

# **Obtaining consumer views of service standards in Home and Community Care**

**Main report of findings**

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**Obtaining consumer views of  
service standards in Home and  
Community Care**  
Main report of findings

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

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# Executive summary

## Aims and objectives

The aim of the HACC Service Standards Consumer Appraisal Data Development Project was to further the development of a tool and method for collecting client appraisals of agency performance against the HACC National Service Standards. This project follows on from and is a complement to an earlier project that developed the Instrument to measure agency compliance with the HACC National Service Standards (Jenkins et al 1998).

The first phase of this work involved investigating and reporting on work that has occurred in the area. This literature review is reported separately and has the following reference:

Cooper, D and Jenkins, A. 1999. Obtaining consumer feedback from clients of home based care services. Canberra: AIHW. (Welfare Division working paper no. 21).

The second phase of this work involved field-testing. This was done with four principal objectives in mind:

- to refine the survey tool developed by the HACC Standards Working Group;
- to test the usefulness of survey methods in providing information about the quality of the service provided by an agency;
- to test the capacity of this tool to stand alone as an accurate indicator of agency service quality as described by the HACC National Service Standards and to analyse the extent to which consumer appraisals provide a useful means of validating and informing HACC agency appraisals; and
- to examine the viability of survey methods according to such criteria as cost, timeliness, practicality, acceptability to clients, and usefulness to service providers.

## Overall findings

- The Consumer Survey Instrument (CSI) can be used as a means of gathering consumer feedback in relation to service quality. For the majority of consumers, this tool reliably measures consumers' opinions of service quality as they experience it.
- The CSI was found to be valid as a measure of service quality experienced by consumers in so far as it was clear, appropriate and relevant to their experiences and opinions.
- Specific revisions to the CSI have been put forward to improve this reliability.
- All three survey methods (mail survey, telephone interview, and focus groups) examined in this study have the capacity to provide valid and reliable information in relation to the HACC National Service Standards. Telephone interviews were found to be the most effective means of collecting consumer feedback about service quality; mail surveys were found to be the most efficient; and focus group were least efficient and of questionable effectiveness.

- It cannot be concluded that this information can be used on its own as a measure of service quality because it remains to be shown that the CSI is sufficiently valid that it will accurately reflect the true level of service quality delivered to consumers. To properly undertake this validity test it is necessary to compare consumer appraisals with appraisals collected by another means; in this case, with Instrument assessment scores. These scores are not available at the time of writing.
- No one method can be recommended for use in all agencies because particular characteristics of agencies and consumers may predispose toward or against the use of a particular method. For example, telephone interviews are not recommended for consumers of non-English speaking background.
- The views of Aboriginal consumers can be successfully accessed through telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and focus groups. The success of any of these methods is dependent on the broader context in which they are undertaken. They should reflect a genuine acknowledgment of the value of Indigenous elders' views and be a part of the on-going consultation with and community involvement of elders in their welfare and health services.
- None of the methods tested were observed to be sufficiently effective in eliciting critical comment from consumers of non-English speaking background. A more innovative approach is required for these groups.
- The methods tested did not yield an exact representation of consumers from the HACC target population as measured by national statistics but telephone interviews and mail surveys adequately represented these consumers. Focus groups systematically under represented older and more dependent clients.
- Consumer feedback should not be summarised by adding across items owing to difficulties in adequately accounting for missing data, valid "don't know" responses, "other" responses and skewed data.
- While each of the survey methods examined encountered difficulties overcoming the problems of high reported satisfaction that are typical of feedback obtained from this consumer group, half of the items were not affected by this response set. Thus the Instrument was shown to be capable of measuring feedback in such a way that it could distinguish different levels of service quality.
- In terms of time elapsed (timeliness), when the administrative and process requirements of telephone interviews and focus groups are taken into account, mail surveys, telephone interviews, and focus groups weigh up equally.
- Focus groups were the most time costly means of measuring consumer feedback.
- Mail surveys posed the least administrative burden on service providers.
- Focus groups were very well received as a means of seeking feedback from consumers, however telephone interviews and mail surveys offer a more acceptable alternative means of involvement for many, particularly for more highly dependent clients and carers.
- All things being equal, telephone interviews are the most useful means of gathering consumer feedback.

## **Recommendations for further work**

Having established that the CSI provides a reliable measure of consumer appraisal of service quality in both its content and method of application, it remains to be shown that the CSI is sufficiently valid that it will accurately reflect the true level of service quality delivered to consumers. To properly undertake this validity test it is necessary to compare consumer appraisals with appraisals collected by another means; in this case, with Instrument assessment scores when they become available.

## **Product of the project**

As a result of the extensive field testing and detailed qualitative and quantitative analyses described in this report a set of revised Consumer Survey Instruments has been developed for use in assisting the assessment of HACC funded agencies against the National Service Standards.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Home and Community Care Service Standards Consumer Appraisal Data Development Project (or Consumer Appraisal Project) is the second undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that addresses methods for implementing quality assurance initiatives in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program. Previously the Institute assisted in the development and refinement of an Instrument to measure agency compliance with the HACC National Service Standards.

Both of these undertakings came about as a result of the recommendations of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Review of the Home and Community Care Program (DHSI, 1995). The recommendations of this review included the need to ensure the accountability of service providers with regard to the quality of the services they provide with particular focus on outcomes for clients. To this end, the Standards Working Group was set up by HACC Officials with objectives which included: developing outcome measures for the National Service Standards; developing a consistent national method for obtaining outcome measures on the Standards; and considering methods for obtaining consumer input in the assessment of quality in HACC services.

At the request of the HACC Officials Standards Working Group, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare assisted in the development and refinement of an Instrument to measure the extent to which agencies comply with the HACC National Service Standards. This Instrument was scheduled for implementation on a State by State basis from 1998 with most States moving toward implementation during 2000.

The HACC National Service Standards Instrument examines service provision practices as they are reported by the agency. It requires service providers to answer questions about service practices and policies in relation to how they meet the National Service Standards. The standards are grouped around seven broad objectives: accessibility; information and consultation; efficiency and effectiveness; coordination, planning and reliable service delivery; privacy, confidentiality and access to personal information; complaints and disputes; and advocacy. A complete list of the 27 Service Standards is shown in Box 1.1.

Consumer views on HACC agency service quality has remained an important focus in the development of quality assurance mechanisms. Some developmental work on methods and tools for gathering consumer appraisals occurred during the course of developing the HACC National Service Standards Instrument. A questionnaire for a mailed survey and an interview schedule for a telephone survey were developed and tested. While results showed that telephone interviews were a more effective method for obtaining consumer feedback than mail surveys, it was also clear that there were many issues that could only be addressed by a more comprehensive study.

The project described in this report undertook this more comprehensive study. The project examined the reliability and validity of tools and methods for obtaining consumer appraisals

of service quality across the range of HACC services. It included testing of the applicability and appropriateness of the strategies for use with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Indigenous people. And its principal aim was to test the extent to which consumer appraisals validate agency appraisals and can assist in identifying agencies that are performing poorly against the HACC National Service Standards.

**Box 1: The HACC National Service Standards**

**Objective 1: ACCESS TO SERVICES**

- 1.1 *Assessment occurs for each consumer.*
- 1.2 *Consumers are allocated available resources according to prioritised need.*
- 1.3 *Access to services by consumers with special needs is decided on a non-discriminatory basis.*
- 1.4 *Consumers in receipt of other services are not discriminated against in receiving additional services.*
- 1.5 *Consumers who reapply for services are assessed with needs being prioritised.*

**Objective 2: INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 *Consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities.*
- 2.2 *Consumers are aware of services available.*
- 2.3 *Consumers are informed of the basis of service provision, including changes that may occur.*

**Objective 3: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

- 3.1 *Consumers receive appropriate services provided through the processes of ongoing planning, monitoring and evaluation of services.*
- 3.2 *Consumers receive services from agencies that adhere to accountable management practices.*
- 3.3 *Consumers receive services from appropriately skilled staff.*

**Objective 4: COORDINATED, PLANNED AND RELIABLE SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 4.1 *Each consumer receives ongoing assessment (formal and informal) that takes all support needs into account.*
- 4.2 *Each consumer has a service delivery/care plan which is tailored to individual need and outlines the service he or she can expect to receive.*
- 4.3 *Consumers cultural needs are addressed.*
- 4.4 *The needs of consumers with dementia, memory loss and similar disorders are addressed.*
- 4.5 *Consumers receive services which include appropriate coordination and referral processes.*

**Objective 5: PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1 *Consumers are informed of the privacy and confidentiality procedures and understand their rights in relation to these procedures.*
- 5.2 *Consumers have signed confidentiality release forms.*
- 5.3 *Consumers are able to gain access to their personal information.*

**Objective 6: COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES**

- 6.1 *Consumers are aware of the complaints process.*
- 6.2 *Each consumer's complaint about a service, or access to a service is dealt with fairly, promptly, confidentially and without retribution.*
- 6.3 *Services are modified as a result of "upheld" complaints.*
- 6.4 *Each consumer receives assistance, if requested, to help with the resolution of conflict about a service that arises between the frail elderly person or younger person with a disability and his/her carer.*

**Objective 7: ADVOCACY**

- 7.1 *Each consumer has access to an advocate of his/her choice.*
- 7.2 *Consumers know of their rights to use an advocate.*
- 7.3 *Consumers know about advocacy services - where they are and how to use them.*
- 7.4 *The agency involves advocates in respect to representing the interests of the consumer.*

## 1.2 Objectives of the Project

In 1998, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare was asked by HACC Officials to further develop a tool and method for collecting client appraisals of agency performance against the HACC National Service Standards.

The first phase of this work involved investigating and reporting on work that has occurred in the area. This literature review is reported separately and has the following reference:

Cooper, D and Jenkins, A. 1999. Obtaining consumer feedback from clients of home based care services. Canberra: AIHW. (Welfare Division working paper no. 21).

The second phase of this work involved field-testing. This was done with four principal objectives in mind:

- to refine the survey tool;
- to test the usefulness of survey methods in providing information about the quality of the service provided by an agency;
- to test the capacity of this tool to stand alone as an accurate indicator of agency service quality as described by the HACC National Service Standards and to analyse the extent to which consumer appraisals provide a useful means of validating and informing HACC agency appraisals; and
- to examine the viability of survey methods according to such criteria as cost, timeliness, practicality, acceptability to clients, and usefulness to service providers.

This report documents the process and findings of the field testing undertaken for the Consumer Appraisal Project.

## **1.3 Preliminary work**

### **1.3.1 Literature review**

The first stage of this project involved reporting on existing research or practice in the area. A review of relevant literature was conducted; including library based literature searches and consultation with prominent practitioners and researchers in the field. The review canvassed consumer involvement in the appraisal of a range of health and welfare services. The findings of this review have been incorporated into the fieldwork, in this way improving results by sharpening its direct relevance and appropriateness to the HACC program. Some of the main findings of this review are summarised below.

#### **Overcoming the problem of high reported satisfaction**

Research that has attempted to assess the attitudes of clients towards home care services has been dominated by satisfaction surveys which have largely produced disappointing results. Rates of satisfaction have been inflated to extremely high levels by the presence of biases such as social desirability, acquiescent response, fear of reprisal, gratitude, low expectations, and loyalty to carers. As a consequence, the findings of satisfaction surveys have been of little use in gathering information about the relative merits of different service providers or about which services can be improved.

While clients are reluctant to criticise their carers, they are prepared to criticise the more impersonal, organisational aspects of a service. The most useful research techniques appear to be those which focus on specific aspects of the service rather than global measures of satisfaction. These direct measures of service quality often reveal problems and sources of dissatisfaction which indirect, global measures do not.

#### **Addressing the issue of obtaining a representative survey sample**

The low response rates which plague data collection in surveys of Home and Community Care clients make it difficult to ensure that the sample is representative of the population from which it is drawn. A lack of representativeness can undermine the credibility of findings, and limits the conclusions which the researcher can make about home care clients as a whole.

If the researcher's goal is the assessment of compliance with service standards however, unrepresentative data is not as serious a problem as it may at first appear. This is because only a small number of reported failures to meet an obligation may be sufficient to lead to concluding evidence that the service provider does not meet the service standard in question. If the researcher, on further investigation, finds some evidence of breaches of a service standard, it is not necessary to obtain the opinions of all other segments of the client population; the observed failures are evidence enough that the standards have been breached in at least some instances.

How seriously this failure affects service quality (and how badly it reflects on the service provider) depends on the nature of the service standard. If the standard is, for example, that "Consumers are provided with information about the service", a single breach may be not be particularly serious. However, if the standard is that "Consumers have access to fair and

equitable procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes”, then even a single breach is likely to be cause for concern.

### **Taking into account the diversity of the HACC consumer group**

A consumer survey to assess service standards in HACC funded agencies must allow a comparison across services in order to provide a program level summary of service quality. While questions must be relevant and appropriate to each consumer they must also be able to be universally applied across services and consumers. However, such a survey must also attempt to draw information from consumers of diverse characteristics and receiving varied services. For a survey method to be successful consumers must be approached in ways appropriate to their particular characteristics and circumstances. This includes sensitivity to such issues as cultural and language differences, to difficulties faced by those with communication or mobility difficulties and to the participation difficulties associated with living in rural and remote locations, to name just a few.

While some translation and language change may be necessary for the universal application of any survey tool, where possible, the content of the questionnaire should remain the same but the method of collecting the information may vary to accommodate the communication and participation needs of consumers. Face-to-face interviews, focus groups and in some cases, telephone interviews, may offer a way to overcome respective barriers to participation. In this way the reach of the survey is extended without loss of comparability of content.

## **1.3.2 Preliminary fieldwork**

### **Consumer Survey Instrument development**

As mentioned previously, some developmental work on methods and tools for gathering consumer appraisals occurred during the course of developing the HACC National Service Standards Instrument. A product of this work was a survey tool for obtaining consumer feedback about HACC service quality. An editorial sub-committee for the HACC Standards Working Group drafted the questions in this questionnaire. Each question was specifically designed to measure agency performance as it related to a particular standard. In this way, consumer appraisals could be matched directly to agency performance against the standards. The questions were refined and pilot tested and then refined again after field-testing.

With the agreement of the steering committee appointed by HACC Officials, the survey instrument that emerged from this work was used as a starting point for the fieldwork described in this report. It will be referred to as the Consumer Survey Instrument (CSI).

A number of modifications were made to the CSI prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The language was simplified and the number of questions was reduced so that the survey was comparable in length to that recommended by the literature. In determining which questions would be discarded, consideration was given to the validity of each item, response rate to individual questions, and to the adequate coverage of the Objectives of the HACC National Service Standards. The validity of items was determined by the results of the HACC National Service Standards Instrument Project (Jenkins, Gibson & Butkus, 1998). The

examination of response rates was made at the direction of the steering committee and related to response rates found in the above-mentioned study.

In addition to revisions to the content of the CSI, an examination of the order of the questions was also made prior to field-testing. This was also done at the recommendation of the steering committee and was of particular relevance to the better adaptation of the questionnaire to telephone interviewing. The wording of some questions was also altered to better suit the telephone interview format, hence some differences developed between the mail survey and the telephone interview schedule.

Three additional modules of the CSI were designed prior to field-testing. These questionnaires related specifically to clients of HACC services providing transport, home maintenance, and meals services. It had been agreed by the Steering Committee that service specific modules should be used for these service types because the clients' experience of service provision was substantially different to clients of other HACC services. A number of the questions on the original CSI for general service types had been shown in earlier fieldwork to be irrelevant, or not to pick up the important aspects of service quality as it related to that particular service type. Where possible consistency was maintained across these modules so that responses to questions could be related back to the standards in a comparable way.

### **Pilot testing**

Focus groups were the first survey method undertaken in the fieldwork. This survey method provided a rich opportunity to hear feedback from consumers about the clarity and practicality of the CSI. As a result of the first four sessions some additional changes were made to wording and the survey layout. These alterations were incorporated prior to the commencement of mail survey distribution.

## **1.4 Report overview**

To support its recommendations, this report relies heavily on the quantitative data collected in the fieldwork which consists of testing a Consumer Survey Instrument by different survey methods (mail survey, telephone interview, focus groups, and face to face interviews). Substantial qualitative information was also gathered however, through the literature review, focus group discussions, and conversations with service providers. As a consequence, both qualitative and quantitative data are presented to answer the requirements of this Consultancy.

The design and method for the fieldwork is presented in the next chapter and those that follow address each of the requirements of the Consultancy in turn.

Chapter 3 reports on fieldwork results relevant to the refinement of the CSI. Each of the items of the consumer feedback questionnaire was designed to be relevant to agency assessments against particular standards. The appropriateness, clarity, reliability and validity of each question is examined by quantitative and qualitative data. Service types with different service provision structures are given special attention, as are the survey requirements of clients of groups such as those of non-English speaking background, Indigenous people, and those living in urban, rural and remote locations.

Chapter 4 tests the usefulness of survey methods in extracting service quality data relevant to the standards. This requires two types of examinations: 1) a comparison of the survey methods in relation to their ability to gain feedback from the HACC population; and 2) a comparison of the survey methods in relation to their ability to gain valid and reliable service quality information.

The first of these examinations require that different survey methods be tested against each other in regard to such criteria as response rate, sample bias, response variability, etc. The second of these examinations requires specific focus on the quality assessment content of the survey. Reliability and validity testing is conducted on the data to compare the survey methods in relation to the quality of the service quality information they collect.

Two samples were constructed to facilitate the tests described above:

- 1) a portion of the agencies participating in the study formed a matched sample with a within subjects design. More than one survey method was used for different groups of consumers in these similar agencies. This allows the effectiveness of each method to be tested by comparing the results against a common service quality. The survey methods utilised for this sample include telephone interviews, mailed surveys and some focus groups.
- 2) the remaining agencies collected survey data using only one survey method. Consumers of these services were asked to participate in one of three survey methods: telephone interview, mailed survey or focus groups. Data from this between subjects design sample is used to test the reliability and validity of the survey tool and provides additional information about the reliability and validity of the survey methods.

Chapter 5 explores the suitability of using the CSI as a stand alone indicator of service quality. In order for it to be considered suitable to do this, it must be found to be 1) reliable and valid in both its content and method of application and 2) agree with assessments made of service quality by other means known to be valid, in this case with Instrument assessments.

The first condition is necessary and failure to adequately satisfy it is sufficient justification to determine that the tool cannot be used as a stand-alone measure. The results presented in this report will provide evidence in relation to this first condition.

The second condition, relating to the validity of methods as adequate indicators of service quality can only be fully assessed when consumer appraisals can be compared with Instrument assessment scores. At the time of writing, Instrument assessment scores obtained in agency appraisals were not yet available from relevant State and Territory offices. In addition, recommendations on the best use of consumer appraisals during the assessment process can only be made once their use in this process has been tested and debriefing with service providers and assessors has been conducted. Again, this is not yet possible at the time of writing.

Chapter 6 will examine the viability of survey methods according to such criteria as cost, timeliness, practicality, acceptability to clients, and usefulness to service providers.

As a result of the extensive field testing and detailed qualitative and quantitative analyses described in this report a revised Consumer Survey Instrument has been developed for use in assisting the assessment of HACC funded agencies against the National Service Standards.

# 2 Method

## 2.1 The Consumer Survey Instrument

### 2.1.1 Development and structure

The Consumer Survey Instrument (CSI) was derived from a consumer questionnaire developed and tested during the development of the HACC Service Standards Instrument. The original questionnaire was drafted by an editorial sub-committee for the HACC Standards Working Group. This group consisted of a consumer representative, a service provider representative, members of the HACC Standards Working Group, and a member of the Consultancy team. The questionnaire was tested by telephone interviews and mailed surveys with clients of five HACC funded agencies and was further refined as a result of this field testing. With the agreement of the steering committee appointed by HACC Officials, the Consumer Survey Instrument tested and refined in this report is based upon the questionnaire that emerged from the HACC Service Standards Instrument Project.

Research undertaken for the HACC Service Standards Instrument Project had revealed that service specific questionnaires should be used for some service types because the clients' experience of service provision was substantially different to other HACC services. Three additional modules of the CSI were designed which related specifically to clients of HACC services providing transport, home maintenance, and meals services. Some questions were deleted or altered and others were added so that information against the standards was obtained in a manner that was relevant for the particular service type. A small group of service providers were consulted in the development of these modules.

The CSI was pre-tested with HACC consumers during the first focus groups. At various intervals during the focus group discussions participants were asked to complete portions of the survey. This exercise provided an opportunity for consumers to express their opinions on the clarity and practicality of the CSI and was a good qualitative test of the Instrument's validity. Changes were made to wording and the survey layout as a result of the first four focus groups. These alterations were incorporated prior to the commencement of mail survey distribution.

Specific adaptations were made to the survey tools to make them appropriate to obtaining feedback by telephone interview. The order of questions was altered to better suit this method, the language used was adapted to a more conversational style, and response categories were made more consistent to allow participants to understand and answer questions with greater ease. Where appropriate these alterations were translated to the mail survey to maintain consistency in the content of the data collected. Nevertheless, some differences remain. Both the mail survey and the interview schedule can be found in the Appendices (A and E respectively).

## 2.1.2 Instrument

The CSI contains questions listed under four sections: Provision of Services; Rights and Information; Satisfaction with Services; and General Information. Each question in the first three sections was specifically designed to measure agency performance as it related to a particular objective of the HACC National Service Standards. This was done so that consumer appraisals could be matched to agency performance against the standards. Questions listed under General Information sought information on characteristics of the respondents and one question in this last section asked about the behaviour of the agency towards them in relation to some of these characteristics.

### Service specific modules

While it was possible to measure consumer opinion of service quality with one questionnaire for the majority of HACC agencies, the results of the HACC Service Standard Instrument Project indicated that service specific questionnaires would be appropriate for clients receiving home maintenance, meals and transport services. Three separate modules were constructed for each of these service types. As far as possible items in each module were designed to maintain as high a level of consistency between modules as possible. Where appropriate, items were identical. Others were added, altered or deleted to improve the applicability of the items to the service type.

Table 1 lists the questions presented in each of the four versions of the CSI used for the mail survey and indicates the Objective that each question relates to under the HACC National Service Standards. As can be seen, each module contains at least one question relevant to each of the seven Objectives. The three additional modules used for the mail survey are found in Appendix B, C and D.

**Table 1: Mail survey items by HACC National Service Standards Objective**

---

Survey Items
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your need and preferences adequately?
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?
If you did not think the services were right did you discuss this with the agency?
If you did not think they completed the work (home maintenance) properly, did you discuss this with the agency?
If you did not think they services (transport) were adequate did you discuss this with the agency?

### **Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management**

Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?

Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?

Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?

Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?

Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?

### **Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery**

Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?

Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?

Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?

Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?

Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?

Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?

Would you say that their meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?

Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?

### **Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information**

Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?

If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?

### **Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes**

Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?

Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?

Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?

Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?

### **Objective 7: Advocacy**

Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?

Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?

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## **Data collection methods**

As will be described in the sections that follow, four data collection methods were trialed in the study. These included mailed surveys, telephone interviews, and focus groups. Face to face interviews were conducted with a portion of the clients of Aboriginal services.

As described in the previous section, the telephone interview schedule was based on the questions outlined in the mail survey with some adaptations to better suit the medium. After providing an introduction and the assurances required by the ethical guidelines of the project, the interview began with questions about the respondent's service use. Questions concerned with service quality followed. In this part of the interview one of four interview

modules was completed. The module was matched to the service received by the respondent. Again, the questions in each module reflected those contained in the mail surveys. Questions common to all service types followed and reflected those questions listed in the mail survey under sections entitled “rights and information” and “satisfaction with services”. Before the close of the interview respondents’ demographic and general comments on the service were recorded. A complete version of the telephone interview schedule including the service specific modules can be found at Appendix E.

Focus group discussions centred around the same questions as presented in the mail surveys, with adaptations to the language as appropriate to the client group and service type. The interview schedule for face to face discussions followed the same format as focus group discussions for Aboriginal services. The modifications required for the focus groups and face to face interviews are presented later in the report.

## **2.2 Sample**

### **2.2.1 Agency sample**

#### **Selection**

Fifty agencies from across Australia were sought to participate in this study. These agencies represent the range of services provided to consumers through HACC. A number of agencies that provide services to particular special needs groups were selected. These include: agencies whose clients are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island background; agencies whose clients are of non-English speaking background; agencies whose clients are affected by dementia; agencies whose clients are younger people with a disability and their carers; and agencies whose clients live in a rural or remote location.

Forty seven agencies from the mainland States and Territories were selected. Data from 41 agencies from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia were successfully collected. In addition, data from three agencies in Tasmania, collected for an independent review by consultants for the Tasmanian government were also received.

State and Territory government departments responsible for the oversight of the HACC program were given a sampling framework to use as a basis for selecting agencies to take part in the study. This sampling framework for the study was structured according to a purposive sampling method. The mix of service types and service target groups were selected across states territories so that no one service category was taken from one state or territory only. In this way any potential effects on the data that were due to State or Territory characteristics were minimised. The framework for the selection of service types in each State and Territory is shown in Table 2.1. The relative size of the sample drawn from each State and Territory approximately reflects the size of the HACC program in each jurisdiction. In addition to the 37 agencies sought for inclusion described in Table 2, two large agencies were to be selected from each of the five largest States to be included in a match sample design (described in Section 2.3. These agencies were to provide services such as home help, personal care, community nursing, respite or case coordination/management.

The three agencies from the Tasmanian sample were selected by the Tasmanian State Department for the purpose of a quality review conducted under that State's direction. These services provided personal care and respite.

**Table 2: Proposed agency sample: service type by State and Territory**

	NSW	Qld	SA	WA	Vic	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Service type</b>								
home maintenance/modification	1	2	1		2			6
transport	2		1	1	1	1		6
meals	2	1			2		1	6
social support		1		1				2
Home help/personal care	1			1	1			3
Community nursing	1	1	1		1			4
Allied health	1						1	2
Respite	2	1	1					4
Case coordination/management	1			1	1	1		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>

NB. An additional two large agencies, matched by service type, were to be selected from each of the five largest States. Three agencies from Tasmania were also included in the sample.

## Recruitment

Where possible, State and Territory officers invited the participation of agencies that met the sampling criteria and who were likely to undertake an assessment using the HACC National Service Standards Instrument within the time frame of the study. The list of agencies that had agreed to participate were forwarded to the Institute and a letter was then sent to the participating agencies from the Institute further explaining the purpose and procedure of the study as it would affect them. This letter is shown at Appendix F.

One agency later refused to participate. Three agencies were not incorporated in the study. In one case Ethics Committee requirements would have delayed the agency's involvement beyond a reasonable project date; in another management changes resulted in no action being taken on the distribution of questionnaires in the required time frame, and in the third continued difficulty in making contact with the agency delayed action on their involvement beyond the timeframe for data collection. The New South Wales sample was smaller than proposed due to the difficulties of obtaining agency participants fitting the project criteria and likely to be involved in agency Instrument assessments within the required timeframe. The characteristics of the participating agencies are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Sample collected: client and service characteristics**

	Sample collected (N=44)
<b>Service type</b>	
home maintenance/modification	3
transport	5
meals	3
social support	1
Home help/personal care	4
Community nursing	4
Allied health	2
Respite	11
Case coordination/management	4
Multiple services	7
<b>Client type</b>	
NESB	2
ATSI	3
Young disabled	3
Dementia and carers	3
<b>Service location</b>	
Rural	8
Remote	2

Note: Some agencies provide more than one service type. Each service type examined in this study is listed.

