' care and support programs

The 2021 Budget provided funding for DVA to conduct a comprehensive review of veterans' care and support programs. Veterans' Home Care (VHC) and CN programs are the primary focus of the Review, though some related arrangements may also be considered to ensure all care and support services for veterans in the home are understood.

The need for a Review

While the VHC and CN programs are well-established, the current care and support market and policy environment in which home care services are delivered is changing, together with the needs and

expectations of the veteran and wider community. This Review is an important opportunity to reflect on current program administration, pricing and structures and ensure the service model is shaped by DVA clients' priorities and provider market dynamics.

The Review will allow us to investigate feedback from some providers that some DVA fees are below market rates, or that fee schedules are overly complex, so that we can ensure the sustainability of services to DVA clients in the future. The Review will consider options to align with the broader reforms across the care and support sector, in particular in response to the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#).

The Review will be conducted over 2021-22 and provide DVA with options to consider for reform of the VHC and CN programs.

Next steps

DVA has engaged Nous Group to conduct the Review, which will include stakeholder consultation. A consultation process will commence in November 2021, providing a range of opportunities for stakeholders to provide input to help shape the advice to be provided to Government. We understand that the sector is also being consulted as part of the Government's broader aged care reform agenda and DVA is mindful of these demands and pressures.

After the Review is completed

The Review is scheduled to be completed by mid-2022. It will be a decision of Government to take forward any potential changes to the current DVA program arrangements, taking into consideration the findings of the Review.

Further information

Further information will be provided through CN Bulletins as the Review progresses, including the consultation process.