



Department of Health

Secretary

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Ms Laura Steward
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 1, 436 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Steward

Court Reference: 5862/2008 Re Veronica Campbell

I am writing in response to your letter dated 15 March 2011 regarding a coronial recommendation made in the above case that;

Ambulance Victoria and the Victorian Government develop a viable method of providing blood products in emergencies in rural communities.

In Victoria, matters relating to stocks and supply of blood and blood products are dealt with by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (the Blood Service), as outlined below. The planning of inventory levels and the distribution of supply are determined in light of the need to balance availability of product with the risk of product expiry and wastage.

Fresh blood and blood products can only be stored for a relatively short period of time before they become non-viable. Further, particular facilities are necessary to maintain the quality of blood and blood products. There is therefore a risk that fresh blood and blood products will be wasted if they are stored in locations with low demand, or if they are stored in facilities that are not optimal for maintenance of quality. Blood is a finite resource dependant on voluntary donations and there is a responsibility to minimise wastage.

The Blood Service provides advice to the Victorian Government and collaborates with relevant government agencies and health services in planning for levels of inventory for blood and blood products. The Blood Service does this by providing to the Department of Health annual data about stocks of and demand for blood and blood products, to inform the annual supply planning process. The Blood Service consults with health services about requirements for blood and blood products and makes arrangements for supply according to the request received from health services, subject to any shortages and supply issues that may prevent all requests from being met. The Department of Health is made aware of any significant supply issues and monitors any steps that are taken to address problems or concerns.

The Department of Health has confirmed that the Blood Service is working collaboratively with AV to further improve urgent access by AV to blood and blood products AV and the Blood Service have decided to achieve this through a "hub" hospital to source appropriate products.

Accordingly, effective from 13 April 2011, AV has made arrangements with the Royal Melbourne Hospital so that blood and blood products are available to be carried on AV aircraft to an incident scene. This arrangement requires AV to: meet certain audit requirements in relation to the handling of blood and blood supplies, as specified by Royal Melbourne Hospital; and maintain validated equipment for storage of blood and blood products, which is subject to annual inspections by the National Association of Testing Authorities. In addition, in late 2010 AV installed refrigeration units in Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance Single Responder Units, which can be used for short periods to transport blood and blood supplies from a major hospital to a rural hospital upon request from a medical practitioner. This initiative will broaden the statewide base for improved, rapid availability of blood and blood products to ensure there is an appropriate mechanism in place that supports rural communities in emergencies. The Department of Health considers that this is an appropriate arrangement in light of the risk of wastage outlined above, and notes that infrastructure is in place to ensure that blood and blood supplies are taken from hub hospitals as quickly as possible to places where it is required.

The Department of Health will continue to monitor this area to ensure that measures enacted address the Coroner's recommendation.

Should you require further information on this matter please contact Ms Lucia Clarke on 9096 7555 or email lucia.clarke@health.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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

FRAN THORN
Secretary