

17 July 2026

Coroner Giles
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh St
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006



University Hospital Geelong

Ryrie Street
Geelong, VIC 3220

PO Box 281
Geelong, VIC 3220

T 03 4215 0000

ABN 45 877 249 165

BY EMAIL: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Coroner Giles,

Finding into the death of Simon Gaskill
Coroners Court Reference: COR 2022 002051

I write in response to Your Honour's recommendations to Barwon Health, made following the coronial inquest into the death of Simon Gaskill, and detailed in Your Honour's finding, delivered on 16 April 2026.

Your Honour made four recommendations, pursuant to section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)* (**the Act**), directed to Barwon Health. Each of those recommendations is outlined below, together with Barwon Health's statements of action in response, as required by section 72(4) of the Act.

Recommendation 1

Barwon Health ensure review and, if necessary, amend the existing processes of its outpatient clinics (including the radiology department) concerning non-attendances to ensure that they are fully consistent with the stated policy aims of the Victorian Department of Health's 'Managing referrals to non-admitted specialist services in Victorian public health services' policy.

This ought to be done with a view of ensuring specific procedures are in place that are responsive to the various stated barriers to accessing services highlighted in this policy under 'Disparities to access in care', in particular for persons experiencing homelessness, and who are, or may be, discharged to homelessness.

Barwon Health agrees with this recommendation and is currently in the process of reviewing and updating the following procedures to ensure that they are responsive to the stated barriers to accessing services highlighted under the 'Disparities to access in care' section of the Victorian Department of Health's 'Managing referrals to non-admitted specialist services in Victorian public health services' policy:

- (a) Barwon Health Non-admitted Acute Specialist Clinics Referral Procedure;
- (b) Barwon Health Non-admitted Acute Specialist Clinics Discharge Procedure; and
- (c) Referral Management Form General Medicine Specialist Clinics (Outpatients).

Barwon Health's Specialist Clinics Advisory Group (which consists of all program managers and administrative leads from Barwon Health's various Directorates that have Specialist Clinics) will consider what changes need to be made to the above policies. The proposed improvements will then be submitted to the Specialist Clinics Governance Group (which includes the Director of each Barwon Health Directorate) for consideration and endorsement. Once endorsed, the Specialist Clinics Advisory Group will coordinate and supervise the implementation of these improvements in Barwon Health's outpatient and radiology teams.

Recommendation 2

Barwon Health review its policies, procedures and training to staff on providing care to, and communicating with patients experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness to:

- (a) ensure staff verify an admitted patient's address and contact details with the patient on admission and at the time of discharge and make any necessary changes to the patient record as required;*
- (b) ensure staff clearly document in the patient record when a patient is homeless or at risk of homelessness, and identify a suitable method of communication with the patient following planned discharge where they have no fixed place of abode;*
- (c) ensure that, where possible, planned outpatient appointments are scheduled prior to discharge and that these appointments are documented in the patient's My Service Diary or other preferred communication method as nominated by the patient;*
- (d) ensure staff document all contacts and attempted contacts with patients in respect of outpatient clinic appointments in the patient's record; and*
- (e) explore opportunities to enhance supports for outpatients experiencing homelessness through integrated housing and