



## Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

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Mr Iain Trelaor  
West Deputy State Coroner  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Mr Trelaor

I write in response to a letter from the Coroner's Registrar dated 16 June 2017 regarding the Coronial investigation and recommendations following the death of Mr Samer Damouni.

I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Coronial Investigation into the death of Mr Damouni and I extend my sympathies to his family.

The Department of Health and Human Services works with all Victorian health services, including Monash Health, to support and improve the safe and effective care of persons experiencing mental illness. To this end the department provides funding and operational guidelines for health facilities that support people presenting with mental illness.

These facilities, including emergency departments, are designed to provide an appropriate, respectful and safe place for people experiencing mental illness in which to be assessed, observed and commence treatment if required.

***In response to recommendation 2:***

- *That Monash Health, in conjunction with Better Care Victoria, implement a Behavioural Health Precinct at Casey Hospital and, if appropriate, across the network of Monash Health Hospitals.*

The Coroner's recommendation is being implemented, in part, at Monash Health.

The department understands the recommendation to implement the Monash Health "Behavioural Health Precinct" proposal incorporates models such as Behavioural Assessment Rooms (BARs) and Psychiatric Assessment Planning Units (PAPUs).

**Behavioural Assessment Rooms (BARs)**

- BARs have been developed in response to the special needs of patients exhibiting aggression and maximise the safety of staff, patients and others
- BARs are secured from the broader emergency department, and provide a separate space within which a multidisciplinary team can work, as well as providing privacy while needs of patients can be assessed

- These rooms can reduce the risk of injury for the patient and staff, facilitate a more positive patient experience, and reduce distress to other patients and visitors in the emergency department.

#### Psychiatric Assessment Planning Units (PAPUs) in Emergency Departments

- PAPUs (i.e. mental health short stay units, for up to 72 hours) ensure that a person seeking help regarding a mental illness receive treatment that is person-centred and inclusive of their family and significant others
- PAPUs enable timely access to short-term inpatient care and treatment where required and minimise extended inpatient stays
- PAPUs aim to reduce demand on emergency departments by admitting people to a specialist mental health unit from the emergency department or from the community, as appropriate.

A BAR may be implemented in addition to or without a PAPU. A PAPU requires more space than a BAR in that it is self-contained, with single bedrooms and ensuites, as well as shared living space and access to outdoor space.

Currently there are PAPUs in emergency departments at Eastern Health, Peninsula Health and Austin Health. There are currently no PAPUs at any Monash Health campus.

A BAR is now a routine inclusion within new emergency departments or within an existing emergency department undergoing refurbishment. On 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the Minister for Health, the Hon Jill Hennessy announced that as part of funding to establish a further five BARs in hospitals with emergency departments, Monash Health's Clayton emergency department will have a BAR developed. As Monash Health currently has BARs at Dandenong and Clayton emergency departments, the additional BAR at Casey Hospital ensures network wide coverage of this facility type.

Regarding the PAPU aspect of the "Behavioural Health Precinct" at Casey Hospital and across the network of Monash Hospitals, as noted three PAPUs in emergency departments within Victorian health services have been established in the last two years, at Eastern Health, Peninsula Health and Austin Health. These emergency department PAPUs are being monitored regarding impacts on safety and quality of care and patient throughput. There is the potential for further PAPU facilities in emergency departments in the future.

Based on bed capacity and system design considerations, which will guide Government investment in this area in future years, Monash Health's needs and capacity to implement any future funded PAPUs in emergency departments will receive full consideration as part of planning.

#### ***In response to recommendation 3:***

- *That Monash Health, in conjunction with Better Care Victoria, increase the acute mental health inpatient bed capacity at Casey Hospital and, if appropriate, across the network of Monash Health Hospitals.*

The two parts of recommendation 3 have both been implemented.



The department has ensured that additional recurrent operating funding, from 1 July 2017 has been allocated to Monash Health to expand the number of acute mental health inpatient beds at the Clayton inpatient unit by three beds.

Further, the department is working with Monash Health during 2017 to review options to expand mental health bed capacity at Casey Hospital, maximising use of existing mental health facilities, to increase capacity in the short term.

The department is working with Monash Health via service and master planning processes to review bed capacity at both Casey Hospital and Dandenong Hospital in the medium to longer term. The current departmental Service Plan for Casey Hospital envisages a future increase in adult acute mental health beds. Implementation of additional beds is subject to budget processes and available funding.

Whilst the recommendations to implement additional Emergency Department mental health service models and additional mental health bed capacity will be made on the basis of the broader statewide infrastructure, service planning, population need considerations and available funding, these recommendations are both being implemented in collaboration with Monash Health.

Please contact Mr Matthew Hercus, Assistant Director, Mental Health Branch if you have any queries in respect of this matter. Mr Hercus may be contacted on phone 9096 0459 or email [matthew.hercus@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:matthew.hercus@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Kym Peake**  
Secretary

14/9/2017