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# Improving access to data on length of stay in aged care in Australia: a feasibility study into options for a dynamic data display tool

Working paper 2 2016





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*Authoritative information and statistics  
to promote better health and wellbeing*

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

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### **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare**

Board Chair  
Dr Mukesh C Haikerwal AO

Director  
Mr Barry Sandison

Any enquiries relating to copyright or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Digital and Media Communications Unit  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6244 1000

Email: [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au)

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**Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at <[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)> for any amendments.**

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# Abbreviations

ACPR	Aged Care Planning Region
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CACP	Community Aged Care Packages
DoH	Department of Health
EACH	Extended Aged Care at Home
EACHD	Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia
LOS	Length of stay
NACDC	National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse
PIAC	Pathways in Aged Care linkage map

# Summary

The length of time care recipients spend accessing aged care is an important measure of demand for services and levels of service utilisation. Improving understanding of length of stay (LOS), particularly when compared across residential aged care and community-based care, can provide insight into service delivery planning at the whole-of-government level.

The AIHW has been funded by the Department of Health (DoH) to explore options for the development of a dynamic data display tool focusing on LOS in aged care.

Current LOS data published as a part of the annual Residential aged care and Home Care web reports are well suited towards adaptation to a dynamic data display environment. These data require minimal effort to translate to a SAS VA environment, and are low risk in terms of confidentiality and reliability. Based on this the following recommendations are made:

1. Develop a dataset containing client and service provider information for 2005–2015 for:
  - a. implementation in SAS VA
  - b. assessment of confidentiality and reliability issues
  - c. development of data views.
2. Consult with key stakeholders.
3. Investigate alternative software options to support reporting of LOS in a dynamic data display tool.
4. Implement annual updates in line with NACDC data refresh cycle to provide the latest information available.
5. Further expand as Pathways in Aged Care (PIAC) linkage map and other data on LOS become available.



# 1 Measuring and reporting length of stay

## 1.1 Measuring length of stay

Length of stay (LOS) data are measured by analysing the admission and discharge dates of clients using aged care services. It can be measured across individual client episodes of care in different service types (episodic data), or as the total time spent in a particular service type over a lifetime.

The AIHW does not currently produce episodic data on LOS, but has done so in the past. A range of disaggregations for LOS has also been produced in past publications (see Appendix Table A.1 for an overview).

## 1.2 Reporting length of stay in a dynamic data display

Length of stay is typically reported either as an average length of time in a particular service type, for example, residential aged care, or as the aggregated number of people who spent time in a service type for a particular length of time, for example, 6–12 months (see Appendix Tables A2 and A3 for examples).

Tables currently published as part of the annual Residential aged care and Home Care web reports are well suited to adaptation to a dynamic data display environment. These data will require minimal effort to translate to a SAS VA environment, and are low risk in terms of confidentiality and reliability. These tables provide a cross-section of information on length of stay in Australia based on the following variables:

- state and territory
- remoteness area
- sex
- age group
- separation reason
- year.

Using SAS VA, users will be able to dynamically adjust these data variables. This adds value to previously available data in which users were limited to published tables and variables, and needed to consult multiple sources to view how LOS has changed over time.

The recently-executed schedule between AIHW and DoH for upgrading the NACDC provides an opportunity for the AIHW to investigate alternative software options to support reporting of LOS in a dynamic data display tool.

## 2 Recommendations

AIHW makes the following recommendations for the development of a LOS in aged care dynamic data display tool:

1. A dataset containing client and service provider information for 2005–2015 be developed for:
  - a. implementation in SAS VA
  - b. assessment of confidentiality and reliability issues
  - c. development of data views
2. Consult with key stakeholders.
3. Investigate alternative software options to support reporting of LOS in a dynamic data display tool.
4. Implement annual updates in line with NACDC data refresh cycle to provide the latest information available.
5. Further expand as PIAC and other data on LOS become available.