## 2.2.2 Consumer sample

### Selection

The method for selecting HACC service consumers to become participants in the study was dependent upon a number of factors. These factors included the survey method to which the HACC agency was allocated and the characteristics of consumers which would be likely to affect their willingness or ability to participate (such as their level of dependency).

### Focus groups

Focus groups required between seven and ten participants for each group. Two focus groups were held for each of seven of the ten agencies participating by this method. For three agencies, limited participant availability resulting in only one focus group discussion being conducted. For some of these agencies, participants were recruited from the group who attended the service on the day that the focus groups were conducted. This was the case for three of the ten agencies where focus groups were conducted. For one agency a randomly selected sample of clients were invited to participate. The recruitment of participants by this method provided an insufficient response rate to satisfy the required sample size. The agency recruited additional participants from those clients who had previously communicated with them about service quality issues or participated in quality improvement activities. The remaining agencies selected participants by contacting current clients whom they believed would be able and willing to take part in the activity.

### Telephone interviews

Where possible, all consumers who had recently received HACC services from the selected agencies or were considered current clients were to be invited to participate in the study by

telephone interview. Eight of the 17 agencies whose clients took part in telephone interviews invited all of their clients to take part in the study.

For nine large agencies however, it was necessary to select a sample of clients. For each agency participating in consumer appraisal by telephone interview, 40 interviews with consumers were sought. The selection of these participants was achieved by systematic sampling. Assuming a non-response rate of 20%, approximately 50 consumers from each of these agencies were invited to take part. The 50 were obtained by selecting every  $n$ th consumer from their list of current consumers, calculating  $n$  by dividing the total number of consumers by 50 and rounding to a whole number.

### **Mailed survey**

Again, where possible, all consumers who had recently received HACC services from the selected agencies were to be invited to participate in the study by completing a written questionnaire. 19 of the 27 agencies whose clients completed mailed surveys distributed the survey to all of their clients.

For eight large agencies however, it was necessary to select a sample of clients. For each agency participating in consumer appraisal using mailed surveys, 50 survey responses were sought. The selection of these participants was also achieved by systematic sampling. Assuming a non-response rate of around 70%, approximately 150 consumers from each of these agencies were asked to complete and return the survey. The 150 were obtained by selecting every  $n$ th consumer from their list of current consumers, calculating  $n$  by dividing the total number of consumers by 150 and rounding to a whole number.

## **2.3 Design**

### **2.3.1 Overview**

The research design is constructed to the purpose of meeting the objectives of the consultancy as outlined in the previous chapter. To refine the survey tool, each of the items of the consumer feedback questionnaire was designed to be relevant to agency assessments against particular standards.

This sampling framework for the study was structured according to a purposive sampling method. This sampling method selected agencies covering the range of service provision structures relevant to agencies using the HACC National Service Standards Instrument and covering a range of clients including those with special needs with regard to participation in feedback exercises. This study was not intended as a survey that establishes the state of consumer opinion on HACC services in a region, a state, or nationally. It was intended to test the suitability of the CSI in different populations. Hence the agency sample was not drawn to be representative of the HACC population. Rather, sampling was undertaken selectively so that groups of special interest were sampled in similar proportions to other groups. In this way, quantitative and qualitative analysis could determine the effectiveness of the survey tool in informing performance assessments against the HACC National Service Standards for the range of service types and the range of consumers accessing HACC services.

To test the capacity of the survey tool to stand alone as an accurate indicator of performance against the standards it must be found to be reliable and valid in its content and method of application and found to agree with assessments of service quality measured by other means, in this case, with agency assessments against the Instrument. Given that Instrument assessments are not available at the time of preparing this report and that no other common quality assessment measure was available for all the agencies in the sample, an alternative experimental design offers a test of validity in the absence of external confirmatory data. This design is described below.

### **2.3.2 Matched sample – within subjects design**

A portion of the agencies participating in the study formed a matched sample with a within subjects design. More than one survey method was used for different groups of consumers in each of the agencies in this sample. This allows the effectiveness of each method to be tested by comparing the results against a common service quality.

Agencies were matched by the types of services they provided. The reliability and validity results of the HACC Service Standard Instrument Project (Jenkins, Butkus & Gibson, 1998) found that the Instrument and the consumer survey was most valid and reliable for agencies providing home help and/or personal care, respite, community nursing, and case coordination/management. Agencies selected for the within subjects design were chosen by the States and Territories from those providing these services. The selected agencies were also required to be large, having at least 200 clients to allow more than one survey method to be used.

The survey methods utilised for this sample include telephone interviews, mailed surveys and some focus groups.

Ten agencies were sought to undertake surveys by both telephone interviews and mailed questionnaires. Two of the ten were also to undertake focus groups. Two agencies were drawn each of the five largest States participating: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Victoria.

### **2.3.3 General sample – between subjects design**

To test the usefulness of survey methods, the same survey tool (or as close an equivalent as could be achieved given the special requirements of the medium) was tested by different survey methods. A group of agencies collected survey data using only one survey method. Consumers of these services were asked to participate in one of three survey methods: telephone interview, mailed survey or focus groups. Data from this between subjects design sample is used to test the reliability and validity of the survey tool and provides additional information about the reliability and validity of the survey methods by making a comparison of results across agencies.

Different service types were matched across survey methods so that clients of each of the main service types were surveyed by each one of the main survey methods under examination. Table 4 shows the sample framework with the planned distribution of services across survey methods. In this way the relative efficacy of survey methods could be examined by quantitative comparison.

**Table 4: Proposed agency sample: service type by survey method**

Service type	Focus group	Telephone interview	Mail survey
home maintenance/modification	1	3	2
transport	1	2	3
meals	1	3	2
social support	0	1	1
Home help/personal care	2	0	1
Community nursing	1	1	2
Allied health	0	1	1
Respite	2	1	1
Case coordination/management	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>

Consumers of fifteen agencies were to undertake surveys by mailed questionnaire only. Consumers of fourteen agencies were to undertake surveys by telephone interview only, and consumers of eight agencies were to participate in focus groups.

Agencies in the general sample were selected from a range of service types but those primarily providing home maintenance/modification, meals services and transport were more heavily represented in this sample. Their presence in the sample allows a more thorough investigation of issues associated with the unique characteristics of these services. In addition to the service characteristics of the general sample, several client groups are also specifically targeted. These are groups for whom particular modifications to the method or survey instrument may be required to adequately gain their feedback. The groups include HACC clients of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and those affected by dementia and their carers. Agencies with these client types were sought from agencies providing the following services: home help/personal care community nursing, respite, case coordination/management, that is, agency service types for whom the consumer survey tool was most likely to be applied without methodological complications.

### 2.3.4 Qualitative analysis

Some issues raised by the study are better examined by qualitative analysis than by the use of statistical data. The applicability of survey tools and methods to special needs groups are an instance of this. Focus groups and face to face interviews provide a wealth of information of a qualitative nature. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group suggested that face to face interviews were likely to be the most viable strategy for use with Indigenous people from remote communities. The findings of the literature review corroborated this view. Similarly, the project's steering group recommended that non-English speaking background consumers be involved in the study by taking part in face to face survey methods. Accordingly, focus groups were conducted in three agencies specifically providing services to Aboriginal people and two agencies specifically providing services to people of non-English speaking background. The Aboriginal specific services selected were to comprise one rural service, one remote service and one urban-based service. Where appropriate, some individual face to face interviews were undertaken for clients of Aboriginal specific services. A small sample of non-English speaking background consumers participated in telephone interviews. The results of these surveys are examined quantitatively.

Focus groups were also conducted for agencies representing each of the service types of interest in determining the generalisability of the Consumer Survey Instrument. The detailed qualitative data provided by focus group testing ensured a thorough analysis of the suitability of the tools across service types. Table 5 details the characteristics of agencies selected for the more in-dept quantitative analysis provided by focus group testing.

**Table 5: Sample collected – focus groups**

<b>Agency characteristics</b>	<b>Number of agencies involved</b>
General HACC services where Instrument and consumer survey is universally applicable	2
Aboriginal specific services including remote, rural, and metropolitan services	3
Non-English speaking background specific services	2
Meals services	1
Transport services	1
Home maintenance services	1

## 2.4 Procedure

### 2.4.1 Agency participation

As previously described, State and Territory government officers secured the consent of appropriate agencies to participate in the study. A letter was then sent from the Institute which provided further details about the study's purpose and method. A project officer from the Institute then contacted each agency to confirm their involvement, gather relevant data about the service and inform the agency of the survey method to which they had been allocated. Following this conversation a second letter was sent to each participating agency confirming the sampling method to be used and providing details about the method for selecting and recruiting participants to the study.

### 2.4.2 Consumer participation

Like participant selection, the method for recruiting HACC service consumers to become participants in the study was dependent upon the survey method to be used and the characteristics of consumers. In addition, the recruitment of consumers to the study depended upon the practicality of the recruitment method given the participating agencies' resources.

The ethical requirements of the study precluded the Institute from making direct contact with consumers without first obtaining their consent to do so. The Institute was therefore dependent upon the service provider to obtain this consent. There were three means by which service providers could do this. They were by seeking the consent of the client or designated carer:

- 1) in person;
- 2) by telephone; and
- 3) by mail.

## **Focus groups**

The majority of consumers were recruited to participate in focus groups by being asked by the agency in person or over the telephone. The agency explained the purpose of the study and, providing assurances of the voluntary nature of their involvement, sought the client's consent to take part and pass their contact details to the Institute.

As mentioned previously, in one agency an attempt was made to recruit focus group participants by mailing them an invitation to take part. The insufficient response rate required the agency to make telephone contact with potential participants to recruit them to the study.

Once participant consent was obtained, the Institute sent a letter to participants confirming the details of the focus groups, explaining the purpose of the study and the how the data would be used, and providing further assurances of the confidentiality of the individual's comments and the voluntary nature of their participation. As with all correspondence to participants, a free call number was provided for participants to ask for further information if required. An example of this letter is provided at Appendix G.

In consultation with the service provider, the Institute arranged the venue, catering and participant transport to and from the venue. The focus groups were designed by Alt Beatty Consulting. These consultants conducted ten focus groups in total for clients of five agencies. The focus group discussions centred around the questions contained in the self-completion questionnaire. Where appropriate to the participants' abilities, at intervals during the discussion participants were asked to complete portions of the questionnaire. Agency staff were asked not to attend these focus groups discussions.

Summary reports of the focus group discussions were prepared for each agency whose clients participated by this method. Statistical summaries of questionnaire data collected from these groups were available for five agencies. The agencies for whom this statistical data was not available included those providing services to Aboriginal clients and those providing services to clients of non-English speaking background.

## **Telephone interviews**

The preferred method of recruiting consumers to participate in telephone interviews was by having the service provider seek their consent by telephone or in person. Of the 18 agencies that recruited telephone interview participants, 11 asked their clients to participate by telephone or in person. During this interaction, the agency explained the purpose of the study and, providing assurances of the voluntary nature of their involvement, sought the client's consent to take part and their permission to pass their contact details on to the Institute. Once participant consent was obtained, the Institute sent a letter to the participant providing details about the interview, explaining the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and providing further assurances of the confidentiality of individual's comments and the voluntary nature of their participation. An example of this letter is provided at Appendix H.

The remaining seven agencies recruited telephone interview participants by sending a request to consumers through the mail. A participation form encouraged consumers to take part in the telephone survey but offered the option of completing a mail survey if a telephone interview was not suitable for them. Accompanying this form was a cover letter from the agency and a letter from the Institute providing the same information as the letter last described. An example of this letter is provided at Appendix I.

Once consent to take part had been obtained the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare sent a letter to participants thanking them for their willingness to take part and providing the relevant details and assurances concerning the study. Telephone contact details were then provided to the consultants who were to conduct the interviews. The Australian Institute of Family Studies was the contracted consultant for this task. Participants were informed of this in the letter that they received from the Institute. They were, however, advised to call the Institute's free call number if they wanted further information about the study.

Interviewers recorded participants' responses using the CATI system. When all the interviews had been conducted the interview data was forwarded to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

### **Mail surveys**

Twenty six agencies recruited consumers to participate in the study by way of a self-completion questionnaire, including three agencies in Tasmania. While the majority forwarded these surveys directly to consumers through the mail, at least three of these agencies distributed surveys to clients in person.

To each of the agencies participating using the mail survey method, the Institute forwarded survey packages for consumers. These packages contained a reply paid envelope (addressed to the AIHW), a survey form, and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the survey, assurances of confidentiality, and giving the project's toll free number. Agencies were encouraged to include their own cover letter in these packages to reassure their clients of their cooperation with the study, of its value to them and of the privacy and confidentiality of their replies which should be sent directly back to the Institute. In the case of the Tasmanian agencies, the State department forwarded survey packages to agencies for them to distribute to their clients.

These packages were then sent out by the agencies to consumers according to the sample determined during discussion with the Institute. Agency staff were discouraged from assisting their clients to complete the survey. Rather family members, friends or other individuals not associated with the agency were suggested as appropriate people to assist in this way.

Consumers returned their surveys anonymously direct to the Institute. On receipt of these forms, the Institute undertook quantitative and qualitative analysis of responses. In the case of Tasmanian participants, surveys were returned to the State department. The survey data was then compiled and de-identified to protect privacy and forwarded to the Institute.

### **2.4.3 Consumers of non-English speaking background**

As agreed with the project's Steering Committee, consumers from non-English speaking background were involved in the study by participating in focus groups. Two such groups were conducted at each of two HACC agencies. Participants were recruited to the groups by being asked in person by the services' coordinators. Interpreters were required at all of these sessions and the discussion questions were simplified to facilitate interpretation to the groups. Interpreters provided assistance in Greek, Italian, and Russian.

A small group of non-English speaking background consumers were involved in the study by taking part in telephone interviews. A group of Cantonese speakers who accessed

services from one of the agencies in the sample were individually interviewed by telephone. In all other cases where non-English speaking consumers had nominated to be involved in the telephone survey, a carer or other person was available to answer or interpret the interview for them.

#### **2.4.4 Consumers of Aboriginal descent**

As agreed with the project's Steering Committee, consumers of Aboriginal descent were involved in the study by participating in focus groups and personal interviews. Focus groups were conducted at three HACC agencies providing services specifically to Aboriginal consumers. One of these services was located remotely, one rurally and the other was an urban service.

Participants were recruited to the groups by being asked in person by the services' managers or coordinators. An interpreter was required at the focus groups conducted at the remote location. The discussion questions were adapted to better reflect the characteristics of the services. A small group of Aboriginal consumers were involved in the study by taking part in face to face interviews and some who were unable to attend the focus group on the day it was held but who wanted to be involved participated by telephone interview.

#### **2.4.5 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations, including issues of privacy and confidentiality have been carefully considered in developing the proposed methodology for undertaking this study.

- It is made clear to all consumers that their participation is voluntary.
- All participants are assured that their responses will not be reported to agencies or government officers in a way that individually identifies them.
- Consumers completing mailed surveys are asked to return them anonymously. For these participants, AIHW does not have access to the names and addresses. This is indicated to consumers in the first contact made by the agency. HACC agency staff do not have access to the names and addresses of people who return survey forms, or to the content of the forms.
- Information obtained from the survey is not made known to agencies other than in aggregate form. Participants are informed of this. Only aggregate information is provided to agencies and government appointed assessors.

# 3 Testing the Consumer Survey Instrument

This chapter examines the validity and reliability of the Consumer Survey Instrument. Section 3.1 examines the content validity of the CSI. It discusses the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the questions and the performance information that they provide. This section draws on feedback from consumers gained from the focus groups and comments provided during telephone interviews and written on surveys. The quantitative analysis begins by an examination of the response rate to individual items. The majority of items were effective in collecting consumer feedback. Some consumers encountered difficulty answering some items. These difficulties arose from the irrelevance, inappropriateness or lack of clarity present in items for consumers of particular characteristics. These problems are discussed in the sections that follow.

The section on internal consistency (Section 3.2) presents the findings of correlation analyses of the collected data. The results of these analyses indicated that certain changes to the CSI would be likely to improve its ability to collect valid and reliable service quality data.

## 3.1 Content validity

### 3.1.1 Evaluation of missing data

The quality of a survey tool can be assessed by its ability to gain valid and reliable feedback from those who complete it. Each item should contribute to the measurement of the underlying construct of interest; in this case, the quality of service provided by the HACC funded agency.

At the most basic level, each item should be successful in eliciting a response from relevant respondents. Failure to elicit a response can be the result of a range of factors. It may be indicative of lack of relevance or lack of clarity to respondents. Respondents may believe that the response categories provided would not accurately reflect their opinions. Respondents may also have a negative reaction to items such as believing them to be too intrusive or they may have concerns about the consequences of answering. Lack of response for these reasons reflects the successfulness with which respondents have been assured of privacy and confidentiality and have been informed of the uses to which the data will be put. The structure of the survey tool itself can lead to missing data. For example, survey tools can be too long to maintain respondent interest or ability to continue.

The causes of missing data are in part evidenced by the pattern of non-responses. The analysis that follows examines these patterns using data collected by mail survey. Examination using this survey method provides the most stringent test of the success of the survey tool, since respondents are generally “on their own” in interpreting the questions. Unlike telephone interview and focus group participants, they do not have the benefit of an

interviewer or facilitator to explain or add context to the items. Mail surveys typically produce the highest rates of missing data.

### **Item response rate for the mail survey**

Table 6 lists the proportion of missing data against questions asked in all four modules of the CSI used as a mailed survey. The questions are grouped by the Objectives of the HACC National Service Standards that they are relevant to. This layout facilitates a comparison of missing data by Objective. This comparison is most relevant since the aim of the survey is to collect consumer feedback against the standards.

Across all items the average proportion of missing data was 6.6%. This low level of missing data indicates that, overall, the four CSI modules are successful in eliciting consumer response.

The extent to which items were relevant to the respondents' current experiences was the most evident determinant of missing data. The lowest incidence of non-response occurred for questions relevant to Objective 1: Access to Services. Over 95% of respondents were willing or able to answer questions relating to whether their needs and preferences had been taken into account at assessment or whether these services met their needs. Items relating to Object 4: Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery also had, on average, a high response rate. Respondents were willing or able to answer questions relating to whether they had received a service agreement or whether services were provided as they said they would be.

In contrast, the highest proportion of missing data occurred for those items relating to advocacy. While 13.4% failed to answer the question about whether the agency would accept family and friends acting on their behalf (the third highest rate of non-response), over one fifth of respondents did not answer the question relating to whether they had received information about obtaining or using an advocate. Many respondents added comments on the survey to the effect that the need for advocacy services had not arisen for them.

Other items with non-response rates above 10% included questions relating to whether the agency had advised them that complaints could also be taken to outside authorities and whether respondents believed they could have a say in how the agency was run. In both cases comments provided along with the survey indicated that many respondents had not been interested in pursuing such action.

A high proportion of missing data was evident for the question relating to the extent to which the agency was sensitive to respondents' special needs. The special needs groups included those of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, pension recipients or those on low incomes, those living in rural or remote locations, and those caring for someone with dementia. The majority of respondents indicated they were pension recipients or on a low income, and were therefore a member of at least one special needs group. Nevertheless, 15.5% provided no answer to this question. The low response rate for this question may have resulted from its lack of specificity to the respondents' experience or circumstances. They may not have considered that membership in one of these categories lead them to have special needs. The response rate to this question may be improved by asking the question in a way that is more directed to consumers in the relevant category.

Non-response rates were also above 10% for two questions where answers were contingent on the reply to the previous question. These questions were concerned with whether

respondents had discussed their disagreements about service provision with the agency. The non-response rates were calculated for the respondents for whom the questions were relevant, however it was also evident that many respondents answered these questions even where they were not relevant to them. This type of question (contingent on a reply to the previous question) may therefore be inappropriate for use with the HACC target population since the information it supplies is of dubious validity.

The literature review conducted for this project (Cooper and Jenkins, 1999) reported that consumers were more likely to provide critical comment about services when the subject of these criticisms did not relate to those individuals who personally provided the care. This did not however, seem to affect response rate negatively. Rather, Table 3.1 shows that the response rate was high for questions that asked consumers to comment on aspects of their care provider's work. For example, the proportion of missing data for questions relating the reliability and courteousness of meals staff or the skill of transport drivers was less than 5%.

There is no evidence that the length of the questionnaire affected item response rates. Proportions of missing data occur in a range that is unaffected by the order of the item in the questionnaire.

**Table 6: Mail survey – proportion of missing data**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Missing (%)
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	3.3%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	3.3%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	4.4%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	0.7%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	5.9%
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	4.2%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	6.8%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	8.5%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	6.3%
If you did not think the services were right did you discuss this with the agency?	10.1%
If you did not think they completed the work (home maintenance) properly, did you discuss this with the agency?	14.8%
If you did not think they services (transport) were adequate did you discuss this with the agency?	2.4%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	9.9%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	10.0%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	3.9%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	2.3%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	4.9%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	2.7%

Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	8.3%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	2.8%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	2.1%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	4.0%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	6.3%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	1.1%
Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	1.4%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?	15.5%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	3.0%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	7.9%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	8.9%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	11.5%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	4.5%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	5.8%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	13.4%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	21.9%

### 3.1.2 Relevance of the items

Many consumers who participated in the study made comment on the content of the survey. Written comments on the mailed surveys and comments made during focus groups and telephone interviews contributed to the refinement of the CSI.

This section examines the extent to which the items of the CSI have a valid relationship to the experiences of the respondents as service users. While the issues the items address may be appropriate to the services received and the characteristics of the respondents they may not always accurately reflect respondents' experiences as service users. Section 3.2.1 discussed items for which lack of relevance may have resulted in non-response. When items canvas issues not within the respondent's experience another common response is to check the "don't know" category. Quantitative data from the mailed surveys is used to examine those items to which respondents most frequently answered "don't know" and qualitative information is examined to shed light on the occurrence of these answers.

**Table 7: Mail survey – proportion of respondents answering “don't know”**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	1.9%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	1.4%

Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	2.4%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	0.2%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	13.3%
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	0.1%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	0.9%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	1.1%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	0.6%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	49.0%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	42.8%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	0.1%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	1.0%
Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	0.1%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	0.0%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	0.1%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	0.1%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	0.0%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	0.0%
Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	0.1%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	14.1%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	40.5%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	11.9%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	18.2%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	6.9%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	22.5%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	2.8%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	13.1%

Averaged over items, 8.8% of respondents provided a “don’t know” answer. For many items, however, no respondents or close to no respondents provided this answer. For a few specific items, “don’t know” responses occurred frequently.

The service quality aspect perhaps most foreign to participants in the study was that of involvement in and access to information about service management. Table 7 shows that the two items relating to this, falling under Objective 3: Efficient and effective management, had the highest proportion of respondents answer “don’t know”. Across all survey methods,

many respondents reported that they would not want to be involved in agency management or believed that it was not their role. For those respondents who did not want involvement, the relevance of questions that relate to consumer involvement in management (under Objective 3: Efficient and effective management) could be aided by stressing the hypothetical case: *if they wanted to*, did they believe they could gain access to information or participate in agency management.

This was not true of all respondents however. Consumers with a history of involvement in work such as HACC service delivery or volunteer activities and younger people with a disability more frequently expressed a desire to know about or have a role in HACC service management. As dependency levels or demands on carers increased, however, respondents were less inclined to want to take up such activities. By far the greatest exception to this general trend away from consumer involvement in service management was among Aboriginal consumers. This will be further discussed in the Section 3.3.

Respondents expressed considerable uncertainty in relation to the item that asked if consumer consent would be obtained before information was passed on. While respondents had less difficulty commenting on how confident they felt about how well the agency protected their privacy, there was clearly a greater lack of knowledge of what agency practices were in relation to this issue. Table 3.2 shows that 40.2% of respondents answered “don’t know” to this question. Many respondents mentioned that the circumstances had never arisen in which their information had needed to be passed on. From this perspective, that respondents did not know what the agency would do if such a need arose was of less relevance to them personally than how confident they felt about the agency’s good faith in these matters.

While few respondents found a “don’t know” response necessary for the items related to Objectives 1, 2 and 4, Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes is covered by four items, three of which have been answered “don’t know” by more than 10% of respondents. Again, while respondents had less difficulty commenting on how confident they felt about how well the agency would deal with complaints, there was greater uncertainty about complaints procedures. Table 7 shows that 11.9% of respondents answered “don’t know” in relation to whether they had received information about how to make a complaint and 18.2% did not know if they had received information about outside authorities that could deal with complaints. Respondents remarked that they could not remember whether they had received such information. Many respondents mentioned that they had never needed to make such a formal complaint. Information about the complaints process was not, therefore, something which they kept in mind. Again, many respondents were of the attitude that although they had not been informed of complaints procedures, this was of less importance to them personally than their confidence in how well the agency would deal with these matters.

The item receiving the highest proportion of “don’t know” responses under Objective 6 asked if things would “go badly” for the respondent if they were to make a complaint. This question sought the respondent’s opinion about an issue rather than information about their experiences or knowledge of agency practices and policies. Unlike other opinion related items in the survey tool, the subject of the question could be extended beyond the behaviour of the agency to a whole range of possible outcomes. A number of survey respondents expressed concern that services may be closed down or de-funded by government if complaints were made. Others mentioned the personal stigma associated with being known to have caused trouble by complaining or being labelled as a “whinger”. While many responses to this question were concerned with possible agency action in response to

complaints, it was evident that the breadth of the question evoked many responses that were perhaps of limited relevance to the assessment of the agency's performance against the standards.

The items relating to Objective 1: Access to services, asked respondents to comment on the assessment the agency made of their needs and preferences when they first contacted the agency for help. They were also asked to indicate whether they believed the services decided upon were right for them. Few respondents had difficulty providing an answer for these questions. For a minority of respondents, however, service assessments and arrangements were undertaken entirely by a third party. For example, where a consumer was discharged from hospital, arrangements for community nursing may have been made by hospital staff.

A second factor which affected the ability of respondents to answer questions about assessment was the length of time since the first assessment. For many respondents this may have been some years past. In focus group discussions and telephone interviews respondents expressed difficulty in remembering what may have happened two, three, or even ten years ago. This problem was also expressed in relation to the item referring to whether respondents had received a service agreement (Objective 4: Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery) and in relation to whether they had received information about rights and responsibilities (Objective 2) or how to obtain an advocate (Objective 7). Unlike these latter two items however, the majority of respondents felt able to make a response to questions about how well the agency assessed their needs or informed them about the services to be provided. Presumably, many respondents based their answers on their current experiences of how the agency continued to perform these tasks rather than how it had been carried out initially.

Items relating to advocacy, particularly information on how to obtain an advocate were difficult for respondents to find relevant. Generally, respondents did not believe that they needed an advocate and so believed that the items were not relevant to them. Those who needed an advocate already made use of one and therefore did not need the agency to supply more information about the subject. In addition, in some cases, the agency themselves acted as the advocate for the respondent. In these cases, respondents expressed the view that further assistance in this regard was not necessary.

### **3.1.3 Clarity of the items**

Thorough pre-testing of the CSI eliminated many problems associated with the clarity of the items it contained. Nevertheless, comprehensive testing of the tool across service types and consumer groups drew out some instances of confusion over the meaning of questions.

