



MELBOURNE HEALTH



1 March 2019

This document is jointly submitted to the State Coroner of Victoria by The Royal Women's Hospital (RWH or The Women's), Melbourne Health (MH or RMH), and Ambulance Victoria (AV).

Coroner White recommended in the findings for the inquest into the death of Mrs Elizabeth Gorman on 5 September 2012, that the three health services should:

***'under the guidance of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services meet to consider the feasibility of a single point of triage at the RMH, this to determine whether a female patient should be triaged for admission to the RWH (WEC) or the RMH'.***

Meetings have occurred between the Directors of the Emergency Departments at The Women's, RMH and Ambulance Victoria. The purpose of the meetings was to consider the recommendation and provide advice to the relevant health service Chief Executives and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

A meeting took place on 6 December 2018 at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, attended by:

the Director of Emergency Medicine at The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
the Co-Director of the Women's Emergency Care (**WEC**), and  
the Acting Group Manager at Ambulance Victoria.

The concept of the feasibility of a single point of triage at RMH for any female patient presenting for admission to either The Women's or the RMH, was explored by the representatives from the three health services. It was agreed by everyone present that this is not currently feasible.

A further meeting took place on 20 December 2018. This meeting was attended by:

the Director of Emergency Medicine at The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
the Co-Director of the Women's Emergency Care (**WEC**), and  
the Medical Director at Ambulance Victoria.

The recommendation from the initial meeting was revisited and reaffirmed. The joint recommendation is that a single point of triage at RMH for female patients is not feasible within the current infrastructure.

The Chief Executives of The Women's, Melbourne Health and Ambulance Victoria have endorsed this position.

The rationale is based on the following:


- a. The volume of patients presenting to the Emergency Department (**ED**) at RMH already exceeds the capacity for which it was both designed and predicted to be capable of managing in 2017/18 financial year, by more than 9,400 patients per annum.
- b. The addition of patients who attended and were triaged at the WEC in the 2017/18 financial year would have resulted in an additional 26,319 patients attending the RMH ED.
- c. An increase of this magnitude in the number of patients attending for triage at the RMH ED would greatly overwhelm the current physical infrastructure and the capacity of the clinical and administrative workforces to provide safe and timely care.
- d. The vast majority of the 26,319 patients who were triaged at WEC in 2017/18 financial year had self-selected the WEC or were transported to the WEC.
- e. Any female patients assessed at RMH ED as appropriate either for transfer to WEC for further assessment, or for direct admission to a ward at The Women's, would then require physical transfer to The Women's. The ED at RMH is separated both vertically and horizontally from WEC and the wards at The Women's by a significant distance, which may result in unnecessary delays in treatment and appropriate care. The logistics of transferring an average of 72 patients per day from RMH's ED to The Women's after initial triage at RMH would require significant additional resourcing and infrastructure, and would require funding that is not currently available to either health service.
- f. Clinical staff in the WEC have significant expertise in the assessment and management of neonatal, obstetric and gynaecological emergencies that is not available at RMH ED or within the inpatient services at RMH. Triaging these patients initially at RMH ED and subsequently transferring them to The Women's is likely to result in unnecessary delays for the treatment of time-critical patients.



Dr Sue Matthews  
Chief Executive, The Royal Women's Hospital  
Date of signing: 1 March 2019



Dr Christine Kilpatrick  
Chief Executive, Melbourne Health  
Date of signing: 1 March 2019



Associate Professor Tony Walker ASM  
Chief Executive, Ambulance Victoria  
Date of signing: 27 February 2019