



Department of Health

Secretary

19 MAR 2013

e2937347

Ms Susan Law
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11
222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Law

Court Reference: COR 2010 000376

I am writing in response to your letter dated 3 December 2012 regarding coronial recommendations made in the above case. The Department of Health (the department) has consulted with the relevant units responsible for the funding and training programs for rural and regional services.

Enclosed with this letter is the department's response to the recommendations advising the programs and initiatives already in place to encourage medical practitioner's access to training and educational programs. These initiatives are funded through both the Victorian Government, the Commonwealth, in partnership with the specialised medical colleges.

If you require further information please contact Ms Theresa Williamson, Acting Manager Quality and Safety Programs on telephone: 9096 7258.

Yours sincerely

Dr Pradeep Philip
Secretary



50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne
Victoria 3000
GPO Box 4541
Melbourne
Victoria 3001
Telephone: 1300 253 942
Facsimile: 1300 253 964
www.health.vic.gov.au
DX 210311



Department of Health Response – Case 2010 000376 George A Hutton

Department role

The Department of Health (the department) is responsible for planning, policy development, funding and regulation of health service providers and activities that promote and protect Victorians' health.

Accreditation

The department requires all Victorian public hospitals to be accredited. Health service responsibilities relating to accreditation are outlined in the *Victorian health policy and funding guidelines 2012-13* <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pfg/>.

From January 2013 Victorian health services are required to be accredited against the ten National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (the Standards).

The Standards provide a nationally consistent and uniform set of measures of safety and quality for application across a wide variety of health services. The primary aim of the standards is to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision.

Standard 1: Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations is designed to ensure health service organisation leaders implement governance systems to set, monitor and improve the performance of the organisation and communicate the importance of the patient experience and quality measurement to all members of the workforce. This standard requires health services to have a clinical workforce that has the right qualifications, skills and approach to provide safe, high quality health care.

Standard 9: Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration in Acute Health Care is designed to ensure a patient's deterioration is recognised promptly and appropriate action is taken. Serious adverse events such as unexpected death and cardiac arrest are often preceded by observable physiological and clinical abnormalities. Early identification of deterioration may improve outcomes and lessen the intervention required to stabilise patients whose condition deteriorated in hospital.

Training programs

The department has developed and funds a range of programs and initiatives to support individual medical practitioners to access training and professional development programs to expand their knowledge and expertise. A number of these programs specifically focus on building the skills of general practitioners in rural and regional settings, recognising that GPs play an essential role in the delivery of acute, sub acute and primary health services in rural practice and require a range of specific skills and expertise. These include:

- The 'Extended Skills for GPs' program supports the acquisition of specialised skills for GPs in Victoria. Funding is available for skill acquisition in areas such as Emergency, Obstetrics, Geriatrics and other fields. The program aims to achieve a skilled rural GP workforce, as well as increased retention and recruitment of GPs in areas of workforce shortage.
- The 'Advanced procedural training for GPs' program provides funding for GPs and GP registrars to undertake 12 months of advanced procedural training in a health service in Obstetrics, Anaesthetics, Emergency Medicine and Surgery. Funding enables health services to provide this training through the creation of supernumerary posts.

- The Victorian General Practitioner (GP) – Rural Generalist program offers rural GPs an opportunity to develop advanced skills and practice in Obstetrics, Anaesthetics, Emergency Medicine and Surgery. The focus of this program is to increase the number of students that have completed general practice and advanced skills/specialised training.
- Rural Continuing Medical Education Grants (CME) are available to assist medical practitioners working in rural / regional settings to update their knowledge and skills by undertaking training in metropolitan locations.
- The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Rural GPs subsidy provides support to GPs in rural areas undertaking professional development.

The department also funds the Victorian Medical Postgraduate Foundation (VMPF) Country Education Program. The program provides educational opportunities for general practitioners, specialists and allied health professionals on a wide range of topics and issues facing rural practitioners.

The professional development and educational activities funded by the Victorian government complement and support other initiatives from the Commonwealth Government and the specialist medical colleges to build the skills of GPs and other staff that deliver services in rural health services. Examples of these programs include:

- The Emergency Medicine Education and Training Program (EMET) funded by the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) provides funding to smaller rural health services to enable them to obtain education, clinical support and training from a larger hospital or contract with emergency specialist, and larger hospitals to provide education, clinical support and training to that hospital and smaller emergency departments or urgent care centres where care is provided by non specialist medical staff. There are 40 rural and regional health services that are participating in this program.
- The Rural Health Continuing Education (RHCE) Sub-Program provides funding for support, education and training activities for rural medical specialists, including GPs.
- The Rural Health Education Foundation (RHEF) is also funded separately under the RHCE Sub-Program. RHEF provides rural health professionals with free access to professional development and medical education broadcasts through its satellite network, and via DVD and video, web streaming and podcasts.
- The Rural Procedural Grants Program (RPGP) enables procedural GPs in rural and remote areas to access a grant to attend relevant training and up skilling. The RPGP provides grants for emergency medicine training and procedural medicine training.

Health service role

Victoria's health services operate under a system of devolved governance, overseeing health service planning and provision.

It is the responsibility of health service Boards of Management to administer the operational aspects of health services, including workforce development, staff training and risk management. As part of this, health services are responsible for ensuring that staff can access education and professional development programs to ensure that they are skilled to perform the tasks required within their scope of practice.

Health services need to ensure clinicians (including general practitioners) who provide services to the their health care facilities are appropriately credentialled and have their scope of clinical practice defined in accordance with their level of skill and experience and that that scope of practice matches with the role expected of them (e.g. patient care in emergency department's). This is supported by the department's *Credentialling and defining the scope of clinical practice for medical practitioners* policy

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicalengagement/credentialling/policy.htm>.

Clinician's role

Every doctor practising medicine in Australia must be registered with the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health practitioners, which came into effect in 2010. The registration process is administered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Within this framework medical practitioners must comply with mandatory registration standards. These standards include a requirement for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). As such, all medical practitioners are required to participate regularly in CPD activities that are relevant to their scope of practice in order to maintain, develop, update and enhance their knowledge, skills and performance to ensure that they deliver appropriate and safe care.

It should be noted that in addition to these requirements, any medical practitioners seeking membership to professional medical colleges, including the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners are required to meet a range of requirements and satisfy the college of their competence through training and/or experience. Each college offers a range of CPD programs and activities to members to promote advanced skills and expertise. All courses are required to be accredited by the Australian Medical Council to meet the MBAs CPD requirements.