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active

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

**Quality Management is key to reducing the increased
risk posed by COVID-19.**

Aged Care services need to maintain their focus on continuous improvement activities throughout the current pandemic.

Exposure to risks dramatically increase when fundamental quality management processes are not followed during a crisis. For the safety, health, and wellbeing of Aged Care consumers and because accreditation procedures are continuing during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to meet the standards.

How facilities overcome the new obstacles relating to the pandemic, in order to reduce risk and remain compliant, is a challenge.

WRITES BRAD MEEHAN, STEVEN CHARMAN AND GAIL HARDING

At the time of writing, there have been over 21,300 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Australia, with demographic distribution roughly resembling a bell curve, with the exception of a spike in 20's and 30's relative to other groups.[1] However, the data around COVID-19 deaths spells a different picture altogether. Sadly, of the 313 people who have died from COVID-19 in Australia, a staggering 90% of deaths have been among those aged 70 or older. There have been only been 4 deaths from any confirmed cases for people under the age of 50.[2]

Shortages of supplies, staff, time, and money that already existed in the industry have compounded as COVID-19 upturns society. Then there is the devastating mental health impact that physical/social distancing is having on people from consumers to staff to family members. Despite these unprecedented circumstances, accreditation activities are continuing. A mix of new protective digital desk-based accreditation procedures, in combination with shortened face to face visits, have been put in place by the Aged Care

1   National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, http://www9.health.gov.au/cda/source/rpt_5.cfm, accessed 4 August 2020.
2   Australian Government Department of Health – https://www.health.gov.au/resources/covid-19-deaths-by-age-group-and-sex, accessed 4 August 2020.

Quality and Safety Commission, making it even more important to have readily available up-to-date compliance evidence for submission. As incidences of COVID-19 slow and diminish, there will imminently be a further increase in compliance and accreditation activity. Implementing a robust and effective quality management system may be no easy task at this time, but Aged Care providers need to find a way to do so, and quickly.

Risks are rising

Australia's Aged Care organisations are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Home to the community's most vulnerable and subject to scrutiny and high levels of public distrust, the industry is stuck between a rock and a hard place. No better example can be given than the Prime Minister's announcement that the federal government will step in if Aged Care facilities are imposing visitor rules beyond the national coronavirus advice. For an industry that is struggling to overcome staffing shortages and a dried-up supply chain of personal protective equipment, managing visitations with the necessary protective measures is just not feasible.

Since the Royal Commission into Aged Care started in 2018, the spotlight has been focused on the Aged Care industry. Aged Care workers at all levels walk in fear of putting a foot wrong for the very reasons demonstrated above. It feels like the industry cannot do a single thing right no matter how hard it tries. If the subjective as well as the objective standards cannot be met on a normal day, then how does an Aged Care provider keep the risks of non-compliances down during a crisis? Suddenly the risk of failure is not just being found to have sub-par quality standards that can be rectified, it can mean the death of not just one resident but a pandemic outbreak that devastates a facility. This is something that scares providers as well as accreditors.

No accreditor wants to be held responsible for passing an Aged Care facility that then experiences a catastrophic outbreak of COVID-19 due to sub-par quality management systems. In a letter to Aged Care service providers, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, Janet Anderson, urged facilities to 'undertake a self-assessment against the Quality Standards,' specifically focusing on the 'requirements under Standard 3 and

Standard 8'[34] – areas that can be assumed to be the focus of accreditors during an assessment. Though they are not going to be conducting site visits, accreditors are going to be running a fine-tooth comb through facilities' digital/paper evidence of compliance. In the event of a coronial or other enquiry, where government may be looking to lay blame, facilities will want to be able to show evidence to demonstrate that they have fully discharged their obligations under the law and under the relevant legislation.

Time to overcome the obstacles

How is it possible to overcome not just everyday obstacles but these mountainous risks caused by the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic? Aged Care facilities and leadership teams need time. Time to care for their consumers and protect consumers' right to choose, fighting the desire to restrict their movements further. Time to properly govern and support their staff to ensure high quality care is provided within facilities. Also, time to implement risk regulations to protect against COVID-19.

