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.

Special Consideration for Provisional Certification Extensions

ACIA has received enquiries regarding providers holding Provisional Certification (No ACIS Relevant Clients) who have not yet commenced services to ACIS-relevant clients before their certification expiry date.

To support alignment with ACIA's 18-month audit approach, providers seeking an additional six-month extension should be directed to submit an application for Special Consideration.

Certification Bodies are encouraged to advise providers to either:

- Complete the Special Consideration Application Form; or
- Contact ACIA directly and ACIA will assist with the process.

No application fee currently applies to these requests.

Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are intended to support providers who are progressing towards service delivery but have not yet commenced providing services to ACIS-relevant clients.

ACIA External 017 - Special Consideration Application

Equivalence Reminder for Auditors

As ACIS 5.0 includes provisions for equivalence with other recognised standards and frameworks, auditors are reminded that equivalence does not remove the requirement to identify and record non-conformities against ACIS where applicable.

Where a non-conformity is identified during an audit conducted under an equivalent standard or framework, auditors should consider whether the issue also represents a failure to meet a corresponding ACIS requirement.

This is particularly important where the non-conformity relates to a systemic issue, such as governance, risk management, incident management, workforce practices, record keeping, quality systems or service delivery processes. Even where the non-conformity is identified through the experience, records or support arrangements of a client who is not an ACIS-relevant client, the underlying issue may indicate a broader organisational failure that impacts compliance with ACIS requirements.

Where a systemic issue is identified and would reasonably affect the provider's ability to meet the relevant ACIS requirement, the non-conformity should also be recorded and assessed within the ACIS audit outcome.

Applying equivalence in this manner supports consistency across audits, maintains the integrity of certification decisions, and ensures that organisational-level concerns are appropriately captured and addressed.

Example: An auditor identifies deficiencies in medication management processes through the review of a non-ACIS client's records. While the client may not fall within the provider's ACIS certification scope, the finding may indicate a broader failure in clinical governance and medication management systems. In these circumstances, auditors should consider whether the issue also constitutes a non-conformity against the relevant ACIS requirements.

Audit Outcomes and Continuous Improvement

ACIA recognises that many providers invest significant effort into preparing for audit and maintaining compliance with ACIS requirements. Audits that identify no non-conformities can and do occur.

However, auditors are reminded that the purpose of an audit is to independently assess the effectiveness of a provider's systems, processes and practices against the requirements of ACIS. As with most quality and certification frameworks, it is common and expected that audits will identify opportunities for improvement, including minor or major non-conformities where evidence demonstrates requirements have not been fully met.

Where an auditor consistently reports no non-conformities across a large number of audits, this may be considered a potential indicator requiring further review. While such outcomes may be appropriate in some circumstances, audit findings should accurately reflect the evidence gathered during the audit and the maturity of the provider's systems.

Auditors should remain objective and evidence-based in their assessment and ensure that:

- Non-conformities are identified where requirements are not met.
- Systemic issues are appropriately reflected in audit findings.
- Opportunities for improvement are not substituted for non-conformities where the evidence supports a non-conformity.
- Audit outcomes are consistent with the evidence reviewed and observations made during the audit process.

The identification of non-conformities should not be viewed as a failure of the provider, but rather as a normal and important component of continual improvement and the ongoing integrity of the certification process.

Nominations Now Open: Outstanding Auditor Award

ACIA is pleased to announce that nominations are now open for the **Outstanding Auditor Award 2026**.

This award recognises auditors who demonstrate excellence in auditing practice, professionalism, integrity, consistency and a commitment to improving quality outcomes across the sector.

Auditors play a critical role in supporting confidence in the ACIS Certification Scheme. Through their expertise, objectivity and constructive approach, auditors help service providers identify strengths, address areas for improvement and continuously enhance the quality and safety of services delivered.

We encourage Certification Bodies, colleagues and service providers to nominate auditors who consistently demonstrate:

- Professionalism and integrity
- High-quality and evidence-based auditing practices
- Consistency in audit decision-making
- Constructive engagement with providers
- A commitment to continuous improvement and sector outcomes
- Strong understanding and application of ACIS requirements

This is an opportunity to recognise the valuable contribution auditors make to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the ACIS Certification Scheme.

Nominations are now open and we encourage all stakeholders to consider recognising an auditor who has made a positive impact through their work.

Nomination Form

Nomination Guide

Evidence Spotlight: Demonstrating Effective Clinical Governance

Clinical Governance remains a key focus area during ACIS audits. While many providers have established policies, committees and governance frameworks, auditors should continue to assess how these arrangements are implemented in practice and whether they are driving quality and safety outcomes.

When assessing Clinical Governance requirements, strong evidence may include:

- Regular review and analysis of incidents, complaints and feedback trends.
- Evidence that clinical risks are identified, monitored and addressed through documented actions.
- Minutes demonstrating active oversight and decision-making by governance groups.
- Review of clinical outcomes and quality indicators to inform improvement activities.
- Workforce competency monitoring, supervision arrangements and professional development activities.
- Evidence that lessons learned from incidents, audits or complaints have resulted in changes to practice.

Auditors are encouraged to look beyond the existence of policies and procedures and consider whether governance systems are effectively operating within the organisation. Providers should be able to demonstrate how governance activities influence decision-making, service delivery and continuous improvement.

Effective Clinical Governance is not demonstrated solely through documentation. Rather, it is reflected in how an organisation monitors performance, manages risk, responds to issues and continuously improves outcomes for the people it supports.