



Department of Health

Secretary

29 AUG 2011



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

e2406787

1090/07

Ms Lidia Lo Giusto
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Lo Giusto

Thank you for your letter of 2 August 2011 in which you drew the Department of Health's attention to the recommendations/comments made by the Coroner regarding the death of Marlene Kenny at Gippsland Base Hospital in 2007.

The Coroner's recommendations relate to various activities undertaken by public health services; the pre-amalgamated arms of Ambulance Victoria, being Rural Ambulance Victoria, Air Ambulance Victoria and the Victorian Adult Emergency Retrieval & Coordination Service; and the Department of Human Services (now Department of Health) in the coordination and delivery of emergency patient transfer services.

Most of the recommendations relate to specific medical and transport management issues, which were identified in the context of this case. As public health services and Ambulance Victoria operate under a devolved system of governance, responsibility for patient management, including transfer of patients to tertiary facilities, resides primarily with these organisations and not the Department.

I note that these recommendations have been sent to the relevant organisations who will respond on their own behalf. The Department will, however, liaise with public health services and Ambulance Victoria to ensure the recommendations relating to medical and transport management issues are addressed and implemented, as and where appropriate.

In response to the recommendation set out on page 11 that the Department of Health "consider developing a process where facilities can determine bed availability for medical patients requiring urgent transfer to tertiary facilities through a central point, reducing the time and resources required to find a bed", it is relevant to note that the Department has established the Victorian Critical Care Access website, a real-time critical care bed reporting site which began operating in late 2009.

The Victorian Critical Care Access website is managed by Adult Retrieval Victoria (ARV), which replaced the Victorian Adult Emergency Retrieval & Coordination Service in late 2007. Given ARV acts as the single contact point in Victoria for adult and paediatric trauma advice, general critical care advice and adult retrieval, it was appropriate for ARV to assume responsibility for the management of this website, which assists in the coordination of critical care transfers to ensure timely and appropriate access to critical care beds across Victoria.

I hope this response reflects the concern which the Department gives to the tragic events surrounding the death of Marlene Kenny.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fran Thorn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

FRAN THORN
Secretary