

## Statement to the Coroner

IN THE MATTER of the Coroners Act 2008

And

the death of WAYNE WATSON – COR 2023 07233

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### **RESPONSE BY AUSTIN HEALTH TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act, the Coroner made the following recommendation:

#### **Recommendation 1**

That Austin Health update its guidelines to require that all traumatic head injuries, whether occurring in the Emergency Department or in an inpatient setting, are assessed and documented by staff from a relevant trauma specialty (such as General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Emergency Medicine, or Intensive Care) or by staff who are otherwise trained in and familiar with Austin Health's Emergency Department Guideline on Suspected Head Injury in Adults.

### **STATEMENT OF ACTION IN RELATION TO THE RECOMMENDATION**

Austin Health thanks the Coroner for the recommendation and has reviewed its current policies and practices in response.

1. Austin Health will implement the recommendation as it relates to patients presenting to the Emergency Department. The relevant guidelines will be amended to specify that traumatic head injuries presenting to the Emergency Department are to be reviewed by an Emergency Physician (or equivalent senior clinician).
2. In relation to traumatic falls occurring in the inpatient setting, Austin Health's current Post Fall Management Guideline provides a framework for clinical assessment and management, including recommendations

regarding CT brain imaging where clinically indicated.

3. Following an inpatient fall, a medical review is undertaken by the treating medical practitioner from the patient's unit, or by the on-call medical or surgical practitioner after hours. Escalation to the on-call consultant is available at any time where clinically required.
4. Austin Health expects all medical practitioners to maintain core competencies in the assessment and management of head injuries. Practitioners are required to follow evidence-based guidelines, including the completion of neurological observations and concussion assessments, and to escalate care where there are concerns regarding serious injury, including suspected intracranial pathology.
5. At the Royal Talbot Campus, where there is no on-site medical practitioner after hours, the Post Fall Management Guideline requires nursing staff to notify the on-call medical practitioner as soon as practicable following a fall. An in-person medical review is undertaken at the discretion of the treating doctor, and transfer to the Austin Health Emergency Department is required for any serious or urgent clinical concern.

Austin Health appreciates the opportunity to review and strengthen its processes in response to the Coroner's recommendation.

Yours sincerely,

Tegan Howard  
Associate Director, Medicolegal  
Austin Health