There is one fundamental system Aged Care organisations can put in place and/or strengthen to lighten time pressures and gain confidence in their services and processes. That is, to have a robust and comprehensive quality and continuous improvement management system at the core of their organisation to automate all accreditation activities, reduce risks and prevent non-compliance or sanctions.

3   Facilities need to ensure they have in place arrangements for:
•   assessment and management of risk associated with infectious outbreaks if infection is suspected or identified
•   ensuring adequate care of the infected individual
•   protection measures for consumers staff and for residential Aged Care services, visitors to the service
•   notification advice to consumers, families, carers and relevant authorities.
4   Anderson, J., 'Re: Advice regarding COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)' from Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner Janet Anderson to Aged Care service providers, 2 March 2020 [Letter], < https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/Lettter%20to%20 aged%20care%20service%20providers%20-%2002%2003%202020.pdf>

Mature risk compliance and audit functions

During this time of uncertainty for the Aged Care Industry, it is critical to design integrated systems and processes to help get a facility's compliance and accreditation activities under control. Systemisation is fundamental to reducing risk as audits need to be kept up to date with the relevant standards and executed efficiently and, most importantly, effectively. Having mature functions in place means having a digital auditing system that is tailored to the facilities needs and does not rely on a sole person to implement auditing actions.

Clients have reported an 86% time saving during their auditing activities by using Active Quality's software.
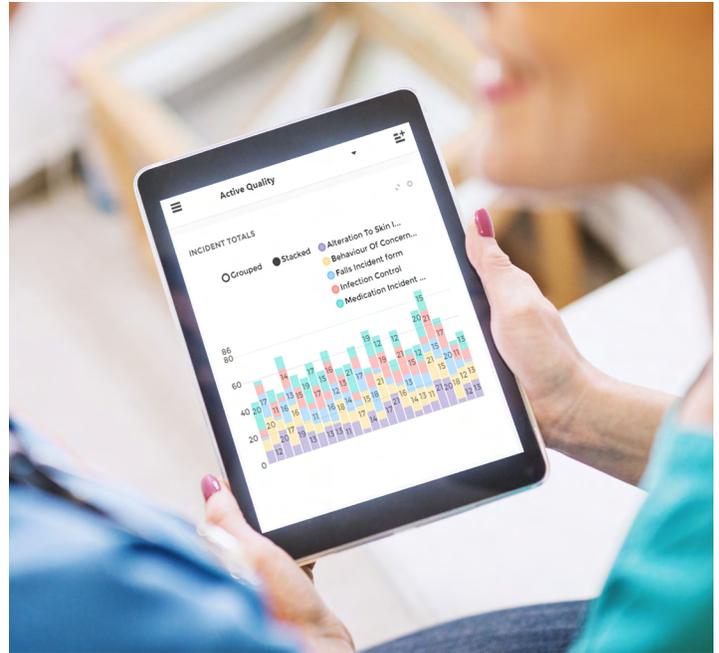
Active Quality's easy to use, cloud-based software helps to build a facility's capacity to evaluate their quality and clinical procedures and policies against the new standards, reducing risk of non-compliance. Underpinning the system are two key frameworks – Quality Management and Quality Culture. The Active Quality Management Framework's continuous four steps of audit, analyse, plan, and monitor are woven throughout each to ensure a cycle of continuous improvement. Members have access to eleven audits, including a Hand Hygiene Audit, that are co-designed with the experienced industry workers from the Aged Care Quality Association (ACQA) to reference the new standards, diversity framework and evidence-based practices. All of which is automated using an online scheduling tool within the system and contemporary progress reports can be exported at any time for up-to-date compliance evidence. These can also be used as evidence to show the diligence taken in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in a facility.

ACTIVE QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

CULTURE ENABLEMENT

CORE ACTIVITIES

01. LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR
The way in which senior leaders set expectations for the organisation relating to the importance of good quality management and the way in which strategy and direction influence conduct and culture.

AUDIT
Review your policies and procedures against the New Aged Care Quality and Safety Standards and/or National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 and associated rules. Access to audits, co-designed with experienced industry workers and aligned with evidence-based, best practice.

