



Secretary

Department of Health

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Sheean Werkmeister
Coroner's Registrar
Team 8
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
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Dear Sheean

Thank you for your letter of 22 August 2022 regarding Coroner Peterson's findings and recommendation into the tragic death of Ruth McKenna.

Coroner Peterson recommended that *the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists liaise with the Department of Health to explore the possibility and feasibility of developing a laparoscopic surgery database within Victoria to enhance quality and accountability in laparoscopic gynaecological surgery. Such a database could enable health authorities to access live outcome data, provide feedback to clinicians, target training, and make recommendations to clinicians and services regarding service capabilities.*

The Department of Health (The Department) has investigated the feasibility and usefulness of Her Honours recommendation with input from subject experts which included Dr Lance Emerson, CEO of the Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI), Professor David Watters, former Chair of the Victorian Perioperative Consultative Council (VPCC) and Professor Mike Roberts CEO of Safer Care Victoria (SCV).

In the case of Ruth McKenna, experts believed the establishment of a database or registry would not have prevented the outcome for Ms McKenna, nor would it provide impactful outcomes for similarly complex cases. A registry would provide retrospective audit outcomes, valuable though these may be, this case would have been too complex for a registry. Experts acknowledged this case was about operating on a complex patient with worse than anticipated physiology and the need for more multi-disciplinary decision making.

The Department would like to advise Coroner Peterson that, after careful consideration, we will not be accepting the recommendation as sited above. However, the Department wish to advise Her Honour that we commit to the consideration of those issues identified in the findings. Through the Department's ongoing collaboration with SCV and VAHI, there may be opportunity to influence system wide messaging and shared decision making that would facilitate the identification and management of complex patients.

The Department acknowledges that in accordance with section 72(5) the Act, the Coroner will publish our response on the Courts website.

Should you have any queries in relation to this response, please contact my office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Euan M Wallace', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Euan M Wallace AM
Secretary
Department of Health

15/09/2022