

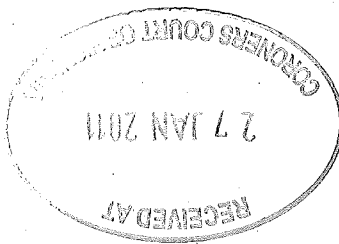


Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Ageing

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24 JAN 2011



OUR REF:
YOUR REF:

e2097813

Ms Candice Batty
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 1, 436 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne 3000

Dear Ms Batty

The Coroner recently reported on the death of Patricia Mary Cook, a former resident of Dorset Lodge Supported Residential Service.

A recommendation of the report was that "the Victorian Department of Health include the requirements to have a falls prevention policy in the Accommodation and Support Standards of the *Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act*. This requirement should extend to all SRSs, and be appropriate for the characteristics and needs of residents at each facility. The Department should provide ongoing assistance to SRS operators to develop their falls prevention plans through training courses, guidance material and planning framework".

The department supports the view that all SRS that accommodate one or more residents at risk of falls should have a falls policy in place, requiring them to undertake an appropriate falls risk assessment in the context of their care planning, and to instruct staff on measures to minimise the risks to residents with mobility issues.

The department currently expects SRS to have such arrangements in place to comply with the Health Services Act 1988 and associated regulations, and it is anticipated this would continue under the new legislation when it is proclaimed.

It is proposed that the supporting materials to the new Act and regulations will set out what the department expects of proprietors for them to be found compliant with the new scheme, and include a requirement for any SRS accommodating one or more residents at risk of falls to have a falls policy in place, and to ensure that relevant staff understand and can act upon that policy as required. This should minimise the risk of recurrences of the circumstances leading to Mrs Cook's death as outlined in the Coroner's findings.

The department will also continue to raise awareness of proprietors and staff of SRS of the importance of this issue, and the resources available for them to institute falls risk assessments and develop policies on falls prevention and management in such instances. This includes resources such as the Falls Risk Assessment Tool developed by Peninsula Health Service¹ and the Coroner's Investigation Standard into fall related deaths.

To this end, falls prevention will be a focus of ongoing communications with the sector, through sector wide newsletters and other means. The department will also explore whether specific training in relation to falls should be included in its funded training program for SRS proprietors and staff.

Yours sincerely



FRAN THORN

Secretary

24/1/2011

¹ Published on the department's web site at www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/falls/providers/rac/plans_frat.htm