ANALYSE
Assess your results and trend your performance to find the gaps you need to address. Benchmark anonymously against other providers and within your group across all audits, clinical incidents, and feedback.
Export professional, easy to read reports.

02. PEOPLE PRACTICES
An individual employee's attitude and behaviour towards quality management and accreditation.

MONITOR
See your performance across multiple sites and services on one dashboard.
Track your performance using the clinical incidents and feedback forms.
Identify opportunities to improve.

PLAN
Leverage your insights to develop targeted and effective quality improvement strategies.
Implement continuous improvement actions on every item within the audits, clinical incidents, and feedback forms.

05. STRUCTURE, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES
How a business organises its people and activities to get quality management and accreditation work done.

03. CONSUMER ORIENTATION
The extent to which consumer-centricity is embedded in the culture. Your consumer determine the quality of your product or service.

04. MANAGING CHANGE
What happens when there are quality-related incidents and breaches within the organisation, how issues are addressed and what lessons are learned for future improvement.

Robust continuous improvement and feedback loop

Active Quality embeds continuous improvement planning into their feedback and audit tools to enable users to understand the root cause of errors and risks within their facility. This is why it is so important to audit effectively. Not only does consumer feedback need to be actively encouraged, so does honest reporting on clinical incidents and during other auditing activities. It is not enough for the systems to be comprehensive and streamlined. Without truthful feedback, the collection of accurate data is unlikely, making it almost impossible to rectify potential risks and causes of error. It requires a change in culture to

achieve a robust continuous improvement and feedback loop because, though honest feedback may be encouraged, there could be an underlying and counterproductive idea lurking that anything considered 'bad news' is not welcome. This can foster a culture of concealment and blame, which needs to be quickly addressed from the top down in an organisation. Active's Quality Culture Framework addresses the five foundational building blocks that facilities and organisations need to have in place in order to foster and grow this culture of honesty and quality – leadership behaviour, people practices, consumer orientation, change management, and structure, systems and processes. A consistent and vigilant focus on these elements will deliver the reward of a cohesive quality culture.

| LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR | PEOPLE PRACTICES | CONSUMER ORIENTATION | MANAGING CHANGE & STRUCTURE | SYSTEMS & PROCESSES |

Effective monitoring and use of data

Honest reporting for accurate data collection enables facilities to analyse what the emerging risks and potential issues they face are in order to proactively address them. Having access to internal and anonymous external benchmarking tools makes it incredibly easy to asses compliance levels as well as see developing trends in consumer and employee engagement. It is these systems that transform an organisation from working in a reactive, crisis management environment, which is stagnant and cripples any growth, to being proactive and innovative. This is why Active Quality has developed a streamlined auditing and continuous improvement system. Staff will save time on the actual auditing activities so they can focus on implementing the new COVID-19 regulations, proactively reducing risks and enhancing consumer experience.
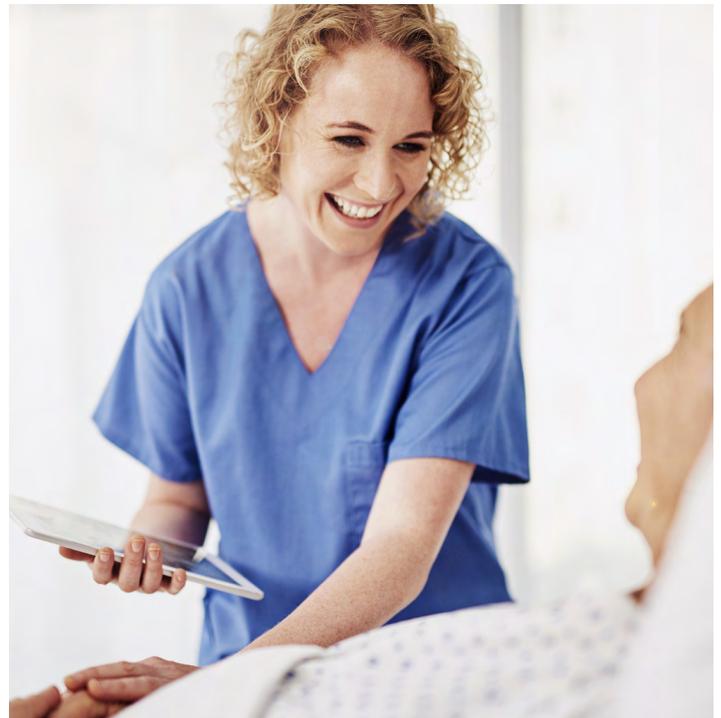
About Brad Meehan

