



**ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

**St Vincent's Hospital
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20 January 2021

Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006
By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Sanderson

Investigation into the death of Anthony Lansell Churches- COR 2017 5543

I refer to the findings and recommendations made by Coroner Cain into the death of Mr Anthony Lansell Churches received by St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited (St Vincent's) on 21 October 2020. St Vincent's response to the recommendations is detailed below.

Recommendation 1 - *That St Vincent's Health conduct a review of training programs (induction training for new ED staff and periodic training for ongoing ED staff) and any associated materials (hard copy and online) to ensure that they include comprehensive guidance about the response required in the event that a compulsory psychiatric patient absconds and highlights the importance, purpose and use of the MHA124 form when notifying police.*

St Vincent's has reviewed its online resources and training programs and developed further learning materials for Emergency Department (ED) staff regarding the response required in the event that a compulsory psychiatric patient absconds. The materials will be incorporated in to existing training packages routinely provided to ED staff. In addition, the policy and flow chart that details the actions that should be taken when a patient absconds will be updated to include further detail regarding the roles and responsibilities of staff in completing the absconded patient suite of paperwork and making the necessary notification to police. It is anticipated that the policy updates will be completed in February 2021.

Recommendation 2- *That St Vincent's Health consider the introduction of measures to improve observations of patients at risk of absconding during the afternoon changeover of shift (2pm-4pm).*

St Vincent's has considered measures to improve observation of patients at risk of absconding from the ED at all times, not only during the afternoon changeover shift. St Vincent's is currently working on improving timely access to a "special" (one-on-one nursing observation) for patients in the ED. ED staff have access to proximate alarms and are continuing to explore appropriate wandering alarms

that can be used when assessed as appropriate and necessary in the circumstances. In addition, St Vincent's is exploring the possibility of obtaining additional staffing resources in the ED whilst awaiting the implementation and roll out of the St Vincent's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Hub ("the Hub").

Furthermore, St Vincent's is currently reviewing its processes to ensure a streamlined admission pathway from the ED to the Acute Inpatient Service in order to reduce wait times and to limit the opportunity for patients to abscond.

Recommendation 3- *That St Vincent's Health provide an update about implementation of its mental health crisis hub including comment on anticipated (or actual) improvements to patient supervision, absconding risk minimisation or other aspects of mental health management in the emergency department, and how these will be monitored and evaluated.*

The Hub model of care has been finalised however the commencement of operations has been delayed due to a dispute between the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF). This matter is currently before the Fair Work Commission.

Once operational, it is anticipated that the Hub will provide a responsive and coordinated service for people presenting to the ED with mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems. Expected outcomes for patients of the Hub include but are not limited to:

- Improved coordination of care while in the ED;
- Improved communication in the ED;
- Improved patient experience;
- Reduced wait times in the ED for mental health patients;
- Reduced length of stay in the ED; and
- Reduced re-presentations to the ED.

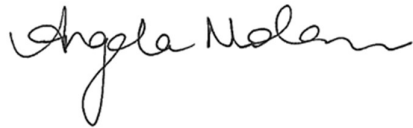
The Hub team will work collaboratively to assess and respond to the needs of the patient and will have the ability to expedite referrals to inpatient or community based supports as required. There will be an increased ratio of staff to patients which will allow for greater capacity to monitor patients at risk of absconding.

The Department of Health and Human Services will design and implement an evaluation of all Hubs across the State, which St Vincent's will participate in. In addition, St Vincent's will develop a dataset to monitor and evaluate the Hub which will include both quantitative and qualitative data. A Steering Committee established to facilitate implementation of the Hub will continue to meet post implementation to further review and refine the model of care and to examine initial feedback and data.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to Coroner Cain's recommendations.

Should you, or Coroner Cain, require any further information or clarification please don't hesitate to contact me on (03) 9231 2211.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Nolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail.

Angela Nolan
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited