

# **Effectiveness of the Commonwealth Home Support Program**

## **Part A — Report at a glance**

# Effectiveness of the Commonwealth Home Support Program

## Part A — Report at a glance

This audit report is presented in two parts:

- Part A — Report at a glance (this part)
- Part B — Full report

Part A has been prepared to improve the accessibility of the full report, and includes what the audit examined, what was concluded, and key audit findings.

Paragraph and recommendation numbers mentioned in Part A refer to the full report in Part B.

## What is the Commonwealth Home Support Program?

The Commonwealth Home Support Program is an aged care program designed to help older people to live independently and safely in their homes. The program aims to provide a small amount of support to a lot of people. To be eligible for the program, people need to meet the age requirements and need assistance with some everyday tasks.

The program offers different services including:

- meals
- help with cleaning, shopping and laundry
- transport to help people get to appointments
- respite care so older people and their families can have a short break

The program started in 2015. Businesses and organisations receive grants from the Australian Government to provide services to older people in their communities.

In 2024–25:



**838,694** people received services from the program



The program received **\$3.1 billion** in Australian Government funding



There were **1,273** program providers

In 2021 the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended a number of changes to aged care in Australia. One of these changes was a new Australian Government program for older people. The government started the Support at Home program in November 2025. It replaced two aged care programs (the Home Care Packages and the Short Term Restorative Care programs). The Support at Home program aims to improve people's access to services, products, equipment and home modifications so people can live independently for longer. The Commonwealth Home Support Program is due to be combined with the Support at Home program no earlier than 1 July 2027.

## What did the audit look at?

The audit looked at how well the Commonwealth Home Support Program is working.

To do this, we asked three key questions:

1. Does the program meet people's needs?
2. Are services delivered effectively?
3. Is the program meeting its objectives?

The audit looked at the work of the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, which is responsible for managing the program.

To help us answer the three questions, the audit looked at the department's records and data and met with department staff. We also asked people what they thought of the program.



**10,125**

Older people receiving program services completed a survey



**495**

People who work for aged care service providers completed a survey



**9**

Organisations that represent older people and aged care providers completed a survey



**59**

People and organisations sent us feedback via our website

## What did the audit conclude?

The Commonwealth Home Support Program is delivering services to more than 800,000 people and people who get the services are generally satisfied with them. However, people have trouble getting the services when they want them. The department does not collect enough information and use it to check whether the program is being delivered well. The department does not collect enough information and use it to check whether people who are eligible for the program are able to get the services they need when they need them. It will need to do a better job of collecting this kind of information and checking and acting on these things before the Commonwealth Home Support Program combines with the Support at Home program.

## Does the program meet people's needs?

The Commonwealth Home Support Program is partly meeting people's needs. The audit looked at how the department checks on and plans for the services people want (demand) and the services providers can deliver (supply). While services are delivered across Australia, the department does not have a clear picture of who needs services, where the highest demand is and where there are gaps in supply.



See the blue box at the start of chapter 2 of the report for the complete summary

The audit found that the department advises the government about supply and demand pressures and checks whether providers are fully using their grant funding, but:

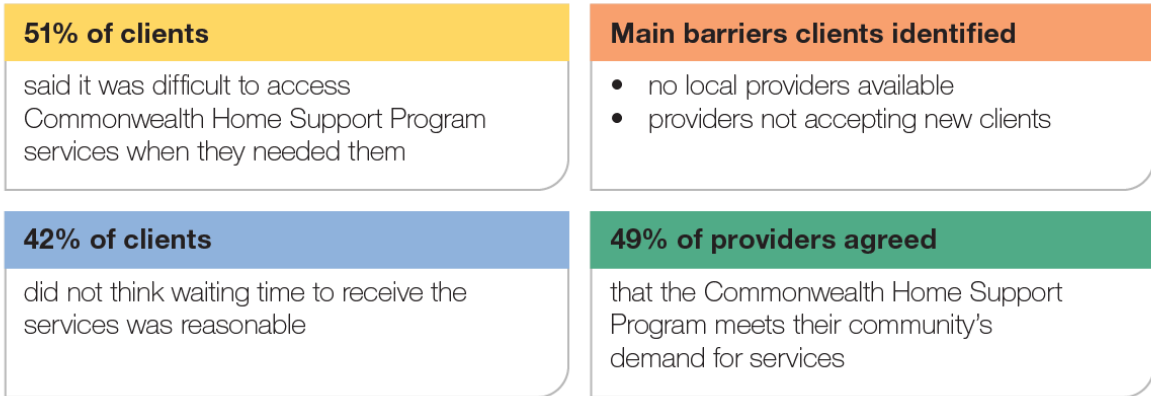
- does not have a good way to measure current or future demand for the services
- does not plan well for increasing demand in the future
- is providing services to people who have not been assessed as needing those services

- does not have good systems and data to calculate and check how long it is taking people to get the services
- does not speak enough to clients and providers about their experiences with the program



