



Department of Health

Secretary



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Mr Darren Stebbings
Senior Registrar
Latrobe Valley Law Courts
By email cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Stebbings

Court Ref: 197/2007

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response regarding the coronial recommendation made following the inquest into the death of Mark Andrew Downie.

On 2 June 2009, the coroner in this matter recommended that consideration be given to developing a Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) service in Warragul, finding that Mr Downie required admission to a step-down unit following his discharge from Latrobe Regional Hospital. An alternative to this recommendation has been implemented and is outlined below. A number of efforts to improve the flexibility and range of services available to support people with a mental illness are also outlined.

PARC services are a relatively new service model. As such, they are not yet available in every Area Mental Health Service (AMHS) across Victoria. At the time of Mr Downie's death in January 2007, there was no PARC service available in Gippsland Area Mental Health Service (AMHS). However, as part of an ongoing commitment to improving access to this service type, a new PARC service was opened in Bairnsdale on 1 July 2008.

Gippsland PARC covers the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland and Wellington. Further information about PARC services can be found from www.snap.org.au or www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/parc.pdf.

Gippsland AMHS also has a Community Care Unit (CCU) located in Traralgon. CCUs provide medium to long-term residential and clinical care and rehabilitation services for people with a mental illness and psychosocial disability. A new model of care at the Traralgon CCU is currently being considered, to offer a more flexible service response to people with a mental illness.

In addition, as part of ongoing reform of the mental health service system, four initiatives are being implemented in various AMHS across Victoria. These initiatives aim to strengthen the capacity of the mental health service system to support people with a mental illness with complex needs including forensic health needs. Two programs being implemented in Gippsland are the Forensic Clinical Specialist and Intensive Home-Based Outreach Support initiatives. The Forensic Clinical Specialist initiative aims to build capacity in AMHS to work with high-risk clients and clients with a forensic history. The Intensive Home-Based Outreach Support initiative provides up to one to one support to people with severe and enduring mental illness and associated psychiatric disability. The Department of Health has funded a four-year external evaluation of these initiatives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the recommendation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fran Thorn', with a stylized, cursive script.

FRAN THORN
Secretary