Brad has designed and deployed enterprise level consumer-centric transformation programs for many ASX100 companies, Health Care providers and GOCs. He has expertise in strategy, operating model development, consumer centricity, governance, quality management and large-scale cultural transformations. Brad has advised the leadership teams of Health Care and Aged Care organisations including Cabrini Health, Calvary Health, Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, IRT, Allity Aged Care, BaptistCare, Benetas and Bolton Clarke to name a few. He gained his MBA with distinction from Queensland University of Technology and has completed Harvard Business School Leadership Programs in both Customer-Centric Strategy and Change.

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About Steven Charman

Steven is passionate about using technology to help organisations and teams find more effective and efficient ways to work together. Steven is a member of and adviser to the Aged Care Quality Association (ACQA) and collaborates with hundreds of providers to deeply understand the needs of aged and care service delivery. Prior to joining Active Quality Steven was CEO at Intelligent Developments, a Sydney-based software firm. It specialises in mobilising small teams of technical experts to deliver cost effective software solutions. Steven and his team have delivered projects to customers and partners like Qantas, Optus, CBA, Pizza Hut, KFC, Harris Farm Markets and others. These projects are highly scalable, high security, mission-critical and strategic technology solutions, Steven oversaw the planning and design, through to implementation and ongoing delivery and support. He carries a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Macquarie University and a Certificate in ISO 9001: 2018 – Quality Management from BSI.

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About Gail Harding

Gail Harding brings over 30 years experience as an Executive Officer/Director of Nursing in rural hospitals, Aged Care facilities and community services. As the Chairman of the Aged Care Quality Association (ACQA) Gail liaises with peak bodies and departments Australia-wide on issues affecting the industry and her management of 'Ageing in Place' is used by the Commonwealth as an example to emulate. Gail draws upon her vast practical and advisory experience, including time as the Deputy Director of the Joanna Briggs Evidence Based Practice Aged Care. Specialising in enhancing quality management systems, robust governance processes and effective risk management procedures, she leads teams through change processes on all matters of compliance. Gail is a Registered Nurse with a BA in Health Science Nursing, Cert IV Workplace Training and Assessment, Cert IV Frontline Management, and Cert IV Work Health and Safety.