Items that were clearest to respondents were those that were directly related to their current experience of the service. Items that required an opinion on a concrete aspect of service delivery were readily understood and answered. For example, items which asked about the tastiness of meals or the reliability or skill of transport drivers posed no problems to respondents. Where items referred to subjects that were not within respondents' general experience or were more abstracted from the experience of service receipt, greater uncertainty surrounded the meaning of the question.

An item relevant to Objective 2: Information and Consultation, asked respondents whether they received any information from the agency about their rights and responsibilities. Grouped together in this way, rights and responsibilities had less meaning to respondents than if particular aspects of rights and responsibilities were discussed individually. As a

collective concept, rights and responsibilities were thought of by respondents as something usually covered during the respondent's first contact with the agency, not part of their ongoing relationship with the agency. It did not clearly relate to their current experiences of how they dealt with the agency or how the agency treated them. From this perspective, even though it related directly to service assessment information sought by the HACC Service Standards Instrument, when applied directly to consumers the item provided limited information about service quality. Other items in the CSI addressed individual issues of rights and responsibilities more successfully.

As reported in the previous section, many respondents did not want to become involved in or be informed about service management. Some respondents even expressed the concern that it may be inappropriate for them to have access to information about how the service was run. The clarity of this item could be improved by providing examples of the types of documents relevant to agency management that could be made available.

An item relevant to Objective 4: Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery, asks respondents to indicate if the agency has been sensitive and responsive to their different requirements as a member of a group listed in the previous question (including non-English speaking background, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, pension or low income recipient, living in a rural or remote location, or caring for someone with dementia). The majority of respondents indicated that they received a pension or were on a low income. Some of these respondents had difficulty interpreting the question in relation to this. They were not clear on what their "different requirements" might be in relation to their status as pensioners or low income recipients.

An item relevant to Objective 5: Privacy, confidentiality and access to personal information, asked respondents whether the agency would ask their permission before telling someone else about them. The wording of this item caused some respondents to have difficulty identifying situations where this issue might be relevant. In the absence of an example to illustrate this, respondents were on occasion uncertain about the item's meaning.

Items relating to Objective 6: Complaints and disputes, most frequently created difficulties for respondents. The item, which asked respondents if they had been told they could voice concerns to outside authorities, was generally outside of the experience of most respondents. Respondents were frequently uncertain of who these outside authorities would be but were interested to know who they were. The addition of text explaining when complaints might need to go to outside authorities and some examples of who these are would aid the clarity of this item.

The item asking respondents if they were confident that the agency would listen to any concerns and deal with them properly was a double-barrelled question. In some cases respondents were confident that the agency would listen sympathetically to their concerns but did not believe they would deal with the issues as needed. In many cases where this was mentioned respondents believed the agency had insufficient resources to properly deal with their concerns. It is recommended that this question be divided into two; one dealing with whether agencies would listen to concerns and another dealing with whether agencies would deal with them properly.

Items relating to advocacy were introduced with a description of what an advocate was and who could act as an advocate. Respondents were then asked whether they believed that the agency would accept a friend or relative arranging services for them. For some telephone interview respondents, the phrasing of this question raised issues for them about the possibility of losing power of attorney. Interviewers sometimes found it necessary to explain

that advocates were selected at the consumer's choice rather than against their wishes or that an advocate would only be accepted by an agency when the service recipient nominated them. A wording change is recommended for this item to clarify this issue.

### **3.1.4 Appropriateness of items**

An important aspect of the validity of items on the CSI is the extent to which they are appropriate across the range of people who use HACC services and across the range of service types canvassed by the survey tool. While the four modules were designed in recognition of the diversity of HACC services, items on each tool were constructed with the aim of maximising the compatibility across survey modules. As far as possible the same items were used to assess the same standards. This section assesses the extent to which the pursuit of compatibility has affected the appropriateness of items to respondents. The appropriateness of items is discussed in relation to the Objective to which each relates.

Under Objective 1: Access to services, respondents receiving general home services were asked to comment on whether the agency had made a clear agreement about the services to be provided. This agreement was described as an agreement about the type of services, how often they would be provided, and for how long. Service agreements regarding the duration of service provision was most appropriate for consumers who received care for short episodes such as on discharge from hospital or after an incidence of illness or injury. Some consumers receiving community nursing, home help or personal care may receive this form of episodic care. For the majority of consumers however, an agreement about the duration of service was inappropriate and could in some case be considered insensitive. Many services provided care until the consumer or the person for whom they were caring could no longer live at home or died.

Under Objective 2: Information and consultation, respondents who did not agree with the services the agency determined were appropriate were asked to indicate whether they had discussed these issues with the agency. The intention of this item was to measure the extent to which consultation was facilitated by the agency with consumers. It was evident that many respondents to the mailed survey answered this question even when it was not appropriate to them. When telephone interviewers presented this question to interviewees a number of respondents who indicated that they had discussed their disagreements about service provision with the agency stated that they were aware that it was often not possible for the agency to help them out more. Most frequently respondents indicated that they needed more services rather than a different type of service but they frequently believed that resource constraints on agencies prevented them from receiving more services.

Most respondents answered "no" to the question "Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?" For most respondents this question was not something that they had ever needed to consider and did not think it appropriate to them or the agency. Telephone interviewers reported that for a small portion of respondents, the question evoked alarm. Nevertheless, across the sample of agencies examined by mail survey, 4% of respondents indicated that they had experienced concerns about their safety or security. Even though many respondents found the question inapplicable to their experiences and was disturbing to some, it clearly uncovered some valuable data concerning agency service quality.

Half of respondents answered "don't know" to the question about "whether things would go badly" if they made a complaint. Almost all of the remainder of respondents answered

“no”. Some respondents to the mail survey felt this question to be trying to draw out negative comments about the agency when they believed the service was very good. Telephone interviewers also reported that the question appeared to be too suggestive of possible negative consequences of making complaints and that it seemed to be putting doubts in people’s minds. This consequence is of particular concern given that most respondents had no experience of making a complaint. That the question may be evoking answers in relation to events beyond the agency’s control also stands against its usefulness as an item for measuring service quality.

In relation to Objective 4: Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery, an item asks “Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of one of these groups?” A small proportion of consumers of Aboriginal background receiving services from agencies not specifically targeted to Aboriginal consumers took part in the survey. Some of these respondents believed that it was inappropriate for them to be treated differently from other consumers and therefore considered this question to be inappropriate.

Some non-Aboriginal respondents took offence at being asked if they were Aboriginal and some commented that they were angry at the implication that special groups such as those listed in the previous question should receive preferential treatment.

### Types of service

The appropriateness of the CSI to consumers receiving different types of HACC services is examined in the remainder of this section. Again, qualitative information obtained during focus groups, telephone interviews and from comments written on surveys is used, as are quantitative data. The proportion of missing values and “don’t know” or “not applicable” answers provided on the mail survey are examined as an aid to identifying service types for which the CSI posed difficulties for respondents. These are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Mail survey – proportion of respondents answering “don’t know” or failing to answer averaged over items by service type**

Service type	Proportion answering “Don’t know” (Mean)	Proportion of missing data (Mean)
Home help/personal care	17.7%	6.2%
Community nursing	16.1%	10.0%
Respite	13.8%	7.2%
Case coordination/brokerage	18.6%	8.3%
Allied health	20.2%	6.8%
Social support	13.7%	6.5%
Home maintenance/modification	17.4%	6.5%
Transport	15.4%	7.4%
Meals	17.1%	6.8%
Mean of means	16.7% (SD=2.1 %)	7.3% (SD=1.2%)

Table 8 provides evidence that the special modules for home maintenance or modification, transport and meals services have been successful in asking appropriate questions of consumers of those services. The average level of missing data or “don’t know” responses across items is close to (within one standard deviation of) the average for other services

examined. Indeed, telephone interviewers reported that respondents were most at ease with questions directly related to meals, transport and home maintenance services. The items that these respondents found inappropriate to them were the same that respondents from other service types had difficulty with: items related to advocacy, participation in and information about agency management, and items concerned with information about complaints.

Respondents receiving community nursing services had the highest levels of non-response to items compared to respondents of all other service types. Non-response rates were notably higher for community nursing consumers for items relating to whether they had received a service agreement, and whether the agency had provided services accordingly. Almost a quarter of respondents did not answer the item regarding whether they had received information about how to obtain or use an advocate and 19% did not answer the item regarding whether they had been given information about outside authorities they could take their complaints to. Fifteen per cent did not answer the item regarding whether the agency would seek their consent before passing information on.

As mentioned previously, in many cases, respondents receiving nursing care had their care arranged by the hospital upon their discharge. It appears that for many respondents receiving community nursing, a passive acceptance of the professional medical care provided to them may have made many of concepts of the HACC Service Standards irrelevant. This result supports the findings of Donaldson, Lloyd and Lupton (1991) who found that patients of general practices, particularly those older, more frail patients show little consumerist behaviour in relation to their health care and instead accept a passive role in their health care arrangements.

Respondents receiving allied health services provided the highest average rate of “don’t know” answers to items. The proportion of “don’t know” answers was notably higher for items relating to whether they had information about rights and responsibilities (21%). Sixty three per cent did not know if they could gain access to documents about how the agency was run. Respondents receiving allied health were also those most uncertain about agency practices regarding the privacy and confidentiality of their information. Sixty per cent of allied health recipients did not know if the agency would ask their permission before passing on information about them. These results could be attributed to the same issues as those for respondents of community nursing.

Rather than dismissing these items as inappropriate for the types of services provided, it may be inferred that these areas of HACC service provision, notably allied health and community nursing, may need to pay more attention to issues associated with the consumer rights of HACC service recipients.

It had been a concern that the CSI would have limited relevance for respondents receiving social support because the type of service was commonly an informal arrangement of companionship rather than the more formal care arrangements made by services such as respite. Nevertheless, Table 3.3 shows that respondents receiving social support were able to provide an answer to items as frequently as and in many cases, more frequently than respondents receiving other services. It should be noted, however, that only one service providing social support took part in the study.

The community options services that participated in this study, like all the agencies that participated in this study, examined the questionnaire to ensure its appropriateness for their clients. While four of the community options services contacted believed the survey to be appropriate for their clients, some services of this type did not. The charter of community options services varies from State to State. Some community options services work closely

with consumers to broker the optimal service mix for clients. In some cases this in-home care extends to clients of the highest dependency levels and may include brokerage of palliative care services.

A small community options service contacted believed that their clients were too dependent to be able to participate by telephone or mail survey, but rather would require face-to-face interview. At the time of the survey some of the clients were being transferred from home to respite care to avoid complications that the Y2K bug may have caused for their life support equipment.

This high dependency level was described as having implications for the relevance of a number of items on the CSI including those related to needs assessment, consumer participation in management, and awareness of information regarding advocacy or rights and responsibilities.

A community options service has responsibility for all of the services it arranges for its consumers, including the quality of those services. Questions on the CSI were therefore relevant to all of the services provide through the community options service. The CSI was designed with the intention of relating to a single service, and as such, some of the items ask about service quality issues in a single agency. To clarify the intention of the survey for consumers of community options services, a covering letter should indicate that consumers consider the community options service and all of the services they receive through it when answering the survey. In particular, this cover letter should explain that “the agency” may refer to both the community options itself and all of those services brokered through it.

For clients of services such as community options who are highly dependent to the point of being reliant on assistance for virtually all daily living activities, it may be more appropriate to seek consumer feedback of the sort obtained for residential care clients. That is, feedback that recognises the limitations of the client in relation to service quality issues.

## **3.2 The validity of the CSI for groups of interest**

### **3.2.1 Non-English speaking background consumers**

Four focus groups were conducted with consumers of non-English speaking background. Two groups comprised Italian speakers, one group Russian speakers, and one Greek speakers. Many of the participants of these groups had little or no English and, in many cases, were not literate in their first language. The questions put to the groups during discussion were simplified to facilitate translation. The discussion questions are listed in Box 2. As can be seen, questions relate as directly and concretely as possible to the participants' experiences as a service user.

In general the questions covered during the focus groups were relevant to participants with the exception of questions relating to advocacy and external complaints authorities. Participants indicated that they had not experienced the need to contact external authorities in relation to the HACC services they received. Rather, they relied upon the assistance of the HACC provider and the community contacts it facilitated. Participants were reserved about making use of other authorities including those operated by government.

### **Box 2: Focus group discussion questions for non-English speaking background groups**

#### **1: Help provided**

- 1** WHAT help do you get from the agency?
- 2** Did they ask you about WHAT you (and your carer) NEEDED?
- 3** Did you and the agency AGREE about WHAT SERVICE they would give, WHEN?
- 4** Is their help OK FOR YOU?
- 5** Is their help ENOUGH?  
If not, did you TELL the agency?
- 6** Is the help WHAT THEY SAID it would be?

#### **2: Rights and Information**

- 1** HOW were you told about your RIGHTS and responsibilities?
- 2** Is your information kept PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL? Do they tell other people your business?
- 3** Have they told other people about you, WITHOUT ASKING YOU FIRST?
- 4** Were you told that SOMEONE else could help you talk with the agency?
- 5** Did they tell you HOW to get someone else to help talk with them?

#### **3: Satisfaction with Services**

- 1.** Have you ever been worried about your SAFETY when getting help?  
If YES, what worried you?
- 2** Have you been told WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY with the help you get?
- 3** Did they tell you about OTHER PEOPLE you can talk to if you're not happy?
- 4** Would the agency LISTEN TO YOUR CONCERNS, and sort them out?
- 5** What would THEY DO if you COMPLAINED?
- 6** Could you GET INFORMATION about the way the agency is run?
- 7** Could you HAVE A SAY in the way the agency is run?

#### **4: General Client Information**

**Age**

**Sex**

**Carer**

**Country of origin**

**Pension**

**Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your background as a Russian (name appropriate)?**

Formal notification of rights and responsibilities, care arrangements and other information normally required to be provided in writing were not relevant to these HACC consumers. Rather, understandings about service agreements were established through dialogue between the service provider and consumer. Although often established informally, these arrangements were nevertheless as important to consumers as if they were formal agreements in writing.

### **3.2.2 Aboriginal consumers**

The consumers of three HACC funded agencies target specifically to Aboriginal people participated in focus groups; one each in a rural, remote and urban area. The two focus groups conducted in a remote area required the use of an interpreter for the Yankunytjatjara language. Similar questions were raised during discussion as those used during the focus groups for non-English speaking background groups. It was evident, however, that the

aspects of service quality that were relevant to Aboriginal consumers were different from those of non-Aboriginal consumers.

Contrary to most of the respondents taking part in this study, Aboriginal consumers were keenly interested in being involved in service management. Aboriginal women particularly, took or desired to take an active role in this. All of the Aboriginal consumers interviewed, including those from remote, rural and metropolitan services concurred that it was important that they be informed of and involved in service management. This was perhaps one of the most important aspects of service quality from the Aboriginal consumers' point of view. Being informed, consulted and involved in service management activities was a clear message to these consumers that the agency was sincere about respecting them as elders and in turn, providing quality service to them. Agencies that achieved this had established an elders' committee. Decisions about the aged care services were made in consultation with and at the direction of this committee.

Service agreements and assessments of needs were not relevant to Aboriginal service users in the same way as non-Aboriginal service users, particularly for those in rural or remote locations who lived more traditional Aboriginal lifestyles. The needs of these service users extended into the fulfilment of cultural, family and political obligations. The health and welfare needs of these consumers changed both predictably and unpredictably. The success with which a service met these needs was dependent on its ability to recognise and properly deal with the culture and politics of Aboriginal families and traditions.

A consumer survey tool appropriate to Aboriginal service users should place greater emphasis on information and consultation issues, on involvement in service management, and on the service's success in respecting the values and culture of its consumers.

### **3.2.3 Dementia specific services**

Feedback about services provided to those affected by dementia was straightforward where a carer was available to provide that feedback. As far as the survey items were concerned, all were of some relevance to these service users. However the limited free time and often physically and emotionally exhausted condition of these carers limited their ability to respond to the survey. A common concern of these consumers related to the limitation of respite care in amount and type, particularly for dementia sufferers whose behaviours were more challenging to contain. An implication of this for the CSI items was that many of these consumers found little relevance in the item regarding participation in agency management. This kind of activity required time, which few had.

### **3.2.4 Rural and remote agencies**

The items of the instrument were appropriate for consumers living in these areas. Some items were of more relevance than others. In remote and rural regions consumers often commented on the limited availability of services in the region or expressed a need for more services than they were currently accessing. Questions related to complaints were in some cases appended with comments describing the difficulty of complaining about services in a small community where little else may be available. Access to formal advocates was limited for clients living in rural and remote regions. Travel distances and the disabilities of clients acted against active consumer involvement in service management.

### 3.2.5 Younger people with a disability

While the items of the CSI were relevant for consumers in this group, in some cases these younger HACC consumers believed that the service quality benchmarks used by many HACC consumers were too low. The hope of some of these consumers was for service quality beyond those described by the items of the CSI. The HACC services provided to this group affected their lives in an on-going way and supported them in their passage through life with a view to possible increasing independence. Their expectations of service quality frequently outstripped those of older HACC consumers.

## 3.3 Testing for the ceiling effect

Consumer feedback collected from groups like the HACC target population is typically characterised by very high levels of reported satisfaction (Cooper and Jenkins, 1999). The result is that across the total sample, respondents generally only answer questions by using categories that reflect positively on agencies. The number of response categories used may be few and typically fall at the top end of the possible response set. This ceiling effect gives data very little variability. This in turn reduces the usefulness of the data to discriminate between one agency and another based on consumer survey responses.

The CSI was designed recognising the potential of this problem to arise in the data. As a result, some respondents commented that items seemed to be trying to draw out negative sentiment when consumers actually believed the services to be very good. This section examines the data to observe whether its usefulness has been compromised by the ceiling effect.

**Table 9: Mail survey – proportion responses in the most favourable response category**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	80.7%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	94.4%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	88.6%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	95.8%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	37.9%
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	54.3%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	32.3%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	23.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	61.2%
If you did not think the services were right did you discuss this with the agency?	65.0%
If you did not think they completed the work (home maintenance) properly, did you discuss this with the agency?	60.0%
If you did not think they services (transport) were adequate did you discuss this with the agency?	50.0%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	

Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	32.8%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	29.9%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	95.4%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	97.7%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	96.3%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	84.7%
Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	70.5%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	86.0%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	91.4%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	87.5%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	93.3%
Would you say that their meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	89.1%
Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	95.0%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?	88.7%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	82.1%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	56.7%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	58.1%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	32.3%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	88.3%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	70.3%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	46.8%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	24.6%

Note: Percentages calculated excluding missing cases.

The proportion of respondents using the highest response category (offering the most favourable answer) for each item is listed in Table 9. As can be observed, for 17 of the 34 items more than 80% of respondents provided answers which most favourably reflected on the service provider. For some items this high positive response rate is reassuring. For example, regarding the items referring to safety and security concerns under Objective 3, one would hope that very few respondents indicated concerns of this nature but these items nevertheless provide important feedback about an essential aspect of care. The item under Objective 5 referring to consumer confidence in the agency's practices surrounding privacy and confidentiality falls into this same category. We would hope that the distribution of these responses was skewed towards the positive.

Other items request information that should be subject to greater variation in response. When these items are considered alongside items of less variability, a more useful measure

of service quality may emerge. For example, the items related to complaints and disputes under Objective 6 vary in the likelihood that agencies would receive a positive appraisal against all four items on the consumer survey tool. While many respondents may be satisfied with the way the agency deals with complaints, fewer respondents were confident that they had received information about the proper process for making a complaint. Fewer still had received information about outside authorities that would deal with unresolved complaints.

Although half of the items of the CSI produced responses of limited variability, the small proportions of negative or less positive comment shed light on the service quality experience of respondents. When items of less variability are considered alongside those of greater variability it is possible to discriminate between the quality of service experienced by clients from different agencies.

## **3.4 Internal consistency**

### **3.4.1 The interrelationship of items and Objectives**

This section addresses the issue of whether the items of the CSI provide satisfactory information against the seven Objectives to justify their inclusion in the survey tool.

The first approach to the issue of whether the items provide a valid and reliable indication of agency performance against the standards is to observe the comments and discussions of clients during focus groups, telephone interviews and from mailed surveys. The previous sections have noted many of these comments. In addition, it was observed during focus groups that the strong relationship between service standards and items did not necessarily mean there was a strong relationship between consumer answers and service standards. For example, in response to the question “Could you have a say in the way the agency was run if you wanted to?” a participant responded with a suggestion for a service improvement she would put in place if she was running the agency. In addition, it was noted across all survey methods that respondents’ answers sometimes did not sit within the closed question format of the CSI. The extent to which these issues may have compromised data quality requires another approach to testing the effectiveness of the CSI.

A second approach is to examine the interrelationships among items on the CSI. Each item under an Objective should be related to other items within the Objective in such a way that it both informs and confirms our knowledge of the Objective. The following discussion examines the relationship between items within Objectives and, in the light of comments by respondents, addresses the question of whether each item provides a satisfactory measure against its Objective. The mail survey data is used for the quantitative analysis performed here, since this data provides the most stringent test of the reliability and validity of the CSI.

#### **Objective 1: Access to Services**

To summarise the findings reported earlier relating to items of this Objective - all of the items were clear to respondents and generally were found applicable with the exception of the first item regarding whether needs and preferences were taken into account at first contact with the agency. For some consumers who had their services arranged for them by bodies such as a hospital, this question was believed to be of limited relevance. Similarly,

those whose first assessment was long ago hesitated at this question but were nevertheless frequently able to provide an answer.

**Table 10: Correlation coefficients for items relevant to Objective 1**

	1	2
1 When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?		
2 Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right services for you?	0.23	
3 Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right amount of services for you?	0.31	0.46

Note: Correlations calculated excluding missing data and “don’t know” category responses.

The correlations between the items relevant to Objective 1 are shown in Table 10. The item regarding whether the agency had adequately assessed needs and preferences (Item 1) had the weakest relationship to the other variables. When compared with the other two variables, Item 1 was most strongly related to the respondents’ perception of whether they had been given the right amount of services ( $r=0.31$ ). This relationship may be a reflection of how HACC services are provided. In many cases agencies may only offer one type of service but may be able to vary the amount of service provided to consumers.

The relationship between items may be improved by phrasing these items so that they accurately reflect the consumer’s view of services as they currently experience them, without attempting to elicit memories of events that for some may be too long ago to accurately recall. The following change is suggested for the items:

- “Does the agency properly consider your needs and preferences when they decide how to help you?”
- “Do you think the agency gives you the right type of help?”
- “Do you think the agency gives you enough help?”

These changes aside, taken as a group, the items are sufficiently correlated to be said to be cohesive in measuring access issues, but are not so highly correlated as to be redundant.

**Objective 2: Information and Consultation**

Items related to choice were clear and appropriate for respondents. However, some of the items related to information and consultation were unclear to a portion of respondents. The item concerned with whether respondents had received information about rights and responsibilities was difficult for those who believed they may have received this information some time ago, others were unsure of what this referred to. The items concerned with discussing disagreements about service provision were answered by respondents to whom the question was relevant and inappropriately answered by many to whom it was not relevant.

In order to test the association between items across the different survey modules, scores on similar items were concatenated into a single measure. Thus the four items concerned with choice about services occurring on different modules (shown in Table 9) are scored according to a global measure of choice. The same procedure is used for items concerned with whether work was done as expected (also shown in Table 9). Across modules, consumer views regarding Objective 2 are therefore measured by three general items shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: Correlation coefficients for items relevant to Objective 2**

	1	2
1 Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?		
2 Did the agency offer you a choice in how services would be provided?	0.48	
3 Did you discuss your concerns about service provision with the agency?	0.32	0.58

Note: Correlations calculated excluding missing data and “don’t know” category responses.

The correlations between items relevant to Objective 2 indicate that they are cohesive in measuring information and consultation issues, but among themselves are not so highly correlated as to be redundant. Table 3.6 shows that the items concerned with consumer choice (summarised by item 2 in Table 3.6) were the strongest in understanding consumer’s views about this Objective. Consumer answers to this item were related to their responses to both of the other two items relevant to this objective. Not surprisingly, the likelihood of respondents discussing issues they are not satisfied with has a relatively weaker relationship with their memories of whether they had received rights and responsibilities information ( $r=0.32$ ) when compared to the other correlations in this triad. It may be that the problems associated with the former item has compromised its validity to some extent.

The useful items relating to consumer choice should remain in the CSI. In order to more adequately cover the issues associated with Objective 2 further questions could be added. For example, the standard related to whether consumers are informed of the basis of service provision could be measured by such questions as:

- “Does the agency explain its decisions about the services it will provide to people?”
- “If the agency needed to make a change to your services would they let you know?” and
- “Would they explain why these changes were necessary?”

### Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management

As reported earlier, almost one half of respondents answered “don’t know” to questions relating to involvement in agency management. This was clearly not an issue of great relevance to many consumers. Nevertheless, where respondents did provide “yes” or “no” answers to these questions Table 3.7 shows that there was a very strong relationship between the two items ( $r=0.70$ ). Respondents who believed they could gain access to documents about management also believed they could have a say in agency management. The two items are so highly correlated as to be considered providing redundant information about service quality outcomes against this Objective. The first item listed in Table 12 was described previously in this chapter as causing some confusion for respondents about what documents should be available to them. The results of the correlation analysis show that this item could be removed from the CSI without losing information about consumer opinion on this topic.

**Table 12: Correlation coefficients for items relevant to Objective 3**

	1	2
1 Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?		
2 Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	0.70	

3 Have you ever had concerns about your safety or security because of the actions of agency staff?	0.02	0.05
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Note: Correlations calculated excluding missing data and "don't know" category responses.

In response to these first two items, many respondents wished to add that they were confident about the way the agency was run. The addition of a third item addressing this issue directly would aid the comprehensiveness with which this Objective was covered and would pick up issues that affect consumers not otherwise addressed in the CSI, such as proper account keeping and staff management. The third item suggested is:

- "Are you satisfied with the way the agency manages its business, for example how it handles accounts or manages staff?"

This item would address consumer concerns about failure to issue receipts or do police checks on staff; issues raised by consumers but not previously addressed by the CSI.

The last item listed under this Objective, concerned with the respondent's concerns about safety and security, was not at all related to the first two items. Clearly issues of staff reliability or safety concerns are not associated with ability to be involved in management. This item was nevertheless an important one for evoking critical information about the agency. This item showed a stronger relationship to items concerned with complaints and disputes, indicating that it was relevant to clients who had experienced difficulties with the agency in more than one service quality area. It is recommended that this item remain in the CSI. Research conducted in the United Kingdom found that competence of workers was an important issue for consumers of community nursing care (Henwood, Lewis & Waddington, 1998). This research suggests that it would be useful to supplement the item concerned with safety and security with one concerned with staff competence in order to more adequately cover the issues relevant to efficient and effective management. The following item is suggested:

- "Do the workers from this agency carry out their work competently?"

#### Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery

Survey participants found it easy to respond to questions about whether they had an agreement about services or whether services were provided as they were proposed to be provided. Table 13 shows that the latter item is the strongest in understanding consumer's views about coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery. Consumers' answers to this item were related to their responses to both of the other two items relevant to this Objective. Respondents who indicated that the agency had provided services in the way they said they would were also likely to believe that the agency had made a clear agreement with them ( $r=0.35$ ) and that the agency was responsive to their different needs as a member of a special needs group ( $r=0.32$ ).

