



A Health Practitioner's guide for writing a statement for the Coroner

The Coroners Court of Victoria has developed this guideline to assist health practitioners who have been asked to provide a statement by the coroner.

1. Structure of the statement

- You must state your full name, position held, and a brief description of your qualifications and experience.
- Ideally the dates and times of admission(s), the reason(s) for admission(s), procedure(s) performed, and any discharge(s) should be written in chronological order.
- Where treatment is not related to an admission to a health service, your statement should set out the sequence of treatment including the dates of consultation, any tests ordered, the results of those tests, the advice provided and any referral to other health service providers.
- As it is impractical for the coroner to obtain statements from every staff member involved in the care of the patient, it may be appropriate for you to summarise the care given by other staff by stating your summary is based on information extracted from the medical record.
- You should refer to the health service's medical record of the deceased person. If there are difficulties obtaining access to a copy of the relevant medical record, you should contact the Coroners Court.
- If there are any inconsistencies between the medical record and your recollection of events, these should be noted in your statement.
- It is important that any specific questions contained in the coroner's request are answered in your statement.
- It may also be necessary to refer to any policies and protocols applicable at the time of the death. A copy of all relevant policies should be attached to your statement.
- If there has been a significant elapse of time from the date of the deceased person's death to the time of the coroner's request for the statement, you should not assume something did or did not happen based solely on their health service's policies and protocols in place at the time of the death.
- Your statement will be read by the coroner but may also be read by other interested parties such as family members and lawyers. For this reason, it is important that any medical terminology or abbreviations used are explained the first time each is used.

2. Timeframe

- Your statement should be forwarded to the coroner by the due date stipulated in the request.
- If you believe that you will not be able to meet the due date, you must notify the Coroners Court or investigating Victoria Police member as soon as possible.

3. Errors

- Where a coronial investigation progresses to inquest, minor errors identified after the provision of your statement can be corrected at the time oral evidence is given.

4. Witnessing the statement

- Your statement to the coroner *does not* need to be witnessed but must be signed and dated.

5. Use of the statement in court

- Once submitted, your statement will be considered by the Coroner along with any other statements and information gathered during the course of the coronial investigation.
- The decision whether or not to hold an inquest is made by the Coroner.

6. Information on the coronial process

- For further information about the coronial process, please visit the website at www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au or contact the Coroners Court.

To report a Reportable or Reviewable death, ring 1300 309 519
and ask for Coronial Admissions and Enquiries.