CAB & Auditor Newsletter

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The Australian Community Industry Alliance (ACIA) is pleased to share our ongoing quarterly update for Certification Bodies (Conformity Assessment Bodies - CABs) and Auditors.

As a key partner in upholding quality and safety across community care services, your role is essential to the integrity and impact of the ACIS certification system. Through this newsletter, we aim to keep you informed of important updates, policy changes, best practice insights, and shared learnings that support consistent, high-quality auditing across the sector.

Together, we ensure that providers continue to meet the rigorous standards expected under ACIS, delivering trusted care to individuals supported by personal injury schemes and beyond. We appreciate your ongoing collaboration and commitment to excellence.

Inclusion of DVA Clients as ACIS Relevant Clients

ACIA would like to advise CABs of an important update to the ACIS Relevant Clients Policy (ACIS 5.0). Following the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission decision of 4 May 2026, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has been formally recognised as a Scheme Funder under the ACIS framework.

Accordingly:

- DVA-funded clients are now considered ACIS Relevant Clients for the purposes of certification and audit activities
- Services delivered to DVA participants may be included within the scope of ACIS audits, where applicable

This change supports consistent recognition of accredited providers and strengthens assurance of quality and safety for veterans and their families.

Operational Context
While DVA-funded clients are now in scope, operational arrangements are still being established. This includes:

- Referral pathways to accredited providers
- Reporting and information-sharing expectations
- Broader system interactions between DVA, providers, and certification processes

These elements remain under development as part of broader reform activity within DVA.

DVA Reform Update
This update coincides with the establishment of the Veteran and Family Wellbeing Agency, which will commence operations from 1 July 2026. The new Agency is expected to deliver a more coordinated, whole-of-system approach to veteran wellbeing, including improved pathways to services and support for individuals with complex needs. Given this reform environment, further clarity on DVA processes and expectations is anticipated over time.

Interim Approach and Next Steps
In the interim:

- CABs should recognise DVA participants as in-scope clients where applicable
- Existing ACIS audit methodologies should continue to be applied
- A pragmatic approach should be taken where operational arrangements are still evolving

ACIA is actively engaging with DVA to refine these arrangements and will provide further guidance to CABs as additional information becomes available.

ACIA External 025 - ACIS Relevant Clients Policy ACIS 5.0

DVA's Position on Attendant Care Services

DVA Wellbeing Agency

Audit Notification and ISO/IEC 17065 Requirements

ACIA would like to remind CABs of their obligations under ISO/IEC 17065 in relation to audit planning and communication with certified providers.

ISO/IEC 17065 establishes the framework for how CABs operate, requiring processes to be consistent, transparent, and contractually defined with clients.

While the standard does not prescribe a fixed minimum notice period for audits, it is clear that CABs must have documented arrangements with clients that enable the effective conduct of evaluation and surveillance activities.

Key Expectations for CABs:

- Audit activities must be planned and communicated in advance in line with certification agreements
- Providers must be given reasonable opportunity to prepare for audits, including ensuring access to personnel, documentation, and service delivery environments
- Communication processes should be consistent, documented, and applied fairly across all clients
- Any changes to audit timing (e.g. delays, rescheduling, or non-response) should be clearly documented and managed in accordance with certification procedures

Why this matters
Timely and transparent audit notification is critical to:

- Ensuring audits are robust, evidence-based, and reflective of actual service delivery
- Supporting providers to participate meaningfully in audit processes
- Maintaining confidence in certification outcomes across scheme funders and stakeholders

ACIA has observed instances where providers have not been contacted in a timely manner regarding upcoming audits, or where escalation pathways have not been activated when providers are unresponsive. In some cases, this has resulted in late Special Consideration applications and avoidable certification pressures.

ACIA expects CABs to:

- Maintain clear and documented processes for notifying providers of upcoming audits
- Allow sufficient notice to support provider readiness and audit integrity
- Escalate or manage situations where providers are unresponsive in a timely and transparent manner

This is particularly important in the ACIS context, where delayed or poorly coordinated audit activity can result in certification lapses and impacts to scheme-funded clients.

Further Guidance
Where needed, CABs should refer to their internal procedures and certification agreements to ensure alignment with ISO/IEC 17065 requirements. ACIA will continue to reinforce expectations for consistent audit practices across the scheme.

ACIS Practice Manual Refresh - Now Available

ACIA has recently completed a comprehensive review of the ACIS Practice Manual, aimed at strengthening provider capability and supporting consistent achievement of best practice across the scheme.

The updated Manual introduces enhanced practical guidance, including:

- Clear knowledge expectations for key roles
- Defined skill expectations aligned to service delivery
- Examples of evidence suitable for audit
- Reflective questions to support continuous improvement and quality practice

Access and Distribution
To support uptake across the sector:

- The Practice Manual is now bundled with the purchase of ACIS Standards and the Self-Assessment Tool
- All organisations who have previously purchased ACIS 5.0 have been provided with a copy at no additional cost
- The ACIS Practice Manual has also been distributed to Certification Bodies and auditors to support consistent interpretation and application during audit activities

This update forms part of ACIA's ongoing focus on strengthening audit readiness, improving clarity of expectations, and supporting high-quality service delivery across the scheme.

Auditor Workforce and Certification Pressure

ACIA acknowledges the ongoing impact of NDIS reform and mandatory registration requirements on the certification environment, particularly the increased demand for qualified auditors.

As regulatory expectations continue to shift toward mandatory registration, formal certification, and strengthened assurance mechanisms, there is a corresponding increase in audit volumes and workforce demand across the sector.

Emerging Pressures
ACIA recognises that CABs may be experiencing:

- Increased demand for initial certification and surveillance audits
- Pressure on auditor availability and recruitment pipelines
- Challenges in maintaining consistent capability and audit quality
- Greater complexity driven by new regulatory requirements and scheme changes

Collaborative Opportunities
ACIA is interested in working with CABs to explore practical, sector-wide approaches to support auditor workforce development and visibility.

Potential areas for collaboration may include:

- Joint information sessions to build awareness of auditor roles and pathways into certification
- Supporting promotion and visibility of auditor opportunities across the sector
- Development of shared resources, such as a "How to Become an Auditor" guidance webpage
- Ongoing dialogue to better understand workforce challenges and identify coordinated responses

Strengthening the Audit Workforce
A strong and sustainable audit workforce is critical to maintaining:

- Consistency and integrity of certification outcomes
- Confidence across providers, scheme funders, and participants
- Alignment with increasing regulatory and scheme expectations

ACIA welcomes engagement from CABs interested in collaborating on these initiatives.

ACIS Review Cycle Commenced: Ongoing Feedback and EOI Invitation

ACIA advises that the ACIS Review Cycle has now formally commenced.
We would like to thank CABs and auditors who have already provided feedback on ACIS 5.0. Your insights are critical in ensuring the Standard remains practical, robust, and reflective of real-world service delivery.

Ongoing Opportunities to Contribute
Feedback and Expressions of Interest (EOI) remain open, and we continue to welcome:

- Feedback on ACIS 5.0, including areas for improvement, clarification, or emerging risks
- Expressions of Interest (EOI) to participate in the ACIS Stakeholder Reference Group

The Reference Group will support the review process by contributing audit experience, technical insight, and sector perspectives to inform future updates to the Standard.

Continued Engagement
This remains an important opportunity to contribute to the ongoing development of ACIS and help ensure it continues to support high-quality, consistent, and evidence-informed certification outcomes.

For feedback or to submit an EOI, please contact contact@acia.net.au.

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