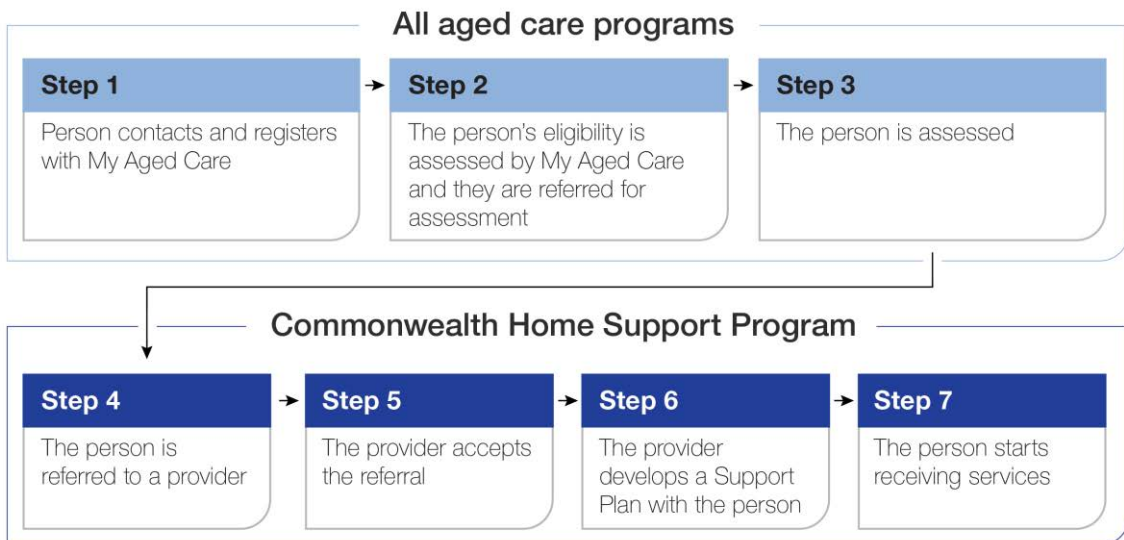
See paragraphs 2.8 to 2.38, and Recommendations 1 and 2, in the report for more information

Through surveys, we asked older people receiving services and the providers of the services if the program is meeting people’s needs.



See boxes 2, 3 and 4 in the report for more information

People access the program through seven steps — this is called the ‘client journey’ in the report.



The *Aged Care Act 2024* requires older people to be approved for aged care services. Based on a survey of providers that had a 66 per cent response rate, the department estimated that in 2023–24, roughly 113,000 people who received Commonwealth Home Support Program services had never been assessed to see if they were eligible or what their needs were. The department asked providers to help get people’s needs assessed.

The department does not track how long it takes for people to receive the services after they register with My Aged Care. This is partly because it does not have the right data or IT systems to collect the data. The department does not have any targets about how long it should take.

We do know that during 2024–25, between steps 2 and 3, the time was 21 days or less for half of program clients. For one in ten clients, it was 103 days or more.



See paragraphs 2.42 to 2.57, and Recommendation 3, in the report for more information

## Are services delivered effectively?

While most people are satisfied with their overall experience with the program, the department does not have a good understanding of whether providers deliver the program well.



See the blue box at the start of chapter 3 of the report for the complete summary

The audit found that the department:

- does not have a plan for speaking with people and providers about the program
- has not engaged well with people about the program
- has not analysed complaints
- has not considered the risks to quality service delivery
- has not planned checks for the highest risks
- has focused on the way providers have spent grants and has not paid much attention to the quality of service delivery by the majority of providers



See paragraphs 3.5 to 3.42, and Recommendations 4 and 5, in the report for more information

We asked older people receiving services and the providers of the services if the program is well delivered.



See boxes 6, 7 and 8 in the report for more information

The department has grant agreements with providers that set out how much money the provider will receive to deliver a service type (for example, meals or transport). Providers need to make regular reports to the department on how they spend the grant money.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing; the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission; and the Department of Social Services each have responsibilities for checking provider reports. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission checks that providers are meeting the Aged Care

Quality Standards and manages complaints. The Department of Social Services helps to manage provider grant agreements. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has overall responsibility for the program.

The audit found that the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing:

- has established committees that have oversight of the program
- has set out the roles and responsibilities with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission; and the Department of Social Services
- manages providers who report delivering fewer services than what they agreed to deliver
- does not have a complete understanding of how the program is working
- does not know the quality of care that is delivered to most people day-to-day



See paragraphs 3.18 to 3.49, and Recommendations 6 and 7, in the report for more information

## Is the program meeting its objectives?

The program has five objectives, which are to support older people who are having trouble with everyday tasks to:

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
have a better quality of life	continue living in their own home and delay moving into a nursing home	to be more involved in their community and have more social connection	keep or improve their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing	be more independent

The department does not show that the program is meeting these objectives.



See the blue box at the start of chapter 4 of the report for the complete summary

The department has performance measures for providers based on compliance with their grant agreements.

The department publishes one performance measure about the program, which is the number of people who accessed the program in a year. For 2024–25, the target was 840,000 people, which the department said it ‘substantially met’. In other audits, the ANAO has found that this performance measure alone does not provide people with enough information about how the program is working and whether it is meeting its objectives.



See paragraphs 4.4 to 4.16, and Recommendation 8, in the report for more information

Although the department has done some reviews of some elements of the program, the department has not evaluated or conducted much research on whether program is meeting its objectives.

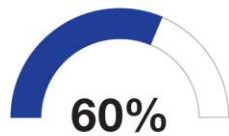


See paragraphs 4.17 to 4.32, and Recommendation 9, in the report for more information

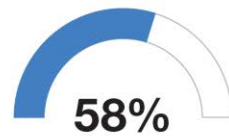
We asked older people receiving services if they thought the objectives were being met.



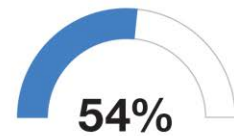
of clients reported better quality of life



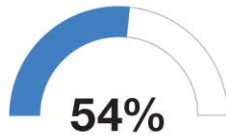
of clients reported improved ability to stay in their own home



of clients reported better physical health



of clients reported better emotional health



of clients reported better mental health



of clients reported better social connection



of clients reported improved ability to participate in their community



of clients reported improved ability to stay connected to their cultural or personal identity



See box 10 in the report for more information

## Auditor-General recommendations

The Auditor-General made nine recommendations to the department.



See the recommendations in the report for more information