



## Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Ageing

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Our Ref: PSD/12/190

Your Ref:

8 May 2012

Ms Zoiee King  
Coroner's Registrar  
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms King

**Re: Court Reference: 1142/07 – Lee Patricia Collings**

Thank you for providing me with a copy of the findings including recommendations into the death of Ms Lee Patricia Collings.

In response to the relevant recommendations made by the Coroner:

### **Recommendation 1**

The Chief Psychiatrist advise the Emergency Department mental health clinicians to routinely and regularly re-assess patients who present with a history of self-harm and with a high blood alcohol concentration in order to more accurately determine the factors likely to predict risk of absconding and suicide.

### **Chief Psychiatrist's response**

The Chief Psychiatrist and the Department of Health have made this clear in several documents that have been produced and distributed to mental health services over the years. These include the clinical practice guideline, 'Assessment of Intoxicated Persons – CPG99121', the program management circular 'Mental Health Responses in Emergency Departments – PMC 080201', the 'State-wide Mental Health Triage Scale Guidelines' and most recently the clinical practice guideline 'Working with the suicidal person – clinical practice guidelines for emergency departments and mental health services'. The Chief Psychiatrist will disseminate the recommendation from the coroner to mental health services and also remind services of the guidelines and program management circulars that have been published and distributed in the past.

**Recommendation 2**

The Minister of Health acknowledge that mental health and overdose patients are over represented in Emergency Department Frequent Presenter populations and accordingly ensure that all Emergency Department mental health and overdose presentations are recorded electronically in databases accessible to subsequent treating mental health clinicians.

**Response**

It is appropriate that mental health patients and persons who have taken an overdose of prescribed or non-prescribed medication seek treatment and care in an Emergency Department when this is indicated. The State-wide Mental Health Client Management Interface Computer service should now be available to mental health clinicians in Emergency Departments. Individual health services have their own systems to record presentations to Emergency Departments. The Department of Health and the Chief Psychiatrist agree that good communication between Triage, Emergency Department clinicians and Mental Health clinicians is important. It is expected that all services have in place processes to support verbal and written/electronic communication between clinicians.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Vine', written in a cursive style.

**Dr Ruth Vine**  
**Chief Psychiatrist**