**Table 13: Correlation coefficients for items relevant to Objective 4**

	1	2
1 Did the agency make a clear agreement with you the services it would provide?		
2 Does the agency provide help as it said it would be provided?	0.35	
3 Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?	0.22	0.32

Note: Correlations calculated excluding missing data and "don't know" category responses.

The item concerned with whether the agency had been sensitive and responsive to their different needs was unclear to some respondents including those on pensions or low incomes who were uncertain about how it related to them. It did, however, evoke some important critical comment about agencies in relation to non-English speaking background groups and those caring for someone with dementia. It is recommended that this question be more specifically worded to evoke the appropriate response for each of the special groups for whom it is intended.

The effectiveness of the first item may be improved by phrasing it so that it accurately reflect the consumer's view of services as they currently experience them, rather than seeming to refer to a service agreement made just after the first assessment (an event that may be too long ago to accurately recall for some). The following change is suggested for the item:

- “Does the agency give you clear information about what help they will give you?”

These changes aside, taken as a group, the items are sufficiently related to one another to be considered as reliably reflecting consumer views regarding coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery. They are not so highly correlated as to be providing redundant information.

### **Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Personal Information**

Two items measured respondents' views on the quality of agency performance in relation to privacy and confidentiality. As described earlier, the two items differed in that one was concerned with the respondents' satisfaction with how the agency dealt with such matters and the other with respondents' knowledge of agency practices in this regard. This latter question was found by some to be unclear. The correlation between the two items was  $r=0.07$ ; a very low correlation suggesting no relationship between the two items. This leads to the conclusion that the respondent's satisfaction with agency practises is not related to their certainty about agency practices surrounding privacy and confidentiality. From a consumer outcome point of view, the former is the most important measure of service quality. While the latter may be an essential issue in establishing the trust of consumers and an important part of the HACC National Service Standards, it is demonstrably difficult to assess from consumer feedback. Many clients would not normally be concerned with such issues, as evidenced by many consumers' difficulty in thinking of a situation when passing on information might be necessary. Other consumers would not always remember the details of assurances about such agency practices. It is recommended that this second item be removed from the CSI.

### **Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes**

Many respondents had no experience of making complaints and so found the items relating to complaints difficult to answer. Around a fifth of respondents answered these questions with a “don't know”.

The item that drew the most critical comment asked respondents whether things would “go badly” if a complaint was made. This item was believed to be evoking concerns where they may not have previously existed. The item respondents were most easily able to answer described whether they believed the agency would listen and deal fairly with complaints. Table 14 shows that these items were related to one another ( $r=0.51$ ). Respondents who scored the agency high on one, tended to score it high on the other as well. These two items were less strongly related to items regarding information respondents had received about

complaints and disputes processes. The two items concerned with information of this type were also strongly related to one another ( $r=0.55$ ). Evidently, the respondent’s satisfaction with agency practices is not related to their certainty about information concerned with complaints and disputes.

**Table 14: Correlation coefficients for items relevant to Objective 6**

	1	2	3
1 Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?			
2 Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	0.55		
3 Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	0.16	0.10	
4 Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	0.21	0.14	0.51

From a consumer outcome point of view, confidence in the agency’s good faith in relation to complaints is the most important measure of service quality. While informing consumers of complaints processes may be an essential service quality issue and an important part of the HACC National Service Standards, it is perhaps inappropriate to assess the distribution of this knowledge among many respondents for whom it is of little relevance. Rather it may be more effective if the consumer’s knowledge about how to make a complaint was phrased in terms closer to their experience. Such a question may be phrased in the following way:

- “If you were unhappy about the service you received, would you feel confident about bringing it up with the agency?”

This question combined with those concerned with whether consumer’s believed the agency would listen and deal with complaints properly would more appropriately and comprehensively cover the important service quality issues associated with complaints and disputes.

**Objective 7: Advocacy**

Two items measured respondents’ views on the quality of agency performance in relation to advocacy. Many respondents considered these issues irrelevant to them. In particular, one third of respondents chose not to answer or answered “don’t know” to the item that asked if they had received information about advocacy. Sixteen per cent chose not to answer or answered “don’t know” to the item that asked respondents if they believed the agency would be accepting of family or friends acting as advocates. The two items were moderately correlated  $r=0.29$ , suggesting some relationship between the two but not so highly correlated that they measure the same aspect of advocacy. The two items would be usefully combined to measure service quality in relation to advocacy. Some clarification of the item relating to the agency’s acceptance of the use of advocacy would improve the reliability and validity of this item and avoid respondents’ concerns about involuntary loss of control of their affairs.

**3.5 Total survey reliability**

The preceding analysis has established that a subset of items on the CSI are of sufficient content validity and reliability to provide a measure of consumer appraisal of agency

performance against each of the Objectives. The question of whether all of these items are sufficiently related together to be considered as providing a cohesive measure of agency performance can be determined by an analysis of total scale reliability.

A reliability coefficient is a numerical expression of the degree of relationship between items that are intended to measure the same phenomenon. When these related items are added to form a scale, the reliability coefficient indicates the extent to which the scale yields a dependable measure of the phenomenon, that is, measures aspects of the same underlying phenomenon with each item of the scale. Carmines and Zeller (1979) suggest that widely used scales should have a reliability in the order of 0.8. This figure is set assuming many items are used to assess and provide the same result against a single underlying construct as may be the case for college entrance tests. The reliability of a test, as described by Cronbach's reliability coefficient, depends upon the correlation between items and the number of items. When fewer items are available to form a scale, lower reliability coefficients may be considered acceptable (see Scott 1968, O'Muircheartaigh & Payne, 1977). For the survey data examined in this report, where only a small number of items are used to construct a scale, reliabilities of between 0.3 and 0.6 can be argued to indicate reliability among the items. Examining the reliability coefficient of the total survey scale provides important information about the overall reliability of the consumer survey tool.

**Table 15: Reliability coefficients for the scales calculated using the items of the consumer survey instrument**

Scale	Reliability coefficient
Objective 1: Access to services	0.60
Objective 2: Information and consultation	0.72
Objective 3: Efficient and effective management	0.51
Objective 4: Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery	0.56
Objective 5: Privacy, confidentiality and access to personal information	0.13
Objective 6: Complaints and disputes	0.61
Objective 7: Advocacy	0.45
<b>Total survey</b>	<b>0.87</b>

Note: Total survey reliability could only be calculated with items used on the general questionnaire since items from different modules cannot be linked to all of the items on the general questionnaire.  
Correlations calculated excluding missing data and "don't know" category responses.

Scales measuring consumer opinion about service quality were created for each Objective by adding all of the relevant items from the original CSI. The reliability coefficients of these scales are shown in Table 15. For all but two of the Objectives, the items have a sufficient degree of inter-correlation to suggest that they reliably measure the same underlying issue in each case. Advocacy items and particularly the two items concerned with privacy and confidentiality were an exception to this.

The total survey scale is created by adding together responses to the selected individual items across each survey. Non-responses and "don't know" or "not applicable" answers are excluded from this scale. The reliability coefficient of this scale is then calculated. Table 15 also shows that the scale created from the total revised survey items has a high reliability coefficient, 0.87, indicating that all of the selected items contribute to our understanding of consumer views of service quality as described by the HACC Service Standards. There is one basic theme to the items of the CSI: they are cohesively related to quality of service provided by a diverse group of HACC services and as experience by its consumers.

## 3.6 Recommended changes to the CSI

As a result of the discussion and analyses presented in this chapter it can be concluded that many of the items of the CSI provide reliable information about service quality issues associated with the HACC National Service Standards. Table 16 lists a revised CSI with changes to item wording, additions and deletions of items to improve the performance of the survey tool in terms of its reliability and validity.

**Table 16: Suggested items for a revised Consumer Survey Instrument**

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### Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives

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#### **Objective 1: Access to Services**

Does the agency properly consider your needs and preferences when they decide how to help you?

Do you think the agency gives you the right type of help?

Do you think the agency gives you enough help?

Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?

#### **Objective 2: Information and Consultation**

Does the agency explain its decisions about the services it will provide to people?

If the agency needed to make a change to your services would they let you know?

If the agency needed to make a change to your services would they explain why these changes were necessary?

Has the agency given you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be done?

Has the agency given you a choice in the types of food you get?

Has the agency given you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?

Has the agency given you a choice in the transport assistance you can have?

#### **Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management**

Are you satisfied with the way the agency manages its business, for example how it handles accounts or manages staff?

*If you wanted to, do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run?*

Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?

Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?

Do the workers from this agency carry out their work competently?

#### **Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery**

Does the agency give you clear information about what help they will give you?

Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?

Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?

Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?

Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?

Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?

Would you say that their meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?

Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to the customs and traditions of your nationality and culture?

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to any financial limitations you may have?

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to the additional needs you have because you live in a rural or remote area?

Does the agency consider your special needs as someone caring for a person with dementia or similar condition?

#### **Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information**

Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?

**Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes**

If you were unhappy about the service you received, would you feel confident about bringing it up with the agency?

Do you feel confident that the agency would listen to any concerns you have?

Do you feel confident that the agency would deal properly with any concerns you raised about the service?

**Objective 7: Advocacy**

If you were to choose someone to speak to the agency for you (to act as your advocate) when arranging services or sorting out problems, do you think the agency would accept this arrangement?

Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?

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## 3.7 Summary

- On average, the items of the CSI had a high response rate. The mean proportion of respondents that failed to provide any answer for items was 6.6%. This result suggests that the consumer survey Instrument is successful in eliciting consumer response; a result that could not be obtained if items were unclear, irrelevant or inappropriate.
- The relevance of items to the consumer's current experiences of service provision was the most notable factor affecting non-response rates and "don't know" responses. Items relating to information they may have received on a range of topics were less successful in eliciting a response than items which addressed the consumers own experiences or perceptions about service quality.
- There was no evidence that the length of the questionnaire affected non-response rates.
- On average, a small proportion of the items of the CSI were answered "don't know" by respondents. The mean proportion of respondents that provided a "don't know" answer for items was nine per cent. For the majority of items, no respondents or less than one per cent of respondents provided a "don't know" response. There were however, several items for which "don't know" was a very frequent answer (in one case up to half of respondents used this response category). These results indicate that the majority of items are relevant to the consumer's experiences.
- In general, the CSI was found to be relevant, clear and appropriate to consumers regardless of the type of HACC service under examination. Some exceptions to this occurred for items addressed to consumers of community nursing and allied health services. Consumers of these services had greater uncertainty about issues related to their consumer rights, including their right to confidentiality of information, use of advocates and the processes available to them for making a complaint.
- Some HACC service providers, such as community options services, assist consumers of very high dependency levels. Where a large portion of an agency's consumers require intensive assistance it may be inappropriate to seek feedback about issues that assume the ability to exercise a broad range of consumer rights. Rather it may be more appropriate to seek feedback of the sort obtained for residential care clients, that recognises the limitations of the consumer.
- There was some evidence of a ceiling effect among item responses. For items concerned with issues of fundamental importance consumer rights, this result was reassuring (for example, items concerned with safety and security and privacy of information). Half of

the items of the CSI were not strongly affected by the ceiling effect. Rather consumers' responses to these items were spread across the range of possible responses. This variability in the data makes it possible to discriminate between the quality of service provided in different agencies.

- Items that are concerned with a particular Objective should have something in common with each other since they each are intended to measure facets of an underlying service quality issue. Of the seven Objectives covered by the consumer survey items, only two were measured by items of statistically low reliability.
- The CSI can be improved by taking into account the effectiveness of its items as described by an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data presented in this chapter. Items that were unclear to respondents were reworded. Items adding little information of relevance to quality assessment from the consumer's point of view were deleted. Some items were added to more comprehensively cover the service issues relevant to Objectives.
- In general, statistical tests of reliability suggested that a large subset of items from the CSI were satisfactorily related to justify their use in the assessment of HACC funded agencies against the HACC National Service Standards. The CSI tested in this study can be considered a reliable tool for collecting consumer feedback. The suggested changes would improve this reliability.
- A simplified interview schedule was presented in this chapter for use with non-English speaking background groups. Items address concrete aspects service quality as it affects the experience of those receiving services. These changes facilitate translation and interpretation across languages.
- A similarly shortened interview schedule was used as the basis for focus groups discussions and interviews with Aboriginal consumers. It was evident, however, that Aboriginal consumers place more weight on some aspects of service quality described by the HACC National Service Standards and less weight on others. It is recommended that consideration be given to developing a CSI which more accurately reflects the service quality issues relevant to Aboriginal communities.

# 4 Testing methods of assessment

The survey method used to collect feedback from HACC consumers is an important factor in determining the reliability and validity of the assessment data received. As outlined in Chapter 2, there were three principal methods for the collection of consumer feedback. These included focus group, telephone interview and mail survey. A small sample of consumers from Aboriginal services participated in face-to-face interviews.

This chapter is split into two sections. The first section makes a general test of the efficacy of each of the survey methods in relation to their ability to obtain feedback from the HACC population. The second section presents a comparison of the service methods in relation to their ability to gain reliable service quality information.

To compare the survey methods with regard to their ability to gain feedback from the HACC population, different survey methods are tested against each other using criteria as such response rate, sample bias and response variability. The second section specifically focuses on the quality assessment content of the survey. Reliability testing is conducted on the data to compare the survey methods in relation to the quality of the information they collect.

## 4.1 Efficacy of survey methods for the HACC target population

### 4.1.1 Observations on the validity of methods

#### Focus groups

Focus groups provided the most comprehensive feedback on quality assessment issues. Important service quality issues were raised by participants at the encouragement of the facilitator or their peers in the group. As reported by Alt Beatty Consulting (who undertook half of the focus groups conducted), the focus group discussion and explanation helped tease out some issues that were unlikely to have been voiced without the additional commentary and encouragement possible in a focus group. In some cases, comment on service quality concerned issues that were not addressed by the closed question format of the CSI or by the types of questions on the CSI. For example, the failure of an agency to provide receipts was not recorded on the CSI but was revealed in discussion. The mail survey method was not as successful a measure of consumer opinion in this regard, being less effective as a means of gathering the detail and allowing the same understanding of consumer views. Telephone interviews provided an opportunity to evoke a detailed account of consumer views but were not always as successful at drawing out critical comment.

Attendance at the focus groups was physically and logistically demanding for some and in some cases, participants expressed initial anxiety about what would be involved. However,

as Alt Beatty Consulting described, all participants appeared to find the exercise a worthwhile activity and enjoyed getting together with other consumers. For those who were able to attend, focus groups were a comfortable method of collecting feedback.

Consumers also frequently benefited from the sessions by sharing information about the service itself and about other services available to them. Focus groups provide an opportunity to introduce new concepts to service users regarding their rights as consumers and offer the possibility of shifting the culture of resistance to raising criticism to one of open communication with the purpose of improving service quality. As Alt Beatty Consulting observed, for many participants concepts of participation in service management and critical comment on agency practices were foreign.

While focus groups provided a congenial atmosphere in which to discuss service quality issues, in many cases participants required strong reassurances that their comments about service quality would be helpful to the service and others, not harmful, and that such comments should not be seen as ungrateful criticism. The overall tone of feedback was one of glowing praise for the agencies, and in at least one of the focus groups there was apparent group pressure against the expression of criticism. The consultants' report indicated that it was not clear that all focus group participants were willing to discuss issues of particular concern to "facilitators unknown to them, in such one-off exercises held irregularly." Rather, participants may have been concerned that their services could be de-funded if they were to be critical, particularly since the focus group was organised by government. Focus groups may be more appropriately run by a neutral party known to the participants or a group whose charter is primarily to promote consumer rights and comprised of community members.

## **Telephone interviews**

The telephone interview schedule, found at Appendix E, shows that the interview followed a directed format. The interaction between the interviewer and the participant allowed the explanation of unfamiliar concepts and the clarification of questions. Interviewers were able to gauge the reaction of participants to the process and content of the interview and respond appropriately. In this way the participants' concerns and uncertainties could be resolved by the interviewer thus reducing the frequency with which participants failed to provide a response to items or terminated the interview.

Many telephone interview participants did not expect the discussion to follow the more formal format of the interview schedule. Rather, the one to one context of the telephone interview frequently led participants to expect a more conversational style discussion of their experiences as users of the HACC service. Respondents frequently wished to discuss the issues raised by questions put to them or to explain their circumstances in detail. Respondents also had some difficulty providing answers according to the categories provided by the schedule. Averaged over items 9.6% of respondents provided a response that was not within the categories provided.

Telephone interviews allowed some consumers to participate in the study who could not have done so by mail survey or focus group discussion. They facilitated the participation of consumers who had limited ability to leave their homes or complete a written survey. Some of those who participated by telephone interview were bed bound, others were visually impaired. For some carers with little time to sit down and complete a questionnaire, a telephone interview offered a quick and easy method of participating without having to read through the details and post off the survey. For other carers the difficulties of

scheduling a telephone interview for a time when they could sit down for 15 minutes uninterrupted discouraged them from taking part in this way. Telephone interviews were not possible for some consumers. Those without a telephone, those with a hearing disability, and those not well enough to maintain a sustained conversation by telephone could not take part.

Consumers frequently enjoyed the opportunity to talk with someone about their service needs, however not all HACC consumers were comfortable with talking on the telephone to someone they had never met and it is not clear that all participants were willing to discuss their concerns frankly in this context. In securing the participation of consumers by this survey method, careful attention was paid to following proper consent procedures and to ensuring that they were aware of their rights and given assurances about the project and the data. In spite of this, some participants could not remember the reason for the call when they were contacted.

It was agreed with the steering group that consumers of non-English speaking background services would be involved by participating in focus groups. However, telephone interviews were conducted with six elderly Cantonese speaking consumers as part of a larger sample taken from a participating agency. While these consumers were happy to discuss their services they were not accustomed to addressing the more formal issues covered by the CSI and felt that many of the questions were not relevant to their situation. The cultural background of this group also appeared to work against providing critical comment against services that were provided to them and for which they felt grateful.

It was also agreed with the steering group that consumers of services targeted to frail and disabled Aboriginal people would be involved by participating in focus groups and face-to-face interviews. However, telephone interviews were conducted with four Aboriginal consumers who could not attend the focus group discussion on the day it occurred. These consumers did not hesitate to provide frank comment about the services provided to them. Issues associated with this are discussed in section 4.1.6.

## **Mail surveys**

Mail surveys allowed participants to take part in the study in their own time and at their own pace. Many participants who were given the option, declined a telephone interview in preference for a mail survey. However completing the survey in this way meant that respondents relied upon their own interpretations of the questions. The survey form was easier for consumers more familiar with answering questionnaires of this nature. Some respondents appeared to be unfamiliar with the tick box format of the survey.

Respondents rarely used the toll free inquiry number to ask about the meaning of individual questions but were more inclined to call if they had decided that completing a telephone interview would be easier for them than reading through the survey form and providing answers in the required categories. Respondents also used this number when they were concerned that they might be returning the survey too late.

Mail surveys are far more susceptible to response set problems that compromise the validity of the data than other survey methods. These response sets include providing answers believed to be socially desirable, providing acquiescent responses, fearing reprisal if negative responses are made, the effects of gratitude overshadowing all aspects of expressed views on service quality, low expectations of what quality should be available, and loyalty to carers. A more lengthy description of these response sets is provided in the literature review prepared for this project (Cooper and Jenkins, 1999). These response sets give rise to high

reported levels of satisfaction which is described in the previous chapter as the ceiling effect. The extent to which the ceiling effect has influenced the data as collected by each of the survey methods is examined in section 4.1.5.

### **4.1.2 Response rate**

Each of the survey methods placed different demands on the time, commitment and abilities of consumers who participated, in this way differently affecting participation rates.

#### **Focus groups**

As described in Chapter 2, focus groups were conducted for the clients of ten agencies. This method of collecting consumer feedback made the most demands on consumers in terms of leaving their home to attend the group and requiring between two and three hours of their time. While the Institute facilitated consumer involvement by providing transport and refreshments and breaks during the session, these group discussions nevertheless required participants to spend time sitting, to make use of unfamiliar facilities and to focus on the topic of service quality for an extended period. While these demands were well within the capability of many HACC consumers, and indeed many enjoyed the opportunity to attend, for some the sessions were physically demanding. In some cases, these demands prohibited their attendance. For others, such as carers, the necessary respite care arrangements to cover the time of this session prohibited their involvement.

The success with which consumers were recruited to attend these sessions varied according to the type of service they received and by implication, the consumers' level of disability. Minor difficulties were experienced recruiting consumers of meals, transport and home maintenance services. Agencies providing these services gathered a sample drawn from their recent consumers who would be capable of taking part in such a group. In some cases, those contacted by the agencies were reported to have been unable to attend as a result of illness, conflicting appointments, or difficulties using transport.

Three services arranged a sample of their consumers to participate in focus groups according to those who attended their day respite centre. On average, these clients were more dependent than those from meals, transport and home maintenance services. This sampling method introduced less bias into the sample since those who participated depended on those who turned up on the day, rather than those whom the agency chose to contact.

Far greater difficulty was encountered in arranging focus groups for clients of more intensive forms of services provided in the home, including home help, personal care and community nursing. Some of the agencies in the sample who were approached advised against requesting this of their clients because too many would be unable to attend or would find it very difficult or contribute to such a discussion. The selection of participants to attend focus groups by any random sampling method was inappropriate for this same reason. Agencies for whom the dependency levels of consumers prohibited involvement in focus groups included one providing community nursing and two providing community options services to very highly dependent clients. Respite services also reported that they had experienced great difficulty getting feedback and consumer involvement in service management from carers, as these consumers were generally too overburdened to find spare time for such activities. Consequently respite service providers advised against surveying carers in this way.

Once consumers had agreed to participate in focus groups on a particular time and day, unexpected medical appointments and illness were common reasons for participants failing to attend on the day. Between 10 and 20% of participants scheduled to attend focus groups did not do so.

One of the services in the matched sample attempted to recruit consumers to participate in focus groups by sending out a letter to this purpose. Clients of this agency received community options services. Of the twenty letters distributed, four were returned indicating willingness to take part (20% response rate). It was therefore necessary to recruit additional participants by telephone invitation.

## **Telephone interviews**

The preferred method of recruiting consumers to take part in telephone interviews was for the agency to ask their consent to take part directly, either by telephone or in person. The resources available to agencies did not always allow this to happen, particularly where the service ordinarily had minimal contact with consumers. For example, a home maintenance service that took part in the study was instructed to attempt to recruit 40 of their recent clients to the study. Some of these clients may have only received services once, others may have only received them once every three months. The agency was not usually involved in regular client contact which would have facilitated recruitment to the study. Further, the agency's administrative budget could not support the additional hours required to call consumers requesting their involvement. As a result, invitations to take part in a telephone survey were sent out to consumers through the mail.

Of the sample of 18 agencies whose participants took part in the study by telephone interview, ten were able to invite a sample of their clients in person. One was able to ask a portion of their sample in person and the remainder by mail. The remaining seven agencies sent an invitation to participate in a telephone interview by mail.

Some service providers believed that telephone interviews would not be the most appropriate means of obtaining feedback from their clients. Among these were service providers whose clients were more dependent, whose clients were hearing impaired, unlikely to find the time to take such a call, or simply clients for whom a telephone call would be out of the ordinary. To accommodate the different survey needs of clients, mailed invitations to consumers encouraged them to take part in a telephone interview but offered the option of a mail survey. Two of the service providers who invited participants to take part in person offered consumers the option of completing a mail survey.

Those agencies who invited participants in person were able to obtain all of the sample requested of them by contacting consumers until the required number had been achieved, or were able to invite all of their clients to participate and successfully recruited those available or able to take part. Service providers frequently had to call a number of their clients to obtain a reasonable telephone interview sample. Recruitment success at this stage was associated with the type of service the agency provided and with the associated level of dependency of the clients of those services. Ninety per cent of transport clients contacted in person by the service provider agreed to take part, whereas services providing community nursing had greater difficulty recruiting participants. Even when the community nursing service personally telephoned clients to seek their involvement only 30% agreed to take part. Community Options programs providing services to highly dependent clients determined that only half of their clients were suitable to be approached for such a survey (whether by mail or telephone interview) and of these all agreed to take part.

Of the seven agencies that recruited participants by mail, an average of 44% of respondents replied. On average, 23% of those invited to participate by mail indicated that they would like to take part in a telephone interview, whereas an average of 16% indicated that they would prefer a mailed survey. An average of 5% of respondents replied indicating that they did not want to take part.

Once consent to take part in a telephone interview was obtained and they had received further information about the study, consumers were then contacted by the telephone interviewers. On average, 11% of willing participants could not be interviewed. Reasons for these interviews not taking place included:

- failure to respond after 15 calls at different times of day and different days of the week;
- disconnected number;
- the participant refused to take part;
- a medical problem had arisen causing them to be unable to take part;
- the participant had died or moved into other accommodation; or
- the participant was unknown at that number.

### **Mail surveys**

Mailed surveys provided the most straightforward method for involving consumers in the study. Agencies were simply required to forward survey packages to the required sample of their clients along with their own cover letter. Consent for the release of contact details was not required by a survey forwarded in this way and administratively the task was less demanding on service providers. Along with this however, was the consequence that only impersonal contact was made with consumers in encouraging their participation in the study.

In only three of the 21 agencies that asked their clients to complete a survey were these surveys delivered in person. For these three services between 80 and 100% of distributed surveys were returned. For agencies that distributed mail surveys through the post, the average response rate was 45%. The best response rate achieved by this method was 65% and the poorest was 8%. In the case of the service with this very low response rate the respite service provider did not include their own cover letter explaining that they were forwarding the survey on behalf of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Without this endorsement, consumers may not have given the same value to completing and returning the survey.

While there was little apparent pattern to the level of response rates across service types, one service type did stand out from the others. The response rate to mail surveys was lowest for services providing respite. On average, 27% of consumers of respite services responded to the survey, 18% fewer respondents than the average across all service types. Not surprisingly, carers requiring respite were the least likely to have the time or inclination to complete a mailed survey.

While systematic data were not collected on the subject, response rates to the mail survey appeared to be higher among agencies who reported active consumer participation in their own quality assessment surveys or other activities requiring consumer input. However the presence of a committee of consumers or consumer representatives on the board did not necessarily go hand in hand with high response rates. Similarly, response rates tended to be

low when services had expressed difficulty in getting such feedback in the past or where clients were not accustomed to being involved in such activities.

### **4.1.3 Profile of respondents**

The purposive sampling method used to select agencies was constructed with the primary intention of examining a mix of agency service types. It was also designed with the intention of including some services targeted to two predetermined client groups: those whose clients were from a non-English speaking background and those whose clients were Aboriginal. It was not constructed with the intention of ensuring a representative mix of consumers. With this in mind, the profile of respondents to each of the survey methods provides an indication of the extent to which the survey has reached consumers typical of the HACC target group. By comparing these findings across methods, some information can be obtained about which survey methods are more or less successful with particular client groups.

#### **Focus groups**

Clients of ten agencies participated in focus groups. Two of these agencies were those selected for the matched sample on the basis of size and general service type. Three were selected on the basis of the services they provided: home maintenance, meals, and transport. According to the sampling procedure and survey methods agreed with the steering group, services provided to Aboriginal and non-English speaking background consumers were also targeted for participation in focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted in each of two agencies providing services specifically to clients of non-English speaking background. Four focus groups were conducted in agencies providing services specifically to clients of Aboriginal descent; two in a remote Aboriginal service and one each in a rural and urban service.