Table 1 presents a staged approach to progress these recommendations. This approach immediately adds value to currently published length of stay data, and allows time for the development of new data, currently not published.

**Table 1: A staged approach to progress these recommendations**

Potential projects		Proposed content		Proposed timing
		In scope	Product	
Phase 1	Implement published residential aged care tables in SAS VA—Draft	Published residential aged care tables	Import and test currently published length of stay tables into SAS VA Draft tool for DoH comment	September 2016
Phase 2	Live SAS VA tables for public use	Published residential aged care tables	Live SAS VA tool	December 2016
Phase 3	Data development for new length of stay tables including; Home care Episodic data Selected ACFI ACPR	Published residential aged care tables Home care	Draft tool based for consultation and testing in SAS VA for DoH review This tool is intended to test new data disaggregation for data quality, and to ensure client confidentiality. These data are not intended to be made publicly available in SAS VA	Early 2017
Phase 4	Investigate alternative software options	Residential aged care Home care	Brief report on feasibility, costs and risks of alternative display tools	Early 2017
Phase 5	Import live SAS VA tool to new software package	Published residential aged care tables	Live SAS VA tool imported to new dynamic data display software environment SAS VA decommissioned	Mid 2017 (dependent upon when software becomes available)
Phase 6	Import newly developed data from Phase 3 in new software package	Published residential aged care tables Home care	Tested and cleared length of stay data made live for public use in new software package	Late 2017–early 2018

# Appendix

**Table A1: Historical and current AIHW reporting of length of stay**

Reporting output	Disaggregation
Residential age care (2014–15 release)	Average length of stay (months) at separation from residential aged care, by care type, sex and age group Total separations from permanent residential aged care, by length of stay and separation reason Total separations from permanent residential aged care, by sex, age group and length of stay
Residential aged care (historical releases)	Average (mean) length of stay, separations of permanent/respice, by sex, state/territory and remoteness Existing permanent residents, length of stay to date by sex and remoteness, at 30 June Separations of permanent/respice residents, completed length of stay, by sex and state/territory across the year Separations from residential aged care, by care type and length of stay 2009–10 to 2013–14 Separations from residential care, by care type, length of stay and state/territory
Home Care (2014–15 release)	Mean length of stay at separation from Home Care, by care level at separation, sex and age group
Community-based care (historical releases)	Community aged care packages (CACP), Extended aged care at home (EACH) and Extended aged care at home dementia (EACHD) separations by length of stay across the year CACP, EACH and EACHD length of stay by sex across the year
NACDC customised data requests	Total recipient days in care Separations and length of stay from residential aged care A variety of trends over time

**Table A2: Example of mean length of stay (months) at separation from residential aged care, by care type, sex and age group, 2013–14**

Sex/Age group	Permanent	Respice
<b>Person</b>		
65–69	28.2	1.8
70–74	29.3	1.6
75–79	27.6	1.5
80–84	28.9	1.4
85–89	31.5	1.3
90–94	37.8	1.5
95–99	47.4	1.8
100–104	63.6	2.2
≥105	90.6	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>

Source: National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse Residential Aged Care Supplementary tables 2013–14.

**Table A3: Example of aggregated display of separations from residential aged care, by length of stay, 2009–10 to 2013–14**

Care type/Length of stay	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
	<b>Number</b>				
<b>All residential</b>					
<1 month	27,322	27,788	28,264	28,634	29,278
1–3 months	32,692	34,247	34,545	35,580	35,990
3–6 months	12,852	13,329	13,142	13,776	13,599
6–12 months	9,561	9,735	10,189	10,347	10,202
1–2 years	11,208	11,385	11,442	12,029	12,150
2–5 years	18,879	19,392	19,673	19,850	20,292
≥5 years	12,414	12,505	12,659	12,660	12,733
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,928</b>	<b>128,381</b>	<b>129,914</b>	<b>132,876</b>	<b>134,244</b>

Source: National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse Residential Aged Care Supplementary tables 2013–14.

