

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006  
Sent via email to: [cpresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

**Court Reference: COR 2022 005384**

Dear Ms Bevan,

Please find a response to your correspondence dated 18 October 2023 from Timboon and District Healthcare Service (TDHS), proprietor of Timboon Clinic.

**Recommendation:**

63. Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act, I make the following recommendations:

- (a) The continued reliance on facsimile communication of critical or important information in the modern era is inappropriate. I therefore **recommend** that the Practice Manager of **Timboon Medical Clinic** consider discontinuing the use of facsimile for the receipt of pathology results and instead institute a digital critical test result management system that incorporates closed loop communication (defined as communication that ensures receipt and understanding of the communicated material).

**Response:**

TDHS met with the family representative of [REDACTED] on two separate occasions to offer our sincere condolences and to discuss the circumstances of his death.

TDHS thanks the Coroner for their recommendation which will be implemented in full. The following outlines the process followed previously and the changes we have made.

Timboon Clinic has not historically relied solely on facsimile communication for critical or important diagnostic information, since the inception of receiving results electronically into Best Practice (clinical software program).

As part of the primary communication of results, all pathology results are received via HL7 messaging (digital encryption), into the requesting practitioner's Best Practice inbox for review and actioning. Results are notated by the practitioner if follow-up is required. Once reviewed and actioned by the practitioner, the results are filed automatically into the patient's electronic medical record. At the scientist's discretion, a follow-up phone call can also be made ensuring the doctor/clinic are aware that the results have been sent via facsimile and indeed have been received.

If the Australian Clinical Laboratory (ACL) is unsuccessful in obtaining contact with the doctor/clinic, ACL will call the TDHS Associate Nurse Unit Manager's (ANUM) on a mobile phone number (24/7) and the ANUM will respond as required.

At the instigation of the pathology laboratory (ACL), some results are also issued via facsimile, secondary to the electronic download, to alert the practitioner to the Urgent / Critical result. We would like to emphasise that this is only ever a backup system.

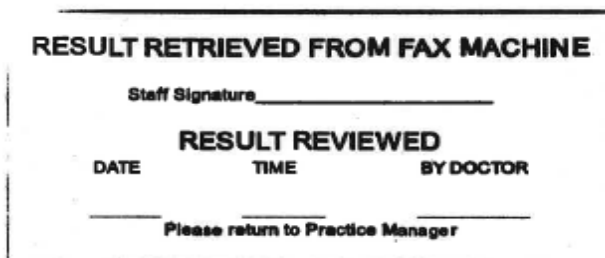
Amendments to this process were implemented prior to receipt of the Coroner's recommendation, as a part of TDHS's quality improvement process, in which our Medical Consultative Committee (MCC) reviewed the receipt and understanding of the communication material process. As a result, the Committee's recommended amendments to the primary communication process and its backup system were applied (please find attached copy of the MCC minutes dated ...

Staff were tasked to develop a systematic process when receiving pathology results, while other staff were trained on the new process before implementation.

The events associated with this incident, have provided a clear opportunity for improvement of this backup system, allowing us to further develop and strengthen our systems around the receipt of diagnostic results issued to Timboon Clinic via facsimile and/or in hardcopy.

The new process includes –

- All documents received via facsimile or in hardcopy are without delay, date and time stamped through an electronic time and date stamp machine.
- Urgent diagnostic results received via facsimile are also stamped with the RESULT RETRIEVED FROM FAX MACHINE stamp (please see below)



Staff check the facsimile machine at scheduled times throughout the day, at the commencement of the day 0830, 1230, 1630 and before leaving the clinic for the day. The facsimile machine is a multi-function centre (printer/scanner/copier) and is in constant use throughout the day and therefore being monitored consistently. Once received and both stamps have been applied, staff sign and place the result in the in-tray of the requesting practitioner.

Following this process an electronic note is then issued to the requesting practitioner via Mediflex (electronic booking system, which allows messaging between administration and clinical staff), to alert the practitioner that the results have been received via facsimile and have been placed in their in-tray for review and actioning. (These results should have already been received electronically in Best Practice). The practitioner indicates in Mediflex that they have reviewed the message by placing

an electronic tick next to the message and return the hardcopy to the administration team for actioning if required.

If the requesting practitioner is not on duty, the administrative staff will alert another practitioner within the clinic and place the hardcopy result in their in-tray and follow the process as above. In this instance, the administrative staff, will reassign electronic results to another practitioner within the clinic via Best Practice.

Once the practitioner has completed their review of the result and signed the stamp, the result is scanned into the patient's medical record in Best Practice by the administration staff – this provides a secondary timeline for result receipt, actioning, and review outside of the electronically received results in Best Practice.

We also engaged with Australian Clinical Laboratories to ensure their contact details data base had accurate information for the Timboon Clinic, Timboon and District Healthcare Service and all practitioners both inside and outside of normal business hours. As described above, if during the after-hours period a practitioner is not contactable, ACL defaults to contacting the Timboon & District Healthcare Service Assistant Nurse Unit Manager (ANUM) phone which is carried, monitored, and answered 24/7. ACL then advises the ANUM of any Urgent / Abnormal result.

Finally, we have scheduled a dedicated, daily allocation of time for each practitioner in Mediflex (electronic booking system) for them to review diagnostic results.

Please find below the required detail of the relevant contact person for the Timboon Clinic:

Katherine Gorringe  
Practice Manager



Yours sincerely,



Gary Castledine  
Chief Executive Officer

Encl. 1. TDHS - CGQCC – Clinical Incident Report – Patient Journey – Incident Review – 2023-03-20  
2. TDHS – MCC – Minutes – 2023-02-27