#### **Participants of focus groups for Aboriginal specific services**

A total of 23 clients of Aboriginal specific services participated in focus groups. Seventy per cent were female. An equal number of these consumers fell into the age groups of 65 to 74 and 75 to 84 years. All participants reported that they were pensioners or on a low income. Eighty three per cent lived in a rural or remote area.

#### **Participants of focus groups for ethnic specific services**

A total of 23 clients of ethnic specific services participated in focus groups. Seventy eight per cent were female. The bulk of participants reported themselves to be between the ages of 65 to 74 years and 75 to 84 years, with an equal proportion (40%) in each of these age groups. Ninety one per cent of participants reported that they were pensioners. All lived in an urban area.

#### **Participants of focus groups selected by service type**

The profile of respondents presented in the table and text that follows details the characteristics of clients of the five agencies selected on the basis of service type rather than client characteristics. A total of 60 consumers participated in these focus groups.

Seventy three per cent of those participating were female. The age profile of participants, shown in Table 17 indicates that the largest proportion of participants fell into the 65 to 74 years age group. In 10% of cases the services were provided to assist the person who was

attending the group as a carer. Five per cent of participants were from a non-English speaking background and none of the participants reported being of Aboriginal descent. Seventy seven per cent reported that they were pensioners or on a low income. Thirty per cent lived in a rural or remote area. Two per cent were caring for someone with dementia.

**Table 17: Focus groups – age of respondents for the total sample**

Age group	Number	Proportion
0-18	1	1.7%
19-24	0	0.0%
25-34	1	1.7%
35-44	8	13.3%
45-54	2	3.3%
55-64	2	3.3%
65-74	9	15.0%
75-84	27	45.0%
85+	7	11.7%
Missing	3	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Telephone interviews

The characteristics of the 373 consumers from 17 agencies who participated in the telephone interviews are presented in this section.

**Table 18: Telephone interviews – age of respondents for the total sample**

Age group	Number	Percentage
0-18	1	0.3%
19-24	2	0.5%
25-34	8	2.1%
35-44	16	4.3%
45-54	32	8.6%
55-64	41	11.0%
65-74	99	26.5%
75-84	111	29.8%
85+	60	16.1%
Missing	3	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Seventy six per cent were female. The age profile of respondents, shown in Table 18 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents were in the 75 to 84 age group. Eleven per cent of telephone interview respondents were carers. Eight per cent of respondents were from a non-English speaking background and one half of one per cent reported being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Eighty one per cent reported that they were

pensioners or on a low income. Thirteen per cent lived in a rural or remote area. Sixteen per cent were caring for someone with dementia.

## Mail surveys

This section presents an overall profile of the 1666 mail survey respondents from all 21 agencies that participated in the collection of feedback in this way.

Seventy one per cent of those responding were female. The age profile of respondents, shown in Table 19 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents fell into the 74 to 84 years age group. In 16% of cases the services were provided to assist the person completing the questionnaire as a carer. Nine per cent of respondents were from a non-English speaking background and one half of one per cent of respondents reported being of Aboriginal descent. Seventy five per cent reported that they were pensioners or on a low income. Eleven per cent lived in a rural or remote area. Eight per cent were caring for someone with dementia.

**Table 19: Mail surveys – age of respondents for the total sample**

Age group	Number	Percentage
0-18	12	0.7
19-24	9	0.5
25-34	33	2.0
35-44	54	3.2
45-54	66	4.0
55-64	122	7.3
65-74	314	18.8
75-84	570	34.2
85+	283	17.0
Missing	102	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1666</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: An additional 101 (6.1%) of the sample were aged below 55 but their aged grouping was not defined according to the grouping presented in this table. This occurred for five agencies who completed an early version of the CSI prior to the final changes before testing.

## Evaluation of respondent profile

The age and sex of survey participants can be compared to the national profile of HACC service users to examine the extent to which the survey has reached consumers typical of the HACC target group. The age and sex profile of HACC consumers nationally is presented in Table 20.

The relative proportions of males to females in the survey sample across all three survey methods are equivalent to the relative proportions in the estimated total population.

The age of telephone interviewees and mailed survey respondents are generally comparable with the national profiles of HACC service users but focus group participants are notably younger. The most common age group for focus group participants was between 65 and 74 whereas mail survey respondents and telephone interviewees, like the population of HACC consumers were mostly commonly aged between 75 and 84 years.

**Table 20: HACC service users by age and sex – estimated proportions, 1997–98**

Age	Female	Male	Total
	% of total sample	% of total sample	% of total sample
0–49	5.9	4.8	10.8
50–54	1.3	0.9	2.2
55–59	1.6	1.1	2.7
60–64	2.4	1.5	4.0
65–69	4.7	2.7	7.4
70–74	8.4	4.3	12.7
75–79	12.7	5.4	18.1
80–84	14.4	5.7	20.1
85–89	10.5	4.1	14.6
90+	5.4	1.9	7.3
<b>All ages</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Data provided by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Characteristics of consumers, unmeasured by the survey, were likely to have impacted on the response rate. Significant factors of this sort would include: the illness or disability of the respondent, including memory loss and confusion, and the lack of available time or energy to undertake such a survey. These factors would have affected focus group participants the most and in differing degrees, telephone interview and mail survey participation rates. Indeed, given the relationship between age and disability, the lower age groups participating in the focus groups compared to the national profile suggest that disability may have prevented many consumers from attending.

Nationally, there are 2.4% of HACC consumers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent (DHAC, 1999). In both the telephone and mail surveys Aboriginal people are under represented. One half of one per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are represented in the telephone interviews and mailed surveys. This finding may reflect consumer preferences and service provision practices. Where they are available and practical, many Aboriginal consumers may prefer to use services provided by Aboriginal people and for Aboriginal people.

Nationally, there are 13% of HACC consumers from a non-English speaking background (DHAC, 1999). In both the telephone and mail surveys non-English speaking background people are under represented. This finding may also reflect consumer preferences and service provision practices. Where they are available and practical, non-English speaking background consumers may prefer to use services that specifically provide for their nationality or address linguistic and cultural issues appropriately.

Some non-English speaking background respondents to the mail survey were able to use an interpreter or family member to respond to the survey. Translated surveys may have assisted some of these consumers in responding to the survey but as noted previously, some non-English speaking background consumers may not be literate in either English or their first language. Telephone interview also presented some barriers for consumers of non-English speaking background. In all cases, those who gave consent to take part were able to use a family member or other carer to interpret or undertake the interview, and in the case of the group of Cantonese consumers, an interpreter was arranged by the Institute. HACC

funded services may, however, have clients from a diverse mix of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Securing their participation in exercises such as this would require interpreter and translator resources and a tailored approach to collecting feedback according to the characteristics of the clients.

The issues of whether the sample of ethnic consumers and Aboriginal consumers from services not specifically targeted to these groups appropriately represents the spread of these consumers in the HACC population cannot be answered until such a census is undertaken. The very low participation rates by these groups does however reinforce the steering groups' recommendation, that Aboriginal consumers and non-English speaking background consumers are best involved in such a survey by personal contact, through focus groups or face to face interviews.

The proportion of HACC consumers who are pension recipients is estimated to be 93% nationally. In the focus groups, telephone interviews and mail surveys, 77%, 81% and 75% respectively describe themselves as having a low income or being on a pension. This result suggests that with respect to the sample accessed by this study, a greater portion of self-funded and more affluent consumers were able to participate.

Data are not currently available to compare the survey samples with the national profiles for those living in rural or remote areas.

While it is difficult to make conclusions about the representativeness of this study's sample without an appropriate census against which to compare statistics, the comparison undertaken here suggests that the survey accessed a sample of HACC consumers that was only approximately representative of the HACC target population.

**4.1.4 Evaluation of missing data by survey method**

An examination of the incidence of missing data for each survey method provides information about the strengths of each survey method in terms of gaining data from participants. The possible causes of missing data were discussed in detail in the previous chapter and among them are lack of relevance, lack of clarity, or the perceived inappropriateness of questions or the response categories provided to answer them. The analysis that follows presents the rates of missing data for telephone interview items and for written questionnaires completed as part of the focus group exercise (that is, excluding participants from services targeted to Aboriginal consumers and consumers from a non-English speaking background). These are then compared to the incidence of missing data for mail surveys presented previously in Chapter 3.

**Focus groups**

Table 21 lists the proportion of missing data against questions asked in all four modules of the CSI used during focus group discussions.

**Table 21: Focus groups – proportion of missing data**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	5.0%

Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	0.0%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	0.0%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	0.0%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	10.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	7.7%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	11.8%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	17.6%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	0.0%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.7%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	11.7%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	0.0%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	11.8%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	0.0%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	6.3%
Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	0.0%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	5.9%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	0.0%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	0.0%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	7.7%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	5.9%
Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	7.1%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?	15.0%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	3.3%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	3.3%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	13.3%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	11.7%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	8.3%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	8.3%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	5.0%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	0.0%

Across all items the average proportion of missing data was 5.8%. This low level of missing data was just 0.8% lower than that for the mail surveys. This finding confirms that the clarity and relevance of the CSI is sufficient to obtain responses from consumers, whether or not a facilitator is available to explain items or answer questions.

**Telephone interviews**

In the telephone interviews, 41 questions regarding service quality were asked of consumers on the condition that they were relevant to them according to the type of service they received. For those questions that were relevant to the interview participants, no missing data was recorded. All respondents provided an answer to all the questions relevant to them. In some cases, however, respondents may not have been able to provide an answer within the categories of the answers suggested to them according to the schedule. In these cases respondents answers were recorded as “other”. Table 22 presents the proportion of answers provided by participants which were recorded as “other”.

**Table 22: Telephone interviews – proportion of “other” responses**

Survey Items by HACCC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first talked to them did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	17.9%
When you first contacted the agency for help with home maintenance/modification did they take into account your needs and preferences?	4.5%
When you first contacted the agency for help with transport did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	15.7%
When you first contacted the agency for help with meals did they take into account your needs and preferences?	22.9%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the ones you needed?	6.9%
Have the transport services provided to you by the agency been adequate in meeting your transport needs?	10.0%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
How were these (rights and responsibilities) explained to you by the agency?	10.7%
Did the agency offer you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you could receive from them?	24.3%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the meals you could receive from them?	14.3%
Can you choose the time of day for receiving meals?	8.6%
If you did not think the services were what you needed, did you discuss this with the agency?	20.0%
If you did not think they services (transport) were adequate did you discuss this with the agency?	10.0%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	13.7%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	17.2%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	3.7%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	5.7%
Are the people from this agency safe and skilled drivers and transport assistants?	4.3%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you?	9.8%
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how often you would be receiving these services?	6.9%

Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how long you would be receiving them?	10.6%
Did the agency give you enough information about what work they would do at your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	0.0%
Did the agency provided clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	24.3%
Do you have enough information about the meals services provided to you?	2.9%
Does the agency provide you with the help that they agreed to provide?	4.9%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	4.5%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	8.6%
Would you say that the transport services provided by this agency were reliable?	2.9%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person from a non-English speaking background?	9.7%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	0.5%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a pension recipient?	4.3%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person living in a rural or remote area?	6.1%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person caring for someone with dementia?	3.3%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal information, are kept confidential and will not be given to other people without your consent?	6.2%
If people from this agency need to pass information on about you, do they ask your permission first?	17.2%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	10.2%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	14.7%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	4.0%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	11.8%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate or someone to help you?	14.2%
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative to be your advocate?	6.4%

Across all items the average proportion of items answered with an “other” category response was 9.6%. The previous chapter described circumstances under which questions were only partly relevant to the consumer’s circumstances. In other cases, the available response categories may not have been satisfactory to properly reflect the consumer’s experience or views. Telephone interviews gave respondents more opportunity to explain these problems and to answer without having to either conform unhappily to the categories provided or to skip the question entirely. Not surprisingly then, the proportion of respondents providing information in the “other” category is slightly larger than the number of missing values found even in focus group completed surveys. Telephone interviews, by the nature of the one-to-one conversation that takes place, allows for fuller understanding of the individual’s opinions than do focus groups. During focus groups discussions, individual replies may sometimes be lost in the group discussion and completing surveys during the process of this discussion does not allow much time for participants to provide written explanations of their answers or non-responses. It is notable, however, that the fuller

understanding that comes from telephone interviews often requires lengthy discussion and for some participants, much effort is required to keep the subject of conversation focused on service quality issues.

## 4.1.5 Evaluation of response category use by survey method

### Use of the “Don’t know” category by survey method

As described in Chapter 3, the degree to which respondents used the “don’t know” category provides an indication of the extent to which the questions put to them have a valid relationship to their experiences. Chapter 3 presented quantitative data from the mailed surveys to examine those items to which respondents most frequently answered “don’t know.” This chapter will compare those results to answers given to the same questions but put to consumers by way of a telephone interview or during a focus group discussion.

### Focus groups

**Table 23: Focus groups – proportion of “don’t know” responses**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	3.5%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	6.3%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	18.8%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	0.0%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	16.7%
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	0.0%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	44.8%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	28.3%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	0.0%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	0.0%
Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	0.0%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	0.0%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	0.0%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	6.3%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	0.0%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	0.0%

Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	0.0%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	12.1%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	50.0%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	9.6%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	13.2%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	9.1%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	18.2%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	3.5%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	12.5%

The average proportion of “don’t know” replies across items was 9.0% for surveys completed during the focus group discussions (see Table 23). This figure was equivalent to the average proportion of “don’t know” replies obtained for the mail survey (8.8%). This suggests that although focus groups had the advantage of putting items in context during a discussion and providing a facilitator to clarify issues, this assistance did not influence the proportion of “don’t know” replies. Again, this supports the finding that items are clear to consumers and that most of the items are relevant. The mail survey results presented in Chapter 3 discussed items that raised problems consumers in regard to relevance. For many items none of the respondents used the “don’t know” category, suggesting that as a group, respondents were certain about which questions they could provide answers for and which ones they could not.

### Telephone interviews

Table 24 shows the proportion of “don’t know” replies occurring for items covered during the telephone interviews. On average 9.2% of respondents answered don’t know to questions asked of them during the telephone interview. This figure is not significantly different than that obtained by either mail survey or focus group. While telephone interviews have the advantage of allowing the interviewer to clarify issues, this assistance did not influence the proportion of “don’t know” replies. Again, this supports the finding that items are clear to consumers and that their relevance is unaffected by the method of survey used.

**Table 24: Telephone interviews – proportion of “don’t know” responses**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first talked to them did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	2.4%
When you first contacted the agency for help with home maintenance/modification did they take into account your needs and preferences?	9.1%
When you first contacted the agency for help with transport did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	2.9%
When you first contacted the agency for help with meals did they take into account your needs and preferences?	8.6%

Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the ones you needed?	2.4%
Have the transport services provided to you by the agency been adequate in meeting your transport needs?	0.0%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
How were these (rights and responsibilities) explained to you by the agency?	25.5%
Did the agency offer you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	18.2%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you could receive from them?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the meals you could receive from them?	2.9%
Can you choose the time of day for receiving meals?	2.9%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	33.2%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	18.2%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	1.1%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	0.0%
Are the people from this agency safe and skilled drivers and transport assistants?	1.4%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you?	3.3%
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how often you would be receiving these services?	4.5%
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how long you would be receiving them?	38.6%
Did the agency give you enough information about what work they would do at your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	4.5%
Did the agency provided clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	1.4%
Do you have enough information about the meals services provided to you?	2.9%
Does the agency provide you with the help that they agreed to provide?	2.8%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	0.0%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	0.0%
Would you say that the transport services provided by this agency were reliable?	0.0%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person from a non-English speaking background?	9.7%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	0.0%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a pension recipient?	10.2%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person living in a rural or remote area?	10.2%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person caring for someone with dementia?	3.3%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal information, are kept confidential and will not be given to other people without your consent?	11.5%
If people from this agency need to pass information on about you, do they ask your permission first?	30.6%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	6.2%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	17.2%

Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	2.7%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	12.9%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate or someone to help you?	26.0%
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative to be your advocate?	33.2%

## Prevalence of the ceiling effect by survey method

As described in the previous chapter, feedback collected from the HACC target population is typically characterised by very high levels of reported satisfaction. All of the survey methods conducted were preceded by explanations of the value of their feedback in the process of improving quality, and assurances that critical comment allowed the opportunity to make positive changes. Focus groups, however, provided the greatest opportunity to encourage consumers to discuss issues that they believed could do with improvement. The analysis presented below examines the degree to which each of the survey methods were successful in overcoming the ceiling effect.

### Focus groups

Table 25 shows the proportion of replies in the most favourable category for each item completed on a written survey during the focus groups. On average 70.1% of respondents provided an answer in the most favourable category. The equivalent figure for mail surveys was 69.9%; a negligible difference. The focus groups appear to be no more successful in overcoming the ceiling effect that results from high reported satisfaction than the mail survey.

**Table 25: Focus groups – proportion responses in the most favourable response category**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	70.2%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right services for you?	93.8%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the right amount of services for you?	81.3%
Has their transport help been adequate to meet your needs?	92.9%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	33.3
Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	75.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the types of food provided?	0.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the time of day for receiving meals?	7.1%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you receive from them?	64.3%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	44.8%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	54.7%

Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	100.0%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	100.0%
Are the drivers and any assistants safe and skilled?	100.0%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	100.0%
Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	92.3%
Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide?	56.3%
Did the agency provide clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	100.0%
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	87.5%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	100.0%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	87.5%
Would you say that the transport service provided by this agency were reliable?	100.0%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of a special needs group?	76.5%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	87.9%
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	46.6%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	51.9%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	18.9%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	87.3%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	80.0%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	47.4%
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	6.3%

Note: Percentages calculated excluding missing cases.

## Telephone interviews

Table 26 shows the proportion of replies in the most favourable category for each question relevant to respondents to the telephone interviews. On average 62.5% of respondents provided an answer in the most favourable category. The equivalent figure for mail surveys was 69.9%; a difference of 7.4% which is statistically significant ( $t=4.77$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). These results suggest that telephone interviews appear to be more successful in overcoming the ceiling effect than either mail surveys or focus groups.

**Table 26: Telephone interviews – proportion responses in the most favourable response category**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Proportion
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>	
When you first talked to them did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	75.2%
When you first contacted the agency for help with home maintenance/modification did they take into account your needs and preferences?	81.8%

When you first contacted the agency for help with transport did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?	75.7%
When you first contacted the agency for help with meals did they take into account your needs and preferences?	42.9%
Do you think the services they agency said they would provider were the ones you needed?	89.8%
Have the transport services provided to you by the agency been adequate in meeting your transport needs?	88.6%
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>	
How were these (rights and responsibilities) explained to you by the agency?	45.1%
Did the agency offer you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided?	50.0%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you could receive from them?	52.9%
Has the agency offered you a choice in the meals you could receive from them?	20.0%
Can you choose the time of day for receiving meals?	2.9%
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>	
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	44.0%
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	54.4%
Have you ever been concerned about your safety and security because of the actions of agency staff?	57.1%
Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?	94.3%
Are the people from this agency safe and skilled drivers and transport assistants?	92.9%
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>	
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you?	71.1%
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how often you would be receiving these services?	74.4%
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how long you would be receiving them?	18.3%
Did the agency give you enough information about what work they would do at your home before they did the work (home maintenance)?	77.3%
Did the agency provided clear information to you about the services (transport) they would provide?	82.9%
Do you have enough information about the meals services provided to you?	71.4%
Does the agency provide you with the help that they agreed to provide?	89.0%
Did the agency complete the work (home maintenance) as they said they would and on time?	95.5%
Would you say that they meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?	82.9%
Would you say that the transport services provided by this agency were reliable?	90.0%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person from a non-English speaking background?	58.1%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	-
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a pension recipient?	82.5%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person living in a rural or remote area?	73.5%
Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person caring for someone with dementia?	90.2%
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>	
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal information, are kept confidential and will not be given to other people without your consent?	82.0%
If people from this agency need to pass information on about you, do they ask your permission first?	50.1%
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>	

Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	57.1%
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	24.1%
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	91.7%
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	2.4%
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>	
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate or someone to help you?	15.8%
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative to be your advocate?	27.6%

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## Summary of the validity of responses by survey method

Putting this last result together with those of previous analyses undertaken in this section, it can be concluded that the CSI is robust across survey methods with respect to the clarity and relevance of its items.

Further, it appears that the one-to-one approach of a telephone interview may provide the most accurate measure of respondent's views in terms of their level of confidence in the quality of the services they have received. When interviewees are not willing to give the agency the highest praise on a subject, they appear to be more likely to provide an answer not within the categories of the questionnaire. These explanations provide insight into the circumstances of survey participants and shed light on quality issues as they related to the particular service under examination.

Focus groups, while providing an opportunity for consumers to receive clarification on the meaning of items and to hear the views of others, nevertheless produced the same high levels of reported satisfaction as mail surveys. As Alt Beatty Consulting noted, in at least one of the focus groups conducted there was clear pressure from older consumers directed towards some of the more vocal participants, not to express criticisms against a service for which they believed they should be grateful.

### 4.1.6 Efficacy of survey methods for special needs groups

#### Non-English speaking background consumers

As noted in the literature review prepared for this project, significant challenges must be overcome to gain the involvement of consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The steering group for this project recommended focus groups as a face to face method of gaining these consumers' views on service quality. With the support of their peers, participants were able to discuss their experiences and opinions about service quality using an interpreter to convey their views.

Non-English speaking focus group participants were frank in their answers to the questions presented to them, indicating how services were provided and what information had been provided to them. It was not clear, however, that participants were willing to discuss issues where they had concerns about the service's quality. The only issue about which a substantive complaint was raised by ethnic focus group participants was with regard to the quantity of services provided to them; a factor which they clearly believed to be the result of government funding rather than inadequate service provision practices.

A group of Cantonese speaking consumers were recruited to take part in telephone interviews in the course of gathering the sample of telephone interview participants for the general population (that is, they were not specifically targeted for the purpose of the study). In general, where agencies provided services to consumers of different ethnic backgrounds as part of their client base, these service providers did not believe that telephone interviews would be a productive means of gathering consumer feedback from these groups. In this context, service providers believed that these consumers would be unlikely to reveal their thoughts on service quality to someone outside their community with whom they had not previously had contact. This concern was borne out for the group of Cantonese consumers interviewed by a Cantonese speaking interpreter. While these consumers clearly enjoyed the opportunity for discussion about their services they did not appear to be willing to offer substantive critical comment about what they received.

Cultural barriers to giving criticism of services are likely to affect the feedback received from some non-English speaking background groups regardless of the survey method used with these consumers. While the focus group was the most successful of the two methods trialed in this study, and the method most frequently recommended in the literature (Craw & Gilchrist, 1998, McVicar & Renolds, 1995), a more innovative means of hearing the voice of these consumers may be required.

### **Aboriginal consumers**

The steering group recommended focus groups and personal interviews as a face to face method of gaining Aboriginal consumers' views on service quality. Four focus groups were conducted for consumers from three services. Personal interviews were also undertaken; four by telephone and three in person.

Aboriginal focus group participants were open not only about how services were provided and what information had been given to them but about their criticisms of the service, although the context was important in allowing this frank airing of views. Where the general consensus of the group was critical, criticisms were more freely expressed, where the group consensus was positive, critical comment was only expressed through one-to-one survey methods (telephone interview or face-to-face interview).

The literature review noted that different groups of Aboriginal people have different cultural practices that affect how feedback should be collected. One of the most effective means of hearing the voice of these consumers recommended by the literature was to make use of established community contacts and networks. Indeed, where elders committees were active in contributing to agency management it was more feasible for the service provider to arrange focus group sessions and interview participants.

Elders committees offered a means of representing the views of consumers to management and provide a credible demonstration of the value given to elder consumers opinions. In some cases, however, they may not represent all in the community accessing the service, particularly where the committee is largely made up of members of the family or clan that predominates in the area. With this in mind, a mix of group and one-to-one survey methods is necessary to ensure that consumer feedback accurately reflects the views of all Aboriginal service users.

Telephone interviews were not a method generally recommended for use with consumers of Aboriginal specific services but proved to be appropriate in the circumstances that arose in this study and yielded frank and insightful information about the services. Consumers who could not attend the focus group meeting on the day, wished to take part by this means.

These telephone interviews may only have been successful, however, because they were put in the context of a community meeting.

Personal contact with consumers gave significant weight to the value placed on their opinions and experiences. That this contact came from a government agency received approval from consumers. The visit from government officers gave credibility to government commitment to improving service quality. Bearing in mind that in this study only three services were examined, a sample far from comprehensive, it cannot be concluded that all Aboriginal consumers would respond as well to government run focus groups. Further, issues concerned with service quality in Aboriginal communities frequently require an understanding of culturally appropriate behaviour. Government officers with an understanding of these issues would be most appropriate to facilitate surveys with consumers accessing Aboriginal specific services.

### **Consumers with dementia and their carers**

The methods suitable for involving consumers with dementia and their carers are limited. Where a carer is available, their views on service quality are sought. Although as Llewellyn, McConnell, & Bye (1998) report, opinions frequently differ between carers and care recipients. In addition, as described in Section 4.1, carers rarely have the ability to find time to participate in focus groups. Telephone interviews and mail surveys were more practical for carers.

Some consumers with dementia do not have a carer. Focus group participation by consumers with dementia is not feasible even for those with early stage dementia as these sessions require sustained attention. Telephone interview and mail survey participation are also unsuitable means of hearing their views on service quality issues, particularly as these methods have limited provision to gauge the extent to which consumers are left concerned over issues or to resolve these concerns. In this study, consumers suffering dementia were not included in the study; rather their carers or advocates were invited to take part, where they were available. Even so, some participants were of less sound mind than others. Telephone interviewers noted that when interviewees were of less sound mind they were less able to simply skip over questions that were not of relevance to them, but rather worried about how these issues might apply to them. While telephone interviewers were able to provide some reassurance in these cases, mail surveys offered no such assistance unless the participant called the toll free query line.

### **Younger people with a disability**

The three services described as providing assistance to younger people with a disability that took part in this study were respite services and provided care and activities for young adults and children. The carers, as clients of the services, responded to the survey. Difficulties encountered in survey participation for carers has been dealt with elsewhere in this report but primarily stem from the limited time and energy that these consumers have for such exercises.

Aside from these services, participation rates were high for younger people in this study. Twenty one per cent of participants of the focus groups (excluding those conducted with Aboriginal consumers and those from ethnic backgrounds) were below the age of 55, 16% of telephone interview participants were below the age of 55, and 17% of mail survey respondents. The age profile of HACC consumers nationally that was presented in Table 20 estimates that 12% of HACC consumers nationally are below the age of 55 years. Clearly

younger people with a disability are more active participants in feedback exercises, particularly focus groups – a method that places greater demands on participants than telephone interviews or mail surveys and requires more commitment to attend.

## 4.2 Efficacy of survey methods for obtaining reliable service quality information

### 4.2.1 Reliability of survey methods

Chapter 3 demonstrated that the items of the mail survey were sufficiently related to one another to describe them as collectively providing a reliable measure of service quality in relation to the HACC National Service Standards. In other words, it addressed the question: do different items about service quality yield a consistent assessment of service quality? This section uses inferential statistics to examine the reliability of the survey methods. It addresses the question: do consumer appraisals of service quality collected by different survey methods yield a consistent assessment of service quality?

#### The matched sample, within subjects design

To test the reliability of survey methods, a portion of the agencies participating in the study formed a matched sample with a within subjects design. More than one survey method was used for different groups of consumers in each of the agencies in this sample. This allows the effectiveness of each method to be tested by comparing the results against a common service quality. The general services survey module was used with these consumers.

