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**Aged care homes make solid progress on fire sprinklers**

The NSW aged care industry is on track to meet requirements to improve fire safety in nursing homes, according to a report released today by Planning and Infrastructure.

New laws were put in place by the NSW Government following the tragic events of the Quakers Hill nursing home fire in November 2011, requiring all aged care facilities to install fire sprinkler systems.

About half of NSW aged care homes were already fitted with sprinkler systems when the laws were put in place.

Two installation deadlines were agreed with the sector – 1 September 2014 and 1 March 2016.

The first annual report of the Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee released today shows that of those aged care homes required to install sprinklers, nearly 80 per cent have either completed or started work:

- 27 facilities have already completed their installations
- 53 facilities are currently in the process of completing their installations
- 303 facilities are in the planning, design or approval phases of their installations.

Deputy Director-General of Planning and Infrastructure Jill Reich said the report showed the Government’s cooperative approach to working with the aged care industry was working.

"About 60,000 people in NSW – some of the most vulnerable people in our community – call aged care facilities home," Ms Reich said.

“We acted quickly to put measures in place to try and prevent tragedies like Quakers Hill happening again.

“Today’s annual report shows we are off to a solid start, and we will keep working with the industry to make sure these facilities are fire safe by the agreed deadlines.”

NSW Fire Commissioner Greg Mullins said he was pleased that Fire & Rescue NSW’s push for sprinklers in nursing homes had been heard and that good early progress was being made.

“It is encouraging that so many nursing homes have already been fitted with sprinkler systems since the legislation was introduced last year,” Mr Mullins said.

“I know that the industry is committed to fitting these systems which will improve the safety of nursing homes and the residents that live there.”
Aged and Community Services NSW CEO Illana Halliday confirmed the aged care industry was working hard to meet the required deadlines and said she too was impressed by the early results.

“These installations are complex and we need to make sure they’re done properly with minimum disturbance to often frail residents,” Ms Halliday said.

“I am impressed at how well the industry has responded to this challenge and to the tight deadlines.”

To date, there have been two determined applications for an extension of the required completion date. Any other applications will be considered on their merits.

“We expect aged care homes to do everything they can to meet the deadline, however, if unforeseen circumstances like a lack of qualified contractors hold up work we will work with the sector to get the job done as quickly as possible,” Ms Reich said.


People can also use the interactive web tool to find out information about a specific facility’s progress at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/en-au/buildinginnsw/safetcampaigns/firesafetyinagedcarefacilities