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About Active Quality

The Active Quality platform has been designed to streamline, monitor and improve quality management practices. This then enables managers and employees to focus on analysis, improvement and innovation while providing boards with increased confidence around governance, compliance and accreditation. The platform offers an intuitive and comprehensive set of tools that streamline auditing, incident management, feedback, analysis, benchmarking, reporting and continuous improvement. It offers separate audits for Residential and Community Care that are co-designed and continually updated by the members of the Aged Care Quality Association (ACQA) to reference the new standards, diversity framework and evidence-based practices. The system is designed and implemented in a way to support the development of a quality orientated culture and decrease or eliminate accreditation risks. The overarching goal is to reduce the burden of paperwork or manual processes, allowing nurse managers and staff to proactively leverage the information collected and use it to drive innovation and enhance the consumer experience.
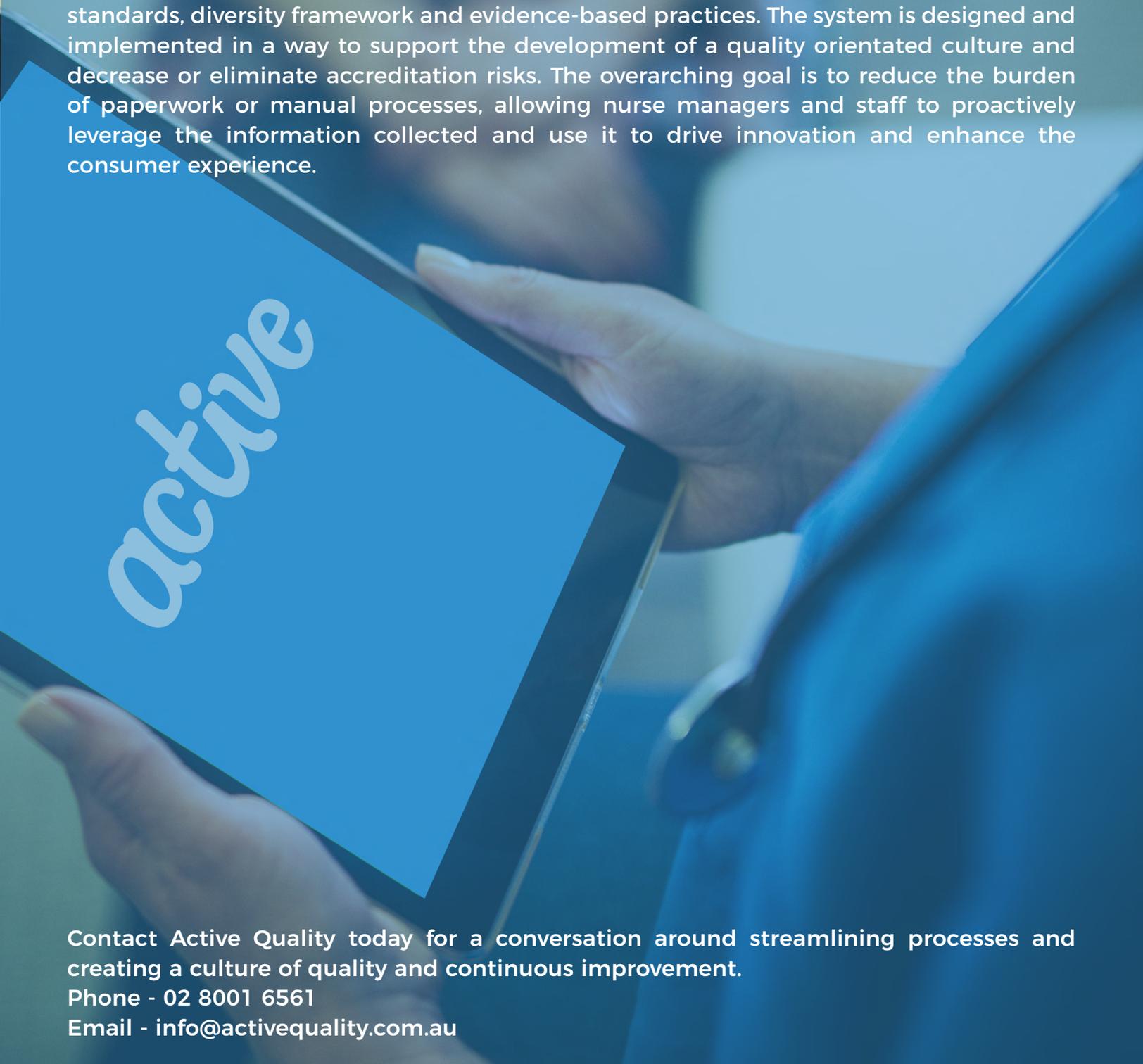
Contact Active Quality today for a conversation around streamlining processes and creating a culture of quality and continuous improvement.
Phone - 02 8001 6561
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Active Quality Partnership

The Aged Care Quality Association (ACQA) is an industry group representing a diverse range of Aged Care providers, including Residential Aged Care, Home Care and Assisted Living. ACQA members work together on compliance, accreditation and improvements to service delivery, supporting one another in implementing the latest in evidence-based practice. Our long standing partnership with ACQA allows us to work closely with providers to rapidly respond to changes in compliance and accreditation requirements.

If you would like further information on ACQA please email info@acqa.org.au or call us on 02 8330 6734