#### A statistical test of the difference between methods

The literature clearly indicates that survey methods vary in the success with which they gather data; mail survey data often being described as least reliable. A statistical test of these differences must begin, however, with the assumption that all three survey methods gather data of equal validity; that they all equally successfully collect data about consumer views of service quality. A statistical test is used to determine if differences in consumer appraisals that occur from one survey method to another can be explained by chance or whether the differences are large enough that they cannot be explained by chance but rather are the result of the different survey methods applied. Chapter 3 demonstrated that it is not appropriate to add scores over items so each item is tested individually for the reliability of the data it collects according to the survey method used to collect it.

**Table 27: Comparisons of mean item response across survey methods – focus groups and telephone interviews**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Telephone interview (Mean)	Focus group Mean	T-test result
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>			
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	1.16	1.50	NS
Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right services for you?	1.03	1.00	P<0.02

Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right amount of services for you?	1.08	1.00	P<0.03
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>			
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	1.09	1.14	NS
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>			
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.38	1.25	NS
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.50	1.33	NS
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>			
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	1.10	1.00	P<0.02
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	1.12	1.08	NS
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>			
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	1.03	1.00	P<0.02
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	1.18	1.00	P<0.006
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>			
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	1.30	1.27	NS
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	1.68	1.88	NS
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	1.01	1.10	NS
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	1.00	1.11	NS
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>			
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	1.10	1.17	NS
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	1.80	1.90	NS

Note: NS denotes "not significant".

Results calculated for 113 cases selected from a large agency participating in all three survey methods..

Probability level at which a result was determined to be significantly different from chance was p<0.01. This more stringent test was used to compensate for the use of multiple significance tests.

Table 27 shows the mean response to items provided by focus group participants and telephone interview participants when missing cases, "other" category responses and "don't know" responses are deleted from the analysis. A score of one represents the response most favourable to the agency's service quality assessment. The higher the score the poorer the assessment of quality. Examination of the mean responses to items reveals that five items were rated significantly higher by focus group participants than by telephone interview respondents. These were items related to satisfaction with the level of service provision, agreements about service provision and the two items concerned with privacy and confidentiality of information.

Table 28 shows the mean response to items provided by focus group participants and mail survey respondents when missing cases and "don't know" responses are deleted from the analysis. The mean responses to items generally do not vary between the two survey groups.

Only one item (“When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?”) was rated significantly more favourably in mail surveys than in focus groups.

**Table 28: Comparisons of mean item response across survey methods – focus groups and mail survey**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Focus group (Mean)	Mail survey Mean	T-test result
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>			
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	1.50	1.00	P<0.05
Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right services for you?	-	-	-
Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right amount of services for you?	1.00	1.00	NS
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>			
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	-	-	-
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>			
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.25	1.17	NS
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.33	1.08	NS
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>			
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	1.00	1.14	NS
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	1.08	1.12	NS
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>			
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?			
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	1.00	1.00	NS
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>			
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?	1.27	1.14	NS
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	1.89	1.79	NS
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	1.10	1.04	NS
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	1.11	1.05	NS
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>			
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	1.67	1.00	NS
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	1.90	1.80	NS

Note: NS denotes “not significant”.

Results calculated for 113 cases selected from a large agency participating in all three survey methods.

- Indicates insufficient variance to calculate the result.

Table 29 shows the mean response to items provided by telephone interview participants and mail survey respondents when missing cases, “other” responses and “don’t know” responses are deleted from the analysis. Examination of the mean responses to items reveals that three items were rated significantly more favourably by mail survey respondents than by telephone interview participants. These were items related to satisfaction with needs assessment and the level of service provision, and with beliefs about agency practices in regard to consumer participation in management.

**Table 29: Comparisons of mean item response across survey methods – mail survey and telephone interviews**

Survey Items by HACC National Service Standard Objectives	Telephone int. (Mean)	Mail survey Mean	T-test result
<b>Objective 1: Access to Services</b>			
When you first contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?	1.16	1.00	P<0.006
Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right services for you?	-	-	-
Do you think the services they agency said they would provide were the right amount of services for you?	1.08	1.00	P<0.01
<b>Objective 2: Information and Consultation</b>			
Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you?	-	-	-
<b>Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management</b>			
Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.38	1.17	NS
Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?	1.50	1.08	P<0.001
<b>Objective 4: Coordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery</b>			
Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?	1.10	1.14	NS
Does the agency provide help in the way they said they would provide it?	1.12	1.12	NS
<b>Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Personal Information</b>			
Are you satisfied that any details that they agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?	1.03	1.00	NS
If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?	1.18	1.07	NS
<b>Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes</b>			
Has the agency informed you of what to do if you’re not happy with the service you get?	1.30	1.14	NS
Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?	1.68	1.78	NS
Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?	1.01	1.04	NS
Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?	1.00	1.05	NS
<b>Objective 7: Advocacy</b>			
Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange service for you?	1.10	1.00	NS
Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?	1.80	1.80	NS

Note: NS denotes "not significant".

Results calculated for 113 cases selected from a large agency participating in all three survey methods.

- Indicates insufficient variance to calculate the result.

For the sample examined in this analysis the method of collecting consumer feedback had little impact on consumer service appraisals. Telephone interview responses provided a significantly less favourable assessment of service quality for three items (of seventeen) than were reported by mail survey respondents. Focus group participants provided more favourable assessments of service quality on five items than did telephone interview respondents. These differences are small, however as there is little variability in the scores which fall predominantly into the most favourable category for all survey methods.

## 4.3 Summary

- Three principal methods for consumer feedback were tested: focus groups, telephone interviews and mail surveys. A small number of face-to face interviews were conducted with consumers from Aboriginal services. Qualitative and quantitative data were used to establish the relative effectiveness of each of these methods.
- Focus groups provided detailed information about issues relevant to consumers and have the ability to uncover issues that may not be drawn out by other survey methods. Attention to the identity of the facilitator (to avoid individuals representing bodies that would cause respondents to be guarded in their discussion) and the regular use of these groups would improve consumer openness further.
- Focus groups were not a viable means of obtaining feedback from consumers more affected by disability. Focus groups were attended by consumers much younger than those most commonly found in the HACC target population. This provides clear evidence that older, more disabled consumers were not able to attend. These consumers would be systematically excluded from consumer feedback that relied solely on focus groups for its collection.
- The formal format of a telephone interview was foreign to some consumers and on average, one in ten respondents did not respond within the categories provided. This can be seen as a positive attribute, however, since while these uncategorised responses add to the time required for analysis, they provide valuable insight into the circumstances and views of consumers. They also allow consumers to express concerns without having these recorded in a "black and white" fashion.
- Telephone interviews facilitated greater participation than focus groups as evidenced by the older average age of participants (more closely approximating the HACC target population. This survey method overcomes some barriers to participation imposed by disability that prevented consumers from taking part in focus groups.
- The method of recruiting consumers to take part in telephone interview is affected by the resources available to the service provider who must conduct in this recruitment. The least costly method of recruitment (invitation by mail) results in the highest levels of non-response. Difficulties in recruiting participants were greater for agencies providing services to more highly dependent clients.
- Mail surveys can be distributed to large number of consumers with the least cost and effort required by the service provider. The absence of personal contact affords this survey method with the least encouragement for consumers to take part. Response rates

were lowest among respite clients as carers are those least likely to have the time or inclination to take part in these exercises. Response rates were notably higher for services whose clients were regularly active in feedback exercises (with the exception of situations where consumers were likely to feel over surveyed).

- Mail survey was the preferred participation method for some consumers. This method also overcame some barriers to participation that the other two methods did not. Again, participants surveyed by this method were older on average than those of focus groups and more closely approximated the HACC target population in respect of age.
- The absence of an interviewer or facilitator for mail survey respondents meant that these consumers relied upon their own interpretations of questions. For those undertaking the analysis of these results there is no direct means of verifying the accuracy of these replies since unlike telephone interviews, there is no opportunity to probe the respondent on the meaning of their answers. Respondents only occasionally provided additional text clarifying their views.
- Data obtained from telephone interviews was the least subject to the ceiling effect. Consumers were less likely to use the response category most favourable to the assessment of the agency when they responded by telephone interview than consumers who responded by mail survey or focus group.
- The average proportion of non-response to items was low for mail surveys (6.6%). Telephone interview respondents provided an answer to every question put to them but in 9.6% of cases their response was recorded in a category labelled “other”. When given the opportunity, consumers prefer to explain their opinions or experiences rather than use categories that do not adequately describe their position. There is also an indication that telephone interview respondents may prefer to provide an “other” response rather than directly criticise the agency.
- The proportion of respondents providing a “don’t know” answer did not differ significantly across the survey methods examined. This result provides confirmation that the items of the CSI are clear to consumers whether or not they have the assistance of someone to interpret them, and that their relevance is unaffected by the survey method used.
- Focus groups were a successful method of incorporating non-English speaking background consumers into consumer feedback exercises, where telephone interviews and mail surveys were likely to be less successful. Little or no critical comment was received through these group discussions however. A more innovative method of hearing the concerns of these consumers may be required.
- Focus groups, face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were conducted with Aboriginal HACC consumers. All of these methods were successful in drawing out frank and critical comment about service quality, although it is noted that the success of telephone interviews may have been due to the fact that they were conducted in the context of broader, face to face community consultation.
- Feedback from Aboriginal consumers was most readily obtained when consumers were active in service management through elders committees. Committee members were actively involved in focus groups. These committees may not, however, provide a representative sample of the Aboriginal people accessing a service. In turn, focus groups may not provide the appropriate forum for hearing the views of all of the relevant groups of Aboriginal people accessing a service. A mix of survey methods, which include one-to-one interviews, is recommended.

- The small sample of Aboriginal specific services examined precludes many conclusions being made from the data collected, but for this sample it was clear that government interest and involvement in service quality assessment and consultation was greatly appreciated.
- Consumers affected by dementia were not directly included in this study, but the feedback of their carers was sought. Respite services had the highest levels of overall non-response to the survey. Carers were also least likely to take part in focus groups, but when they did participate, they preferred the convenience of a mailed survey or telephone interview.
- Younger people with a disability showed participation rates in survey methods that are proportional higher than their prevalence in the population. Younger people with a disability are more active participants in feedback exercises, particularly focus groups; a method that places greater physical demands on consumers to attend.
- Inferential tests of the difference between survey methods examined in a within subjects design indicated that there was little difference between methods with regard to the ratings that respondents gave to agencies. Some support was provided for the finding that telephone interviews are more likely to facilitate critical comment.

# 5 The Consumer Survey Instrument as a measure of service quality

This chapter addresses the question of what role consumer feedback should take in the agency appraisal process. The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish whether the CSI can be considered suitable for use as a stand-alone indicator of service quality. If no other measure of service quality was available, could consumer feedback, as measured by the CSI, be used to indicate the quality of services being delivered? If not, to what use should it be put? To establish the stand-alone capacity of the CSI, it must be found to be reliable in both its content and method of application and it must provide a valid measure of service quality or one that accurately reflects the true level of service quality delivered to consumers.

## 5.1 The effectiveness of the Consumer Survey Instrument

### 5.1.1 Reliability and validity of the CSI

The results presented in Chapter 3 provide evidence in support of the effectiveness of the CSI in collecting reliable and valid consumer feedback. These results are reviewed briefly here.

On average, the items of the CSI had a high response rate. The mean proportion of respondents that failed to provide any answer for items was 6.6%. This result is encouraging as it suggests that the Consumer Survey Instrument is successful in eliciting consumer response; a result that could not be obtained if items were unclear, irrelevant or inappropriate. It can be inferred that items that were most successful in achieving high response rates were those that were directly relevant to the consumer's day to day experience of receiving services. It is not, however, possible to conclusively determine the cause of missing data.

Telephone interview respondents provided an answer to every question put to them but in some cases this response could not be recorded in the categories supplied by the interview schedule. The mean proportion of respondents that provided an answer that was recorded in the "other" response category was 9.6%. This was a higher proportion of respondents than those that chose to skip questions on the mail survey. This suggests that, when given the opportunity, consumers prefer to explain their opinions or experiences rather than use categories that do not adequately describe their position.

Rather than simply indicating that the most suitable response category was not available, responses recorded in the "other" category were, on occasion, a response that avoided

directly offering criticism of services but rather explained the context of what might otherwise seem to be a complaint. The most common example of this occurred for consumers who felt that they did not receive enough services or choice about their services but who nevertheless believed that their HACC service provider was offering them all that they could.

On average, a small proportion of the items of the CSI were answered “don’t know” by respondents. Across the three survey methods tested, the mean proportion of respondents that provided a “don’t know” answer for items was nine per cent. As Chapter 3 revealed, for the majority of items, no respondent provided a “don’t know” response, but there were several items for which “don’t know” was a very frequent answer (in one case for the mail survey up to half of respondents used this response category). These results indicate that the majority of items are relevant to the consumer’s experiences.

It is important, however, not to simply dismiss “don’t know” responses out of hand on the basis that they may not have relevance to consumers. Rather, in some cases, the incidence of “don’t know” responses provides important service quality information. Consumers who indicate that they do not know whether the agency would protect the confidentiality of their details, that they do not know whether they received information about how to make a complaint, or that they do not know that they could use an advocate or take their complaints to external bodies provide important information about the extent to which the agency has given them enough information to exercise their rights as consumers. Some consumers may answer “don’t know” because they can not remember or they have never been concerned to think about a certain issue. But when a large proportion of an agency’s consumers provide a “don’t know” response to an item that should have some relevance to them, there is an indication that this response category is providing service quality information.

As the literature review had led us to expect, there was some evidence of a ceiling effect among item responses. In other words, consumers tended to provide answers indicating a high level of satisfaction with services. For items concerned with issues of fundamental importance consumer rights, this result was reassuring (for example, items concerned with safety and security and privacy of information. Half of the items of the CSI were not strongly affected by the ceiling effect. Rather consumers’ responses to these items were spread across the range of possible responses. Importantly, this variability in the data makes it possible to discriminate between the quality of service provided in different agencies.

In the report of the pilot test of the HACC National Service Standards Instrument, it was suggested that some consumer survey items provide such vital information about service quality that attention to the agency is required if even if a single negative response is recorded. These items include those that relate to concerns about privacy and confidentiality of personal information, safety and security, failures of service provision and negative consequences of complaints. Clearly some items of the CSI should have more weight than others when considering their influence on the assessment of service quality. These items are likely to be those most affected by the ceiling effect, that is, with the lowest proportion of negative responses.

### **5.1.2 Uses of the Consumer Survey Instrument**

Taking all of these results and considerations into account, the Consumer Survey Instrument can be used as a means of gathering consumer feedback in relation to service quality. For the

majority of consumers, this tool reliably and validly measures consumers' opinions of service quality as they experience it.

How then, should this tool be used in the process of appraising agencies against the HACC National Service Standards? One of the most straightforward means of summarising the results of multiple items is to add the responses together to form a scale. To create a scale, each item from which it is calculated must follow a metric in which the increase or decrease in scored responses has some relationship to greater or lesser achievements in service quality (eg. Not satisfied, scored "1", somewhat satisfied, scored "2", and satisfied, scored "3" represents the conversion of an opinion into a numerically measured phenomena. These scores are then added over a number of selected items to form a scale. Scale scores provide summaries of all of the relevant data received. The previous discussion however, has presented a number of reasons why this would not be appropriate for the HACC consumer feedback data. These are detailed as follows:

- The relevance of "don't know" responses to service quality assessment implies that they cannot be excluded from quality assessment measures but their place in the metric of many items is unclear. A "don't know" response cannot always be argued to sit between a "yes" and a "no" but rather frequently represents a category all of its own. Neither can this category of response justifiably be removed from summaries of consumer feedback since many respondents use this category to provide information about what they do not know about their rights as consumers.
- Responses categorised as "other" received by telephone interview can indicate that a new response category is required (if enough of these replies of a certain type are received) but they can also allow consumers to express their concerns and difficulties without requiring them to commit to a black and white response category sometimes indicating approval or disapproval of agency practices. The "other" category can also provide vital information about service quality. In a scale constructed from item responses, those responses left in the "other" category would be excluded from analysis, thus eliminating potentially useful information about service quality.
- Missing data occurs more frequently for some items than others. On average, 7% of respondents did not provide an answer to any particular question. When scales are constructed of respondents' answers to survey items, cases with missing data must be excluded, since to include missing data would result in a miscalculation of the overall scale score. "Other" category responses must also be excluded as are "don't know" replies when they cannot justifiably be included in the metric of the item responses. These exclusions can result in a scale summary that no longer accurately represents the views of those who responded but rather represents the views of those respondents who diligently answered all questions and used all the valid response categories. The potential for bias that results from this is evident.
- Some of the items of the CSI produce very high proportions of responses in categories favourable to the agency. For some of these items, negative responses can provide important information about service quality issues. In a scale created by simply adding scores over items, these few cases of vital information are lost. An alternative technique involves weighting these items or response categories so that their negative responses are not overwhelmed by the high levels of praise that are normally associated with such surveys. A difficulty with this, however, is that the task of determining what these weightings should be is fraught with complexities caused not only by methodological issues but political issues too. It would be difficult to justify weighting up the negative

appraisals of a minority of consumers without first investigating the veracity of these complaints.

An alternative method of summarising item responses is to count particular categories of responses over a number of items. For example counting the number of items from a set of items for which a respondent replies “no”. The previous discussion indicates however, that frequently the proportion of “don’t know” replies provides important service quality information, information which must be understood in the context of the relative proportions of other responses.

To conclude, it would be inappropriate to create a summary scale or scales from the items of the CSI. Rather, the compiled responses to each category of each item provide useful information about agency performance against the HACC National Service Standards. Item results can thus best be used individually to inform appraisals against particular service standards.

## **5.2 The effectiveness of the survey methods**

### **5.2.1 Reliability and validity of survey methods**

Having established that the consumer survey instrument is sufficiently reliable to justify its use as tool to inform agency assessments against the HACC National Service Standards, it must also be shown that the method by which it is applied produces useful and accurate results. The results presented in Chapter 4 provide evidence in relation to this. These results are reviewed briefly here.

Focus groups systematically excluded older, more disabled consumers from involvement because of the physical demands of attending these sessions. Focus groups provided an excellent means of scoping consumer views and introducing new ideas to consumers. They were also well received by consumers, and provided an excellent opportunity to foster good relations with consumers who might otherwise feel excluded from community events and discussions (a factor of most significance for Aboriginal services). There was, however, no evidence that consumers were more likely to be critical of the quality of the services they received.

Telephone interviews facilitated greater consumer participation than focus groups as evidenced by the age distribution of participants more closely approximating that of the HACC target population. Nevertheless, it was evident that response rates were substantially lower for services whose clients were highly dependent. Many item responses indicated a high level of consumer satisfaction with services, regardless of survey method. However telephone interview respondents were least likely to use the response category most favourable to the assessment of the agency. Telephone interviews allowed for the deepest understanding of individual views and experiences and gave participants the opportunity to respond to items even when their response did not fit the categories provided or when respondents did not wish to be out-rightly critical.

Mail surveys provide a means of inviting a large number of consumers to participate in providing consumer feedback at relatively low cost. The participation rates that result from this method are low, however. Like telephone interviews, mail surveys facilitated greater consumer participation than focus groups as evidenced by the age distribution of

participants more closely approximating that of the HACC target population. There was evidence, however, that certain groups were less likely to participate by this method than were others. Response rates were lowest among respite clients. Carers are those least likely to have the time or inclination to take part in these exercises.

Mail survey can access the views of consumers difficult to reach by other means. For example, those in rural areas for whom involvement in face-to-face survey methods such as focus groups or personal interviews requires excessive travel, or those without a telephone. A draw back, however is that without personal contact with the respondent there is no opportunity to probe the respondent on the meaning of their answers or to clarify or assist with issues that may be of concern to them.

To conclude, all of the survey methods examined in this study have the capacity to provide valid and reliable information in relation to the HACC National Service Standards. It cannot be concluded, however, that this information can be used on its own as a measure of service quality, largely because of the difficulties of drawing out criticism about services from consumers. Telephone interviews offer the best opportunity to hear the critical views of consumers. Unlike mail surveys, the opportunity for dialogue between interviewer and interviewee provides an opportunity to understand the service experience of consumers, to clarify issues (for both parties) and to address the concerns of consumers. The successfulness of this survey method can however be hampered by the method by which respondents are recruited to take part. Inviting participants by mail negates some of the advantages of telephone interviews as a more inclusive and personalised means of collecting data.

No one method can be recommended for use in all agencies because particular characteristics of agencies and consumers may affect their ability to participate by some methods. Focus groups are perhaps the least appropriate as a universal means of gathering consumer feedback. Focus groups are clearly a method that excludes the involvement of many older and more disabled consumers. Telephone interviews and mail surveys overcome many of these obstacles to participation, but may still be problematic for some consumers such as those of non-English speaking backgrounds.

### **5.3 The validity of the CSI as a measure of service quality**

Having established that the CSI provides a reliable measure of consumer appraisal of service quality in both its content and method of application, it remains to be shown that the CSI is sufficiently valid that it will accurately reflect the true level of service quality delivered to consumers. To properly undertake this validity test it is necessary to compare consumer appraisals with appraisals collected by another means; in this case, with Instrument assessment scores. At the time of writing, Instrument assessment scores obtained in agency appraisals were not yet available from relevant State and Territory offices, so it is not possible to compare consumer appraisals against other measures of service quality collected by different means.

### **5.4 Uses of consumer feedback**

How should consumer feedback be built into an agency appraisal process? In the absence of data to confirm the validity of the service quality measures provided by consumer feedback,

it would be premature to make conclusions about the role that this information should play in formal quality assessment. The data collected so far have, however indicated that the CSI can be considered to validly and reliably represent consumer views and experiences. What is not clear is whether these views and experiences are a valid measure of the quality of service that is required by the HACC National Service Standards.

As discussed in the literature review, consumer opinion of service quality can frequently be at odds with other indications of the quality of service that consumers are receiving. Most frequently consumer opinion of service quality appears to overstate the quality of the service provided. The CSI was designed with this caution in mind. The items of the CSI produced a spread of responses across categories, allowing the possibility of discriminating between agencies with respect to performance against these items. If these items are a valid measure of service quality against the standards then the variations in these responses across agencies will coincide with variations in HACC National Service Standards Instrument scores across agencies for the relevant standards.

The observations reported in this study indicate that groups within the HACC target population are more or less likely to report high levels of satisfaction with services. For instance, younger people with a disability may more accurately appraise service quality than older consumers. In examining the validity of consumer feedback against an independent measure of service quality it is necessary to test for these differences.

There is evidence in the results of this study that suggest that dependency levels not only affect the ability of the consumer to participate in consumer feedback exercises but also affect the relevance of service quality issues to them. In addition, for some client groups a range of service quality issues may be inconsequential to the quality of service from the consumer's point of view, and others may have far greater importance. Consumer feedback received from Aboriginal service users revealed issues of this nature.

Findings such as this indicate that it would be inappropriate to apply universal standards relating to how an agency's summary of consumer feedback should look. Rather, these summaries should be considered in the context of the service to which they apply. Consumer feedback, considered in the context of agency and consumer characteristics has the potential to provide vital information relevant to service quality assessment.

## 5.5 Summary

The Consumer Survey Instrument was found to be valid and reliable as a measure of service quality experienced by consumers in so far as it was clear, appropriate and relevant to their experiences and opinions. Findings in support of this are as follows:

- On average, the items of the CSI had a high response rate. The mean proportion of respondents that failed to provide any answer for items on the mail survey was 7%.
- On average, a small proportion of the items of the CSI were answered "don't know" by respondents. The mean proportion of respondents that provided a "don't know" answer for items was 9%.
- There was evidence of a ceiling effect among half of the item responses. This did not compromise the survey instrument's ability to measure feedback and distinguish different levels of service quality based on this feedback.

- Of the seven Objectives covered by the consumer survey items, two were measured by items of statistically low reliability. This statistical reliability relates to the degree to which items commonly measure facets of an underlying service quality issue. Revisions to the Consumer Survey Instrument are recommended to improve this reliability.

All of the survey methods examined in this study have the capacity to provide valid and reliable information in relation to the HACC National Service Standards with the following caveats:

- each of the survey methods examined encountered difficulties overcoming the problems of high reported satisfaction that are typical of feedback obtained from this consumer group;
- while focus groups pose the most obvious barrier to participation for those of high dependency, each of the methods is at risk of collecting a biased sample through low response rates. This is strongly affected by the method used to recruit consumers to take part in feedback exercises.
- no one method can be recommended for use in all agencies because particular characteristics of agencies and consumers may predispose toward or against the use of a particular method.

The use of consumer feedback in service quality assessment programs should be reviewed when further data is available regarding their validity in relation to other measures of service quality. The data collected so far allows the following conclusions to be made about its potential use:

- Consumer feedback should not be summarised by adding across items. There are a number of reasons for this and they include:
  - a) difficulties encountered in adding over items where there are missing data;
  - b) “don’t know” category responses can provide important service quality information independent of the metric of other responses to a particular item;
  - c) the same can be said for responses categorised as “other”; and
  - d) high reported levels of satisfaction can skew responses towards positive appraisals but for some issues even small proportions of negative feedback should be considered seriously, that is, have more weight and responses to other items.
- Some agencies may receive one or two serious negative appraisals from consumers. These may be justified by the agency’s failure in regard to service quality or they may be attributed to a factor associated with those bringing forward the complaint, such as a mistaken attribution of blame, or misunderstanding. A process of natural justice would dictate that it would be unreasonable to place penalties on agencies as a result of a small number of reports of service quality failures without further investigation.
- Perceptions about what constitutes an important aspect of service quality vary among consumers. For example, older, more dependent clients may not wish to have involvement in agency management or in some cases, make decisions about their care plan. For others such as Aboriginal consumers or younger consumers with a disability, the ability to make choices and participate in service management is an important service quality issue. As such, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the items of the CSI address quality issues of equal value to consumers in all services. Consumer feedback has the potential to provide vital information relevant to service quality assessment but it should be sensitive to the values, needs and preferences of the consumers it represents.

# 6 Viability of collecting consumer feedback

While the key task of the Consultancy was the refinement of the consumer survey instrument and testing methods of collecting HACCC consumer feedback, the Institute was also asked to provide advice on the viability of these exercises. Factors relevant to the implementation of measures to gain consumer feedback that are examined include: cost, timeliness, practicality, acceptability to consumers, and usefulness to service providers.

## 6.1 Viability of survey methods

### 6.1.1 Focus groups

#### Timeliness

Focus groups are the most time consuming means of measuring consumer views on service quality. They allow for an in-depth coverage of issues relevant to consumers and provide more insight than may be gained by other data collection methods but the range of topics covered is limited by the open nature of group discussion.

The focus groups conducted for this study were of two hours duration, and allowed for one half an hour at beginning and end for arrangements for participants' arrival and welcome and for their departure. A two-hour session also requires a break in the middle of at least 15 minutes. Taking into account hours of attendance that would be reasonable for consumers, it would be difficult to conduct more than two of these groups a day.

Between seven and ten participants is the optimal number for a focus group to ensure success in involving all participants in the discussion. Therefore, if the purpose of the group is to canvas consumer views of service quality rather than simply scoping these issues with consumers, several focus groups would be required to adequately sample an agency's client base. It would not be unreasonable to expect that, for an adequate sample of consumers (70-100), a full time week would be required to conduct this sample.

The organisation of these groups also absorbs significant administration time and preparations must begin early to give consumers sufficient notice. For some agencies it would be insensitive to invite a random selection of consumers by mailed invitation as their disabilities would not allow them to attend. Rather, the most appropriate way to invite participation would be, in many cases, by personal contact over the telephone or in person.

Even if consumers are invited by attend by the most efficient means, letter invitation, attendance arrangements must then be made with each consumer who agreed to take part. These arrangements should include access to transport for those who need it. To facilitate the access of carers to these groups, respite arrangements would also be required. Arrangements for appropriate catering and focus group venue and facilities also require

attention. A week of focus groups would be likely to require at least the equivalent amount of time to organise but could require double this time depending on the complexity of the arrangements that must be made for participant attendance. This organisation would need to commence approximately one month prior to the date of conducting the focus groups.

Once focus group data is collected it must then be analysed. The strength of the focus group lies in the qualitative information that it provides. An efficient facilitator should summarise the important issues raised in the course of the discussion and put these in context in a report prepared after the group has concluded. It is estimated that ten focus groups would require five days for the preparation of a report appropriately summarising these proceedings.

From beginning to end, obtaining consumer feedback by focus groups for a sample of consumers of between 70 and 100 is estimated to require four full time weeks to organise, run and report on. If the focus groups were spread over a one-month period the estimated time required would be two to three months.

### **Practicality and cost**

The conduct of focus groups assumes that agencies have access to adequate administrative support to organise and analyses these sessions and access to a facilitator to conduct the sessions. As described in the literature review, the key to a successful focus group is a skilled and experienced facilitator, who comes at a significant cost (Mackay, Beer, Gilchrist & Woodward, 1998). Using a staff member to act as a facilitator compromises the effectiveness of the survey method, as consumers would be unlikely to speak as freely about their concerns to a group facilitated by the agency itself. Also adding to the expense of the focus group technique are costs relating to travel to the venue, meeting space, catering and incentives for attendance (Ford, Bach & Fottler, 1997). Were consultants to be contracted to facilitate and report on ten focus groups the cost is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$7000.

When using focus groups to survey frail and disabled populations additional consideration must be given to the needs of the surveyed group. The resources required to ensure that HACC focus groups do not simply comprise the most mobile and least frail consumers are not insignificant. In addition to special and individual transport arrangements, many consumers may require individual assistance to complete any written material and a carer to assist with any personal needs during the focus group period. The cost of focus groups for this population are therefore greater because not only do such sessions require a facilitator but also additional support to cater for the cognitive, sensory and physical disabilities of participants.

Consumers from a non-English speaking background may require interpreters to convey their views on service quality. Where a focus group can be organised for one language group, the discussion can flow reasonable fluidly and participants can enjoy hearing the views of their same language peers. Where participants are drawn from more than one language group, a focus group discussion becomes a much more difficult if not unrealistic proposition, not simply because of the interpreter requirements but because it asks more of participants who attend but are unable to understand their fellow participants.

### **Acceptability to consumers**

The consultants who undertook focus group testing for this study noted that while some consumers had initial anxieties about what was involved in a focus group discussion, all

participants found the experience enjoyable. Participants reported that they learnt from the sessions, that they enjoyed meeting with other users of the service and that they appreciated being asked their views on the quality of the service provided to them. As a quality assurance exercise, focus groups have the potential to foster a strong positive relationship with consumers.

Of all of the survey methods examined, focus groups placed the greatest demands on consumers. Consumers who attended needed to be able to leave their homes and they needed to be sufficiently mobile to use transport to get to the groups. The physical and mental requirements of attending these groups necessarily excluded many of the highest dependency consumers from participating. As was shown in Chapter 4, focus groups participants tended to be substantially younger than those taking part in other survey methods. If focus groups were to be the only means of collecting consumer feedback many consumers would be unlikely to be able to have their say.

## **Usefulness**

Focus groups are an effective means of gaining insight into the issues salient in the minds of consumers and of examining, in some depth, their views on relevant service quality issues. Information about gaps in service and service quality and suggestions about how services can be improved are commonly derived from focus group discussions. This can assist in the exploration of service planning and monitoring issues. An important limitation of focus groups is that they do not readily allow a survey of a representative sample of consumers. Rather, certain groups of consumers are systematically excluded from involvement. The most dependent and “at risk” consumers would not be able to add their voice to consumer opinion about service quality. The literature recommends that where the purpose of the survey requires it, focus groups be followed up with a formal survey, more comprehensively assessing the views of consumers by accessing a more representative sample.

## **6.1.2 Telephone interviews**

### **Timeliness**

Telephone interviews are described by Edlund (1997) as providing detailed consumer feedback in a relatively short period of time. Ford, Bach & Fottler (1997) described telephone interviews as tending to be shorter than face to face interviews because clients may consider the interview to be intrusive if they last longer than fifteen minutes. The length of the telephone interview schedule designed for this study was tested to have a duration of around fifteen minutes. No systematic record was kept of the length of time taken for each interview but it was clear that the majority of older consumers enjoyed talking longer than this and it was frequently necessary for interviewers to return participants to the subject of the interview.

In addition to the time required for the telephone interview itself, time must be allocated to allow for repeated call-backs when no response is received. More disabled populations and carers take longer to hear or answer the telephone than might generally be expected for consumers of other survey populations. In some cases this delay in answering may result in missed calls. Taking into account the time required for call-backs and interview times it is reasonable to estimate that a sample of between 70 and 100 consumers would require between 35 and 50 hours of telephone work (a week and a half to two weeks full time).

For this project, telephone interviews were conducted by skilled interviewers contracted for this work. As a result it was necessary to arrange for participant consent for the release of their contact details for this purpose. This step introduced a further delay to the collection of data which would be avoided if the service provider were themselves to undertake the telephone interviews. As it would be difficult for consumers to give frank feedback directly to the service provider, this delay may be unavoidable. One way in which it could be avoided would be by establishing an organisation that regularly undertook surveys of HACC consumers. Consumers could be asked to indicate if they would be willing to release their contact details to such an agency to take part in the regular quality improvement initiatives. This organisation would have to be one whose charter was concerned primarily with the rights of older persons and younger people with a disability.

In recruiting participants to take part in telephone interviews agencies asked their clients in person, by telephone or by a mailed invitation, depending on the administrative resources available to them. While mailed invitations took no more than half a day to organise, a turn around time of two weeks was required for participants to receive the invitation and respond to it. Invitations made in person or by telephone generally had little or no turn around time but required administration time to make contact with those sampled. A sample of between 70 and 100 consumer may require up to two weeks full time to establish contact.

Between the time in which consent to take part has been obtained and prior to the telephone interview, a letter was sent to consumers explaining who would be calling them and why and providing the necessary assurances about confidentiality. In order to ensure that this letter reached participants before telephone interviewing began, an additional week was necessary.

Thus, by any of the method of gathering a sample described, the time between inviting consumers to take part and carrying out the telephone interviews is just under one month. An additional two weeks are then required to conduct the interviews.

Telephone interview data can be analysed quickly when appropriate systems have been put in place prior to the collection of data. With the appropriate software to analyse the responses provided by consumers, summaries of both qualitative and quantitative data can be produced within a few days. Without such software, reporting on the results of telephone interviews may require a week to a week and a half.

## **Practicality and cost**

Telephone interviews can provide a cost-effective means of canvassing the opinions of many consumers in a short time. However as the previous section has revealed, the characteristics of the survey sample and the purpose of the survey contributes substantially to the costs of undertaking such an exercise.

As described in the previous discussion, the majority of older consumers enjoyed talking about their services and their lives and it was frequently necessary for interviewers to direct the participant back to the topic of the interview. In other cases consumers required clarification about the meaning of questions or they required assurances of how the data would be used or what the implications of their answers might be. The skills required to successfully obtain feedback from HACC consumers via a telephone interview should not be underestimated. Training in this skill ensures that quality data is being obtained. Trained telephone interviewers can be expensive to hire, and it would be difficult to place this cost on service providers if the relative costs of quality assessment to total funding is considered

across the range of HACC services. It is also unreasonable to expect service providers to conduct telephone interviews themselves, the quality of the data obtained in this way could not be assured, and neither would it provide the opportunity for consumers to voice their concerns to an biased listener.

Collecting data relevant to service quality requires careful consideration be given to means of protecting the confidentiality of the information supplied by consumers. The practical implications of this involve removing the task of collecting this information from the service provider to a third party. With a third party involved, gaining participant consent is added to the cost of collecting feedback by telephone interview. In the previous section it was suggested that, were the task of collecting consumer feedback to be given to an independent organisation, the otherwise regular expense of obtaining consumer consent for release of details could be avoided.

While the preferred method of recruiting consumers to take part in telephone interviews was by having the agency ask them in person, close to half of the agencies in this study were unable to find the resources to do this. In these circumstances agencies invited their clients by a mailed invitation. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the response rate was substantially reduced by recruiting consumers by this method.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from telephone interviews is a time consuming exercise particularly for those not accustomed to the task or not equipped with the appropriate tools. Considerable efficiencies would be gained by undertaking this analysis and reporting through an agency dedicated to the task.

Were consultants to be contracted to conduct and report on telephone interviews conducted with 100 consumers, the cost is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$5,000. A substantial portion of this cost (approximately one third) is incurred in training interviewers for the specific target group and interview schedule and for setting up the appropriate database and reporting procedure. These costs tend to be one-off, indicating that cost efficiencies can be gained by having telephone interviews conducted by a single reporting agency.

### **Acceptability to consumers**

In Chapter 4 it was reported that when consumers were given the choice between participating in a telephone interview and a mail survey, consumers tended to favour participation by telephone interview. There are a number of possible reasons for this participation choice. The physical capabilities of consumers sometimes make participation by this method most acceptable; for example, where consumers are affected by visual difficulties or those for whom writing or reading is problematic. Some carers preferred to take part in this way because it provided a less troublesome method of replying as it did not require them to complete and post back the survey form. Other consumers simply preferred the method for the personal contact it offered and the opportunity to hear about the purpose of the study.

The literature review reported that as telephone interviews involve greater anonymity than face-to-face interviews, they may encourage more forthright feedback but that like personal interviews, they allow an interviewer to probe for details that are difficult to obtain in a written survey. The results presented in Chapter 4 showed that telephone interview were indeed more successful in obtaining critical feedback than mail surveys and focus groups. This result provides evidence that telephone interviews provide a more acceptable medium for consumers to express their concerns.

## **Usefulness**

Telephone interviews were found in this report to provide reliable and insightful data about service quality. Its usefulness as service quality data is, however, limited for some groups of HACC consumers. Telephone interviews can be hampered by the difficulties suffered by older or disabled populations, such as hearing, speech and cognitive impairments. A difficulty associated with telephone interviews is the bias introduced by poverty and mobility. Some clients do not own a telephone, and others move frequently and cannot be reliably contacted (Edlund, 1997). Non-English speaking background consumers were reported to be less likely to provide frank feedback via this method, and for Aboriginal consumers the success of telephone interviews was likely to depend on the extent to which consumers saw the interviews as part of a broader community activity.

### **6.1.3 Mail surveys**

#### **Timeliness**

Mail surveys provide an opportunity to canvas many topics of interest to the designer of the survey by directed questions. The trade off is that these surveys offer limited opportunity for respondents to express and explore other issues that they consider to be relevant. Some compensation for this limitation can be made by including open-ended questions, but these can be time-consuming to analyse.

The mail surveys conducted for this study were sent to agencies as packages to be distributed to each consumer. These packages contained the survey, a reply paid envelope, and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and providing the appropriate assurances. Service providers were asked to include their own cover letter and to send on the surveys to their clients. The administrative requirements of such an exercise are minimal. It is reasonable to estimate that surveys for a sample of between 70 and 100 consumers could be prepared and mailed within a few hours.

The most time expensive aspect of the mail survey method is the lag between distributing questionnaires and receiving returns from consumers. Consumers were asked to return surveys by a date approximately two weeks after they had received them. The time frame represented a compromise between a date too close for consumers to find time to complete the survey (remembering that some consumers would require assistance to do this) and a time too distant for consumers to remember to complete the survey after setting it aside. In general, completed surveys were returned within one month of their distribution.

Like telephone interview data, mail survey data can be analysed quickly when appropriate support is available. With the appropriate software to analyse the responses provided by consumers, summaries of both qualitative and quantitative data can be produced within a few days. Without such software, reporting on the results of telephone interviews may require a week to a week and a half.

#### **Practicality and cost**

Of the three principal survey methods examined in this study, mail surveys imposed the least burden on service providers to distribute and the least burden for collection of the data as consumers mail these surveys back directly. Mailed questionnaires are thus the least expensive survey method of those examined in this study and the most practical for

allowing larger samples of consumers to be invited to participate with minimal increase in the associated cost.

When the content of a questionnaire does not address all of the relevant aspects of care or when poorly constructed questions stifle consumers' ability to express their opinion accurately, the questionnaire may be inadvertently silencing or misrepresenting opinion. The costs associated with producing and testing a valid and reliable survey have been met by this project.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from mail survey, while somewhat less time consuming than telephone interview data, could also be more efficiently analysed by an agency accustomed to the task and equipped with the appropriate tools.

Were consultants to be contracted to compile and report on mail surveys received from 100 consumers, the cost is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$3,000. A substantial portion of this cost (approximately one half) is incurred in setting up the appropriate database and reporting procedure. These costs tend to be one-off, indicating that cost efficiencies can be gained by having mail survey analysis and reporting conducted by a single reporting agency.

### **Acceptability to consumers**

Mail surveys offer the least opportunity to encourage consumers to take part and, as a consequence, have the lowest rate of response. On the other hand, self-completion questionnaires allow clients to reflect and take time to consider their service experience. For some consumers, particularly carers, finding an opportunity for such reflection required the flexibility of completing the survey at the time of their choosing.

Mail surveys were not an acceptable method of collecting feedback from consumers who are visually impaired or unable to read or write. They did not present a useful means of measuring the views of consumers of non-English speaking background because of the literacy barriers experienced by such consumers. And for ethnic and Aboriginal consumers alike, mail surveys would fail to convince consumers of the value placed on their feedback.

While mailed surveys are a non-intrusive method of soliciting consumer views a consequence of this non-intrusiveness is that consumers may not feel as convinced that their opinions are of value as if they had been personally contacted. For some consumers too, surveys received through the mail can cause some anxiety, particularly if the survey is sent from government and contains a requested return date. While the concerns of telephone interview respondents and focus group participants can be immediately allayed, mail survey respondents concerns can only be addressed if they make contact with the toll free inquiry line.

### **Usefulness**

The analysis presented in this report found that mail surveys provide reliable data about service quality. The directed questions provide specific answers to issues of relevance, in this case to issues of service quality as determined by the HACC National Service Standards. Mail surveys can be distributed at minimal cost to all or part of the population under study. They do not, however allow scope for consumers to explain their answers by putting them in the context of their experiences. Nor is it possible to make an assessment of the respondents' mental state or underlying attitudes by the answers that they provide. For example, a telephone interviewer or focus group facilitator is likely to perceive when

respondents required further reassurance of the confidentiality of their replies or of the use made of the data. Similarly, these survey methods allow some assessment of when participants replies are affected by confusion. It is difficult if not impossible to make these inferences from mail survey responses.

The low response rate associated with this method can result in a response bias in which certain groups of consumers are systematically excluded. Like telephone interviews, its usefulness is limited for some groups of HACC consumers. Mail surveys cannot adequately be used to record the views of some consumers affected by impairments of vision but this method facilitates participation by those whose impairments include those of hearing and speech. Mailed surveys are also of limited use for consumers with literacy difficulties and they cannot be used to adequately assess the opinions of consumer groups such as those of non-English speaking background or Aboriginal descent.

## **6.2 General comments on the viability of collecting consumer feedback**

Consumer feedback is a recognised source of information about the success of organisations in providing quality services. Many HACC service providers undertake consumer feedback exercises as part of a regular quality assurance monitoring and planning regime. For these services the introduction of a requirement for regular reporting of consumer feedback in relation to the HACC National Service Standards would not pose new problems. Such agencies would already be familiar with the requirements of sampling and survey methods. For other service providers these activities would be new. Training or information kits may be required for some service providers to begin to undertake consumer feedback exercises without biasing the sample or results.

Many HACC funded agencies also receive funding from other sources. The users of their services may not all fall into the HACC target group, adding further to the challenge of sampling. In addition, the agency may be required to meet service quality criteria for other funding programs. In some cases the level of HACC funding may be very small in dollar terms or in proportion to the whole budget. In light of this, the cost of undertaking consumer feedback may be too large to be reasonable.

The number of consumers accessing services from HACC agencies varies greatly and is dependent on the types of services offered. Some HACC funded services have fewer than 30 active clients. In such cases it is not difficult to service providers to involve consumers in feedback exercises, particularly where contact with these clients is regular. Some of these small services are, however, assisting consumers with very high dependency; a factor which complicates the process of involving them in consumer feedback exercises.

As the size of the client base increases, it becomes increasingly complex for service providers to find the resources to involve their clients in consumer feedback exercises. Agencies providing meals have very large client bases but frequently operate with the help of volunteers and with limited paid staff. Other services such as those providing community nursing have a large client base and operate with the assistance of full-time paid staff and administrative support. While both these types of large HACC funded agencies affect the lives of many HACC consumers they have very different capabilities to undertake consumer feedback exercises.

## 6.3 Summary

- Three survey methods were examined with regard to factors relevant to the viability of implementing them as regular and formal parts of a quality assessment system. These factors included: cost, timeliness, practicality, acceptability to consumers, and usefulness to service providers.
- With regard to the timeliness with which consumer feedback can be obtained it would be incorrect to assume that mailed surveys are the least timely. When the administrative and process requirement of telephone interviews and focus groups are taken into account, each of the methods weigh up equally.
- Focus groups were the most time costly means of measuring consumer feedback. The practical requirements of facilitating access of consumers to these groups and the length of time required to obtain the views of small groups of consumers, indicates that this method should be used only with specific purposes in mind. Mail surveys posed the least administrative burden on service providers.
- Focus groups are the most well received means of seeking feedback from consumers although they have limited ability to secure the involvement of the more dependent HACC consumer. Telephone interviews and mail surveys offer a more acceptable alternative means of involvement for many.
- All things being equal, telephone interviews are the most useful means of gathering consumer feedback. They allow for an exploration of consumers views and provide an opportunity for exchange of information. They readily access many portions of the HACC target group and can be used to canvas a variety of issues.
- Focus groups are not recommended to be used as the sole means of gathering such feedback because of the systematic sample bias associated with them. Older and more disabled consumers cannot take part.
- Focus groups require a skilled facilitator to elicit consumer views of service quality and there is some evidence to suggest that critical comment cannot be gained using this method particularly from some segments of the community such as those from a non-English speaking background.
- Focus groups most effectively focus on only a few topics of interest and as such they provide an excellent opportunity to scope consumers' views and to exchange ideas and introduce new ones to consumers but have limited ability to collect service quality information across many topics.
- Telephone interviews have the advantage of being able to involve consumers of higher dependency levels in consumer feedback exercises. They have limited use with some segments of the community however. Non-English speaking background consumers have both cultural and linguist barriers to providing critical feedback by this method. And many Aboriginal service users would be unlikely to provide useful feedback when this method was not part of a broader, face to face community consultation.
- For consumers of sound mind telephone interviews provide a very acceptable means of personally seeking their views. For those of less sound mind some anxiety may be associated with participation in telephone interviews. The formal structure of a telephone interview was also foreign to many consumers.
- Skilled interviewers are a vital part of obtaining quality feedback by telephone interview but these come at some considerable cost. The cost and administrative burden of the telephone interview method is also augmented by the procedures required to obtain the

participant sample. Further, when consumers are recruited to take part in telephone interviews by a mailed invitation the high response rate normally associated with this method drops away.

- Mail surveys provide a low cost means of inviting the comment of a broad range of consumers. The low response rate by this method requires that results obtained in this way be considered with some cautions as substantial segments of the relevant population have not been reached.
- While consumers require some time to receive and send back completed mail surveys, the method compares favourably to focus groups and telephone interviews; methods for which other administrative and process issues draw out the length of time required to obtain a reasonable sample of feedback.
- Mail surveys are generally a non-intrusive means of gathering consumer feedback but they are not suitable for all consumers. Those with literacy problems or language barriers may be unable to take part. Some disabilities may preclude consumers from participating by this method and it would not be an appropriate method for obtaining the views of those of non-English speaking background or Aboriginal descent.

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# Appendix A

## Consumer Survey Instrument for general services

# ***Service quality survey***

## ***for Home and Community Care***

The following questions are about the services and assistance you have been receiving from your local Home and Community Care (HACC) agency. Your answers and comments will help government and service providers to improve services provided through the HACC program.

- **Your views are important to us and we look forward to receiving your reply however you do not have to complete and return this survey if you do not wish to. You may also leave blank any questions you would rather not answer.**
  
- **Your replies to the survey questions will be completely confidential.**
  
- **No information about you or your individual answers will be passed back to the agency providing your services.**

**Please return your completed survey form using the reply paid envelope provided. No stamp is necessary.**

**This survey is being conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, an independent statutory authority. Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact us on the following free call number during office hours: 1800 258 963.**

Please answer the following questions about

Name of agency

Simply tick the box of the answer most appropriate to you or write your comments in the spaces provided.

## **1: Provision of Services**

When you first contacted the agency for help someone from the agency should have talked to you about what services you needed.

**1 When you contacted the agency for help did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Partly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

Did not discuss needs with agency..... <sub>5</sub>

**2 Did they agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you, how often you would get them and for how long?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Some of this information..... <sub>2</sub>

No, none of this information..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**3 Do you think that the services the agency said they would provide were the right services for you?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Do you think that the services the agency said they would provide were the right amount of services for you?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 If you did not think the services were right, did you discuss this with the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

No relevant..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 Does the agency provide you with help in the way they said they would provide it?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Most of the time..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**7 What type of help do you currently receive from the agency?**

Type of service

Hours per fortnight

.....

.....

.....

.....

## **2: Rights and Information**

As someone who receives HACC services you have certain rights and responsibilities. For example, you have a right to confidentiality of personal information and privacy and a right to access your personal information.

**1 Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the service provided to you by this agency? (You may tick more than one box)**

Agency spoke to you about these things..... <sub>1</sub>

Printed information provided (leaflets etc)..... <sub>2</sub>

Already familiar with information..... <sub>3</sub>

Not explained..... <sub>4</sub>

Don't remember..... <sub>5</sub>

**2 Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address or other personal details, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**3 If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

An advocate is a person you can choose to represent your rights, and negotiate on your behalf. This may be a friend, a family or an advocacy service.

**4 Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help arrange services for you?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Doesn't apply..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Previously had information..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

### **3: Satisfaction with Services**

The following questions are about your satisfaction with the services you receive and how well the agency listens and responds to your opinions.

**1 Have you ever been concerned about your safety or security because of the actions of agency staff?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**2 If yes, what were your concerns?**

.....  
.....

.....  
.....

**3 Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**6 Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**7 If yes, what do you think would happen if you made a complaint about the agency?**

.....  
.....  
.....

Many HACCC agencies invite their clients to participate in service management by having consumer representatives on a management committee or by regularly asking consumers what they think of the service and its management.

**8 Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**9 Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**If there is more information you would like to give us about any of the questions in the survey, please use this space.**

.....  
.....  
.....  
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.....

## **4: General Client Information**

Now we would like to know a little about you as a HACC client.

**1 You are.....**

Male..... <sub>1</sub>

Female..... <sub>2</sub>

**2 You are aged between.....**

0-18 years..... <sub>1</sub>

19-24 years..... <sub>2</sub>

25-34 years..... <sub>3</sub>

35-44 years..... <sub>4</sub>

45-54 years..... <sub>5</sub>

55- 64 years..... <sub>6</sub>

65-74 years..... <sub>7</sub>

75-84 years..... <sub>8</sub>

85 and over..... <sub>9</sub>

**3 The services you are receiving are primarily.....**

to help you..... <sub>1</sub>

to help you as a carer..... <sub>2</sub>

**4 You are ..... (Please feel free to tick more than one box)**

From a non-English speaking background..... <sub>1</sub>

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander..... <sub>2</sub>

Pension recipient or low income..... <sub>3</sub>

Living in a rural or remote area..... <sub>4</sub>

Caring for someone with dementia..... <sub>5</sub>

None of the above..... <sub>6</sub>

**5 Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of one of these groups?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Partly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Not applicable..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 If you have been answering this survey for someone else (who could not complete it themselves), please indicate your relationship to the person you have answered for?**

Family member..... <sub>1</sub>

Friend..... <sub>2</sub>

Spouse/partner..... <sub>3</sub>

Other (please specify) .....

***Thank you for your time.***

# Appendix B

## Consumer Survey Instrument for home maintenance/modification services

# ***Service quality survey***

## ***for Home and Community Care***

The following questions are about the home maintenance or modification services and assistance you have been receiving from your local Home and Community Care (HACC) agency. Your answers and comments will help government and service providers to improve services provided through the HACC program.

- Your views are important to us and we look forward to receiving your reply however you do not have to complete and return this survey if you do not wish to. You may also leave blank any questions you would rather not answer.
- Your replies to the survey questions will be completely confidential.
- No information about you or your individual answers will be passed back to the agency providing your services.

Please return your completed survey form using the reply paid envelope provided. No stamp is necessary.

**This survey is being conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, an independent statutory authority. Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact us on the following free call number during office hours: 1800 258 963.**

Please answer the following questions about

Name of agency

Simply tick the box of the answer most appropriate to you or write your comments in the spaces provided.

## **1: Provision of Services**

- 1 When you contacted the agency for help with home maintenance or modifications did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Mostly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

Did not discuss needs with agency..... <sub>5</sub>

- 2 Has the agency offered you a choice in how the home maintenance services would be provided? For example, could you choose the type of work or the time and day when these services would be carried out?**

Yes, a lot of choice..... <sub>1</sub>

Some choice..... <sub>2</sub>

No choice..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**3 Did the agency give you enough information about what they would do for your home before they did the work?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Some information..... <sub>2</sub>

No, none of this information..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**4 Did the agency complete the work as they said they would and on time?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 If you did not think they completed the work properly, did you discuss this with the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Not relevant..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 How frequently do you receive home maintenance or modification services from this agency?**

One off..... <sub>1</sub>

Regularly..... <sub>2</sub>

Irregularly..... <sub>3</sub>

**2: Rights and Information**

As someone who receives HACC services you have certain rights and responsibilities. For example, you have a right to confidentiality of personal information and privacy and a right to access your personal information.

**1 Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the home maintenance or modification service provided to you by this agency? (You may tick more than one box)**

Agency spoke to you about these things..... <sub>1</sub>

Printed information provided (leaflets etc)..... <sub>2</sub>

Already familiar with information..... <sub>3</sub>

Not explained..... <sub>4</sub>

Don't remember..... <sub>5</sub>

**2 Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**3 If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help you arrange home maintenance or modification services?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Doesn't apply..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

### **3: Satisfaction with Services**

The following questions are about your satisfaction with the services you receive and how well the agency listens and responds to your opinions.

**1 Have you ever been concerned about your safety or security because of the actions of agency staff?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**2 If yes, what were your concerns?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**3 Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**7 If yes, what do you think would happen if you made a complaint about the agency?**

.....

.....

.....

Many HACCC agencies invite their clients to participate in service management by having consumer representatives on a management committee or by regularly asking consumers what they think of the service and its management.

**8 Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**9 Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

## **4: General Client Information**

Now we would like to know a little about you as a HACC client.

**1 You are.....**

Male..... <sub>1</sub>

Female..... <sub>2</sub>

**2 You are aged between.....**

0-18 years..... <sub>1</sub>

19-24 years..... <sub>2</sub>

25-34 years..... <sub>3</sub>

35-44 years..... <sub>4</sub>

45-54 years..... <sub>5</sub>

55- 64 years..... <sub>6</sub>

65-74 years..... <sub>7</sub>

75-84 years..... <sub>8</sub>

85 and over..... <sub>9</sub>

**3 The services you are receiving are primarily.....**

to help you..... <sub>1</sub>

to help you as a carer..... <sub>2</sub>

**4 You are .....(Please feel free to tick more than one box)**

- From a non-English speaking background..... \_1
- An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander..... \_2
- Pension recipient or low income..... \_3
- Living in a rural or remote area..... \_4
- Caring for someone with dementia..... \_5
- None of the above..... \_6

**5 Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of one of these groups?**

- Yes..... \_1
- Partly..... \_2
- No..... \_3
- Not applicable..... \_4

**6 If you have been answering this survey for someone else (who could not complete it themselves), please indicate your relationship to the person you have answered for.**

- Family member..... \_1
- Friend..... \_2
- Spouse/partner..... \_3

Other (please specify).....

**If there is more information you would like to give us about any of the questions in the survey, please use this space.**

.....

.....

.....

.....  
.....

***Thank you for your time.***

# Appendix C

## Consumer Survey Instrument for meals services

# ***Service quality survey***

## ***for Home and Community Care***

The following questions are about the meals service you have been receiving from your local Home and Community Care (HACC) agency. Your answers and comments will help government and service providers to improve services provided through the HACC program.

- Your views are important to us and we look forward to receiving your reply however you do not have to complete and return this survey if you do not wish to. You may also leave blank any questions you would rather not answer.
- Your replies to the survey questions will be completely confidential.
- No information about you or your individual answers will be passed back to the agency providing your services.

Please return your completed survey form using the reply paid envelope provided. No stamp is necessary.

**This survey is being conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, an independent statutory authority. Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact us on the following free call number during office hours: 1800 258 963.**

Please answer the following questions about

Name of agency

Simply tick the box of the answer most appropriate to you or write your comments in the spaces provided.

## **1: Provision of Services**

When you first contacted the agency for help someone from the agency should have talked to you about what services you needed.

### **1 When you contacted the agency for help with meals did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Mostly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

Did not discuss needs with agency..... <sub>5</sub>

### **2 Does the agency offer you a choice of the types of food provided?**

Yes, a lot of choice..... <sub>1</sub>

Some choice..... <sub>2</sub>

No choice..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**3 Does the agency offer you a choice in the time of the day that you can receive meals?**

Yes, a lot of choice..... <sub>1</sub>

Some choice..... <sub>2</sub>

No choice..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**4 Has the agency given you enough information about the meals services they would provide to you, including notice about what days meals would or would not be delivered or information about meal delivery times?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Some information..... <sub>2</sub>

No, none of this information..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**5 Would you say that the meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Most of the time..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

## **2: Meal quality**

**1 How would you rate the quality of the meals that you receive from this agency? Please tick the most appropriate box for each aspect of quality listed below:**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Tastiness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
<b>Variety</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
<b>Healthiness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
<b>Temperature</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**2 If you receive cooked meals, are they well cooked?**

All of the time.....<sub>1</sub>

Most of the time.....<sub>2</sub>

Some of the time.....<sub>3</sub>

Not at all.....<sub>4</sub>

Not relevant.....<sub>4</sub>

**3 Do your meals look appetising?**

All of the time.....<sub>1</sub>

Most of the time.....<sub>2</sub>

Some of the time.....<sub>3</sub>

Not at all.....<sub>4</sub>

**4 Is the amount of food provided –**

Too much.....<sub>1</sub>

Just right.....<sub>2</sub>

Too little.....<sub>3</sub>

Varies.....<sub>4</sub>

**5 When you first started getting the meals service, were you given information on –**

Yes

No

Don't know

Nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Safe storage of your meal	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>
Reheating your meal	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>

### **3: Rights and Information**

As someone who receives HACC services you have certain rights and responsibilities. For example, you have a right to confidentiality of personal information and privacy and a right to access your personal information.

**1 Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the meals service provided to you by this agency? (You may tick more than one box)**

Agency spoke to you about these things..... <sub>1</sub>

Printed information provided (leaflets etc)..... <sub>2</sub>

Already familiar with information..... <sub>3</sub>

Not explained..... <sub>4</sub>

Don't remember..... <sub>5</sub>

**2 Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**3 If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help you arrange meals services?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Doesn't apply..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

## **4: Satisfaction with Services**

The following questions are about your satisfaction with the services you receive and how well the agency listens and responds to your opinions.

**1 Are the people from this meals agency reliable and courteous?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Somewhat..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**2 If no, what are your concerns?**

.....

.....

.....

**3 Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**7 If yes, what do you think would happen if you made a complaint about the agency?**

.....

.....

.....

Many HACC agencies invite their clients to participate in service management by having consumer representatives on a management committee or by regularly asking consumers what they think of the service and its management.

**8 Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**9 Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

## **5: General Client Information**

Now we would like to know a little about you as a HACC client.

**1 You are.....**

Male..... <sub>1</sub>

Female..... <sub>2</sub>

**2 You are aged between.....**

0-18 years..... <sub>1</sub>

19-24 years..... <sub>2</sub>

25-34 years..... <sub>3</sub>

35-44 years..... <sub>4</sub>

45-54 years..... <sub>5</sub>

55- 64 years..... <sub>6</sub>

65-74 years..... <sub>7</sub>

75-84 years..... <sub>8</sub>

85 and over..... <sub>9</sub>

**3 The services you are receiving are primarily.....**

to help you..... <sub>1</sub>

to help you as a carer..... <sub>2</sub>

**4 You are .....(Please feel free to tick more than one box)**

From a non-English speaking background..... <sub>1</sub>

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander..... <sub>2</sub>

Pension recipient or low income..... <sub>3</sub>

Living in a rural or remote area..... <sub>4</sub>

Caring for someone with dementia..... <sub>5</sub>

None of the above..... <sub>6</sub>

**5 Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of one of these groups?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Partly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Not applicable..... <sub>4</sub>

**6 If you have been answering this survey for someone else (who could not complete it themselves), please indicate your relationship to the person you have answered for.**

Family member..... <sub>1</sub>

Friend..... <sub>2</sub>

Spouse/partner..... <sub>3</sub>

Other (please specify).....

**If there is more information you would like to give us about any of the questions in the survey, please use this space.**

.....

.....

.....

.....

***Thank you for your time.***

# Appendix D

## Consumer Survey Instrument for transport services

# ***Service quality survey***

## ***for Home and Community Care***

The following questions are about the transport services and assistance you have been receiving from your local Home and Community Care (HACC) agency. Your answers and comments will help government and service providers to improve services provided through the HACC program.

- Your views are important to us and we look forward to receiving your reply however you do not have to complete and return this survey if you do not wish to. You may also leave blank any questions you would rather not answer.
- Your replies to the survey questions will be completely confidential.
- No information about you or your individual answers will be passed back to the agency providing your services.

Please return your completed survey form using the reply paid envelope provided. No stamp is necessary.

**This survey is being conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, an independent statutory authority. Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact us on the following free call number during office hours: 1800 258 963.**

Please answer the following questions about

Name of agency

Simply tick the box of the answer most appropriate to you or write your comments in the spaces provided.

## **1: Provision of Services**

- 1 When you contacted the agency for help with transport did they take into account your needs and preferences adequately?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Mostly..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

Did not discuss needs with agency..... <sub>5</sub>

- 2 Has the agency given you a choice in the transport you could receive from them. For example, can you choose the day or time of service, or does the agency offer you a choice of outings or activities you could attend?**

Yes, a lot of choice..... <sub>1</sub>

Some choice..... <sub>2</sub>

No choice..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**3 Has the agency provided clear information to you about the services they would provide to you, including pick up and drop off times?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Some information..... <sub>2</sub>

No, none of this information..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**4 Have the transport services provided to you by the agency been adequate in meeting your transport needs?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 If you did not think the services were adequate, did you discuss this with the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Not relevant..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 Would you say that the transport services provided by this agency were reliable?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Most of the time..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**7 How frequently do you receive transport from this agency?**

One off..... <sub>1</sub>

Regularly..... <sub>2</sub>

Irregularly..... <sub>3</sub>

## **2: Rights and Information**

As someone who receives HACC services you have certain rights and responsibilities. For example, you have a right to confidentiality of personal information and privacy and a right to access your personal information.

- 1 Did you receive any information about your rights and responsibilities in relation to the transport service provided to you by this agency? (You may tick more than one box)**

Agency spoke to you about these things..... <sub>1</sub>

Printed information provided (leaflets etc)..... <sub>2</sub>

Already familiar with information..... <sub>3</sub>

Not explained..... <sub>4</sub>

Don't remember..... <sub>4</sub>

- 2 Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address, are kept private and will not be given to other people without your consent?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

- 3 If people from this agency need to tell someone else about you, do they ask your permission first?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

- 4 Does the agency accept that you may need to have a friend or relative help you use their transport service or arrange transport services for you?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Doesn't apply..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

### **3: Satisfaction with Services**

The following questions are about your satisfaction with the services you receive and how well the agency listens and responds to your opinions.

**1 Are the people from this transport agency safe and skilled drivers and transport assistants?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

Somewhat..... <sub>2</sub>

No..... <sub>3</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>4</sub>

**2 If no, what were your concerns?**

.....

.....

.....

**3 Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**4 Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**5 Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**6 Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**7 If yes, what do you think would happen if you made a complaint about the agency?**

.....

.....

.....

Many HACC agencies invite their clients to participate in service management by having consumer representatives on a management committee or by regularly asking consumers what they think of the service and its management.

**8 Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

**9 Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?**

Yes..... <sub>1</sub>

No..... <sub>2</sub>

Don't know..... <sub>3</sub>

## **4: General Client Information**

Now we would like to know a little about you as a HACCC client.

**1 You are.....**

Male..... <sub>1</sub>

Female..... <sub>2</sub>

**2 You are aged between.....**

0-18 years..... <sub>1</sub>

19-24 years..... <sub>2</sub>

25-34 years..... <sub>3</sub>

35-44 years..... <sub>4</sub>

45-54 years..... <sub>5</sub>

55- 64 years..... <sub>6</sub>

65-74 years..... <sub>7</sub>

75-84 years..... <sub>8</sub>

85 and over..... \_9

**3 The services you are receiving are primarily.....**

to help you..... \_1

to help you as a carer..... \_2

**4 You are .....(Please feel free to tick more than one box)**

From a non-English speaking background..... \_1

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander..... \_2

Pension recipient or low income..... \_3

Living in a rural or remote area..... \_4

Caring for someone with dementia..... \_5

None of the above..... \_6

**5 Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a member of one of these groups?**

Yes..... \_1

Partly..... \_2

No..... \_3

Not applicable..... \_4

**6 If you have been answering this survey for someone else (who could not complete it themselves), please indicate your relationship to the person you have answered for.**

Family member..... \_1

Friend..... \_2

Spouse/partner..... \_3

Other (please specify).....

**If there is more information you would like to give us about any of the questions in the survey, please use this space.**

.....

.....

.....

.....

***Thank you for your time.***

# Appendix E

## Telephone interview schedule

# Telephone interview schedule

## 1. Introduction

Interviewer asks for: title first name last name.

"Hello, I'm <Interviewer identification>.

As explained in the letter you received from the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare we are evaluating the services you receive from Home & Community Care to help agencies improve their services.

Do you have a few minutes to help us with this?"

Interviewer provides assurances about confidentiality of responses, that participation is voluntary, and that interviewee may skip questions or terminate the interview at any time.

## 2. Service use

Are you answering this survey for someone else (who could not complete it for themselves)?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

If you are answering this survey for someone else, please indicate your relationship to the person you will be answering for.

Response category: Family member

Friend

Spouse or partner

Home & Community Care service provider

Other

Are you the person who receives services from Home & Community Care?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Are the services being received primarily to help YOU or to help you as a CARER?

Response category: To help you

To help you as a carer

To help both

Other

Don't know

What SERVICES do you currently receive from the agency?

Response category: Home Maintenance-Modification

Transport

Meals

Social Support

Home Help-Personal Care

Community Nursing

Allied Health

Respite

Case Coordination-Management-Brokerage

Other

Don't know

Which month did first ask for help?

Response category: January/February/March/April/May/June/July/August/  
September/October/November/December

Don't know

And which year (did you first ask for help)?

Response category: 1990 to 1999

Don't know

### **3. Provision of services**

#### **3.1 Home maintenance**

We will now be concentrating on the home maintenance you receive from

<Agency name>

When you contacted the agency for help with home maintenance/modification did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?

Response category: Yes

Mostly

No

Did not discuss preferences with agency

Other

Don't know

Did the agency offer you a choice in how the home maintenance/modifications services would be provided? For example, could you choose the day or time of day when these services were carried out?

Response category: Yes, a lot of choice

Some choice

No choice

Other

Don't know

Did the agency give you enough information about what work they would do at your home before they did the work?

Response category: Yes

Some information

No information

Other

Don't know

Did the agency complete the work as they said they would, and on time?

Response category: Yes

Most of the time

Some of the time

No

Other

Don't know

How frequently do you receive home maintenance/modification?

Response category: Once

Regularly

Irregularly

Other

Don't know

qh1end continue

### **3.2 Transport**

We will now be concentrating on the transport display you receive from <Agency name>

When you contacted the agency for help with transport did they take into account your needs and preferences?

Response category: Yes

Mostly

No

Did not discuss needs with agency

Other

Don't know

Has the agency offered you a choice in the transport you could receive from them. For example, can you choose the day or time of service, or does the agency offer you a choice of outings or activities you could attend?

Response category: Yes, a lot of choice

Some choice

No choice

Other

Don't know

Has the agency provided clear information to you about the services they would provide, including pick up and drop off times?

Response category: Yes

Some information

No information

Other

Don't know

Have the transport services provided to you by the agency been adequate in meeting your transport needs?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

If you did not think the services were adequate, did you discuss this with the

agency?

Response category: Yes

No

Not relevant

Other

Don't know

Would you say that the transport services provided by this agency were reliable?

Response category: Yes

Most of the time

Some of the time

No

Don't know

How frequently do you receive transport from this agency?

Response category: Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Less than monthly

Irregularly

### **3.3 Meals**

We will now be concentrating on the meals display you receive from <Agency name>

When you contacted the agency for help with meals did they take into account your needs and preferences?

Response category: Yes

Mostly

No

Did not discuss needs with agency

Other

Don't know

Has the agency offered you a choice in the meals you could receive from them. For example, does the agency offer you a choice of the types of food provided?

Response category: Yes, a lot of choice

Some choice  
No choice  
Other  
Don't know

And can you choose the time of day for receiving meals?

Response category: Yes, a lot of choice

Some choice  
No choice  
Other  
Don't know

Do you have enough information about the meals services provided to you, including what days meals would or would not be delivered or information about meal delivery times?

Response category: Yes

Some information  
No information  
Other  
Don't know

Would you say that the meal deliveries provided by this agency were reliable?

Response category: Yes, all of the time

Most of the time  
Some of the time  
No  
Other  
Don't know

How would you rate the quality of the meals that you receive from this agency in terms of tastiness?

Response category: Excellent

Good  
Fair  
Poor  
Don't know

How would you rate the quality of the meals that you receive from this agency in

terms of variety?

Response category: Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Don't know

How would you rate the quality of the meals that you receive from this agency in terms of healthiness?

Response category: Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Don't know

How would you rate the quality of the meals that you receive from this agency in terms of temperature?

Response category: Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Don't know

If you receive cooked meals are they well cooked?

Response category: All of the time

Most of the time

Some of the time

Not at all

Not applicable

Don't know

Do your meals look appetising?

Response category: All of the time

Most of the time

Some of the time

Not at all

Not applicable

Don't know

Is the amount of food provided ...

Response category: Too much

Just right

Too little

Varies

Don't know

When you first started getting Meals on Wheels, were you given information on nutrition?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Were you given information on the safe storage of your meal (when you first started getting Meals on Wheels)?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Were you given information on reheating your meal (when you first started getting Meals on Wheels)?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

### **3.4 General**

When you first contacted the agency for help someone should have talked to you about what services you needed. When you first talked to them did they listen to your preferences and consider your needs?

Response category: Yes

Mostly

No

Did not discuss needs with agency

Other

Don't know

Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about which services they would provide to you?

Response category: Yes, a clear agreement  
Yes, a fairly clear agreement  
No, no agreement at all  
Other  
Don't know

Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how often you would be receiving these services?

Response category: Yes, a clear agreement  
Yes, a fairly clear agreement  
No, no agreement at all  
Other  
Don't know

Did the agency make a clear agreement with you about how long you would be receiving them?

Response category: Yes, a clear agreement  
Yes, a fairly clear agreement  
No, no agreement at all  
Other  
Don't know

Does the agency provide you with the help that they agreed to provide?

Response category: Yes  
Most of the time  
No  
Don't know

Do you think that the services the agency said they would provide were the ones you needed?

Response category: Yes  
No  
Other  
Don't know

If you did not think the services were what you needed, did you discuss this with the

agency?

Response category: Yes

No

Not relevant

Other

Don't know

#### **4. Rights & Information**

As someone who receives HACC services you have certain rights and responsibilities (for example, your right to access personal information and your right to confidentiality). How were these explained to you by the agency?

Response category: Agency spoke to you about these things

Printed information was provided (leaflet etc)

Already familiar with information

Not explained

Don't remember

Other

Don't know

Are you satisfied that any details that the agency has about you, such as your address or other personal information, are kept confidential and will not be given to other people without your consent?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

If people from this agency need to pass on information about you, do they ask your permission first?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

An advocate is a person you can choose to represent your rights and negotiate on your behalf. This may be a friend, a family member or an advocacy service. Did you receive any information from the agency about how you could obtain or use an advocate or someone to help you:

Response category: Yes

Previously had information

No

Other

Don't know

Does the agency accept that you may need a friend or relative to be your advocate?

Response category: Yes

No

Doesn't apply

Don't know

## **5. Satisfaction with services**

Many HACC agencies invite their clients to participate in service management by having consumer representatives on a management committee or by regularly asking consumers what they think of the service and its management.

Do you feel that you could gain access to documents about the way the agency is run, if you wanted to?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Do you feel that you could have a say in the way the agency is run if you wanted to?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

(If service type=transport)

Are the people from this transport agency safe and skilled drivers and transport assistants?

Response category: Yes

Somewhat

No

Don't know

(If service type=meals)

Are the people from the meals agency reliable & courteous?

Response category: Yes

Somewhat

No

Don't know

(If service type=general)

Have you ever been concerned about your safety or security because of the actions of agency staff?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Can you tell me about this?

Has the agency informed you of what to do if you're not happy with the service you get?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Did the agency tell you that you can voice any concerns you have about them to outside authorities?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Do you feel confident that the agency will listen to any concerns you have, and deal with them properly?

Response category: Yes

No

Don't know

Do you think that things would go badly for you if you made a complaint about the agency?

Response category: Yes

No  
Don't know

What do you think would happen if you made a complaint about the agency?

Response category: Government cut off service

Agency cut off service  
Government reduce service  
Agency reduce service  
Other  
Don't know

## 6. General Client Information

Now we would like to know some information about you.

(Are you Male or Female RECORD AUTOMATICALLY)

Response category: Male

Female

Are you under or over 50 years old? (are you aged between...)

Response category: 0-18

19-24  
25-34  
35-44  
45-54  
55-64  
65-74  
75-84  
85 and over

Are you from a non-English speaking background?

Response category: Yes

No

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a person from a non-English speaking background?

Response category: Yes  
Partly  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Response category: Yes  
No

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Response category: Yes  
Partly  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

Are you a pension recipient?

Response category: Yes  
No

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your requirements as a pension recipient?

Response category: Yes  
Partly  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

Are you living in a rural or remote area?

Response category: Yes  
No

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a person living in a rural or remote area?

Response category: Yes

Partly  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

Are you caring for someone with dementia?

Response category: Yes

No

Is the agency sensitive and responsive to your different requirements as a person caring for someone with dementia?

Response category: Yes

Partly  
No  
Not applicable  
Don't know

And finally, is there anything you would like to add on any of the issues we have talked about?

Thank you very much for your time. Goodbye.

# Appendix F

**Letter to agencies introducing the project**

Dear HACC service provider,

I am writing to confirm your agreement to participate in a national study examining ways of incorporating consumer views in the assessment of agency performance against the HACC National Service Standards. On a national level, agencies have been selected on the basis of certain criteria, including agency size, service type, and client characteristics. Your agency is one of only two in the ACT that has been nominated by the ACT government to participate in this study.

The Commonwealth/State HACC Officials have requested that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare conduct this project under the direction of a steering committee comprised of service providers, consumer representatives, and Commonwealth, State and Territory government officers. The outcomes will include recommendations for the ongoing collection of consumer feedback and its use in HACC service quality assessment. It will result in a refined tool to gather consumer views and will recommend appropriate survey methods for the HACC target population. This project will provide an opportunity for consumers and service providers to have direct input into the development of methods for including consumer views in the assessment of HACC agency service quality.

This project is being run concurrently with the introduction, by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, of the HACC National Service Standards Instrument. All HACC funded agencies will be required to complete the Instrument. The first stage of the implementation includes training and education of government officers and service providers in its use.

If you agree to participate in this study your agency would complete the Instrument prior to other agencies as part of the training exercise. Consumers of your service would be asked to participate in one of three survey methods: telephone interview, mailed survey or focus groups.

We recognise that HACC funded agencies face a range of workload pressures related to service provision and administration. As such, the Institute will handle the bulk of administrative and practical tasks associated with the survey. You would, however, be asked to assist us by making contact with consumers to gain their agreement to participate in the study.

A member of the Aged Care Unit, Dr Anne Jenkins, will contact you shortly to confirm whether you are willing to be involved in this project. At this time, Anne

will be able to discuss the proposed method for surveying your agency's consumers, as well as answer any further questions you have about the study.

Your participation and the participation of your service's consumers is voluntary. All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and no information will be available to anyone outside the Institute in ways that would allow any individual to be identified. This project has received the approval of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Ethics Committee.

The results of the study and an agency specific summary of their consumer feedback will be sent to participating agencies at the completion of the project. Additional details of the project and the procedure for participating agencies are enclosed. If you would like any more information we would be happy to provide it to you. The project manager, Dr Anne Jenkins can be contacted on (02) 6244 1173.

We look forward to your cooperation in this project and hope that everyone in the industry will benefit from its results.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Jenkins  
Research Fellow  
Aged Care Unit

Diane Gibson  
Unit Head  
Aged Care Unit

# Appendix G

**Letter to consumers confirming their focus group participation**



Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is assessing the quality of service provided by Home and Community Care (HACC) agencies.

You are invited to attend a discussion group about the quality of the service you receive from <name of agency>. We need feedback from people who use these services, and by joining in this discussion you will help us to improve quality of service generally.

- Your participation is entirely voluntary.
- The things that you and others talk about will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The comments made in discussion about <name of agency> will be combined with the comments of other discussion groups. A statistical summary report will be provided to relevant Government departments and <name of agency> so that services may be improved. The report will not contain any information that can identify you personally.

**When: 10:00am to 12:00pm**  
**<Date>**  
**(tea and coffee available from 9:30)**

**Where: <Address>**  
**<Address>**  
**<Address>**

Morning tea and lunch will be provided. Transport to and from the venue will be arranged for you. If you have any queries about your participation in this discussion group you may talk to us directly by calling a free call number:

**1800 258 963**

We appreciate your assistance and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Jenkins  
Project Manager  
Aged Care Unit

For health and welfare  
statistics and information

6A Traeger Court  
Fern Hill Park  
Bruce ACT  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601

> Phone 02 6244 1000  
Fax 02 6244 1299  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

# Appendix H

**Letter to consumers confirming their telephone interview participation**



Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is conducting a telephone survey on our behalf to help evaluate the quality of service provided by Home and Community Care agencies.

A representative of the AIFS will telephone you shortly to arrange a time to talk with you about the quality of service you receive from the **<name of agency>**. We need feedback from people who use these services, and by taking part in the telephone interview you will help us to improve the quality of service generally.

- Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to leave any question/s unanswered.
- The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare are independent bodies who provide impartial information to government, non-government institutions and the public. The information you give us about the **<name of agency>** will not be given back to them directly but will be combined with the comments of other clients. A statistical summary report will be provided to relevant Government departments and the **<name of agency>** so that services may be improved. The report will not contain any information that can identify you personally.

If you have a query about your participation in this survey you may talk to us directly by calling a free call number:

**1800 258 963**

We appreciate your assistance and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Jenkins  
Project Manager  
Aged Care Unit

For health and welfare  
statistics and information

6A Traeger Court  
Fern Hill Park  
Bruce ACT  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone 02 6244 1000  
Fax 02 6244 1299  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

# Appendix I

**Letter to consumers inviting their participation in a telephone interview**



Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is conducting a survey on our behalf to help evaluate the quality of service provided by Home and Community Care agencies.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a short telephone interview to talk about the quality of transport service you receive from <name of agency>. If you agree to take part in this national study, a representative of the AIFS will telephone you to arrange a convenient time to talk with you. We need feedback from people who use these services, and by participating in the telephone interview you will help us to improve the quality of service generally.

- Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to leave any question/s unanswered.
- The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare are independent bodies that provide impartial information to government, non-government institutions and the public. The information you give us about <name of agency> will not be given back to them directly but will be combined with the comments of other clients. A statistical summary report will be provided to relevant Government departments and <name of agency> so that services may be improved. The report will not contain any information that can identify you personally.

Please complete the attached participation form to let us know if you would be willing to participate or if you would rather not. This should be returned to us by <Date>. A reply paid envelope is provided. No postage stamp is necessary.

If you have a query about any aspect of this survey you may talk to us directly by calling a free call number:

**1800 258 963**

We appreciate your assistance and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Jenkins  
Project Manager  
Aged Care Unit

For health and welfare  
statistics and information

6A Traeger Court  
Fern Hill Park  
Bruce ACT  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601

> Phone 02 6244 1000  
Fax 02 6244 1299  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

## Participation information for clients of <name of agency>

The Home and Community Care (HACC) Consumer Service Appraisal Survey aims to improve the quality of services provided by HACC agencies by collecting and reporting on the experiences of people who use those services. Your views and experiences are important to us, even if you have only been receiving services for a short time or have only used the service once or twice.

**If you would be willing to have a representative of the Australian Institute of Family Studies call you, please indicate below and write you name and contact details in the space provided.**

**YES, I would be happy to participate in this**

**study by taking part in a short telephone survey .....**

Name: .....

Telephone number: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

If you would like to participate but a telephone survey is not suitable for you, a

.....

.....

Even if you would prefer not to take part in this survey, we would like to know that you have had the opportunity to have your say. Please send this form back to us even if you don't want to be involved in the telephone survey. If you don't want to participate your name and contact details are not required.

**NO, I do not want to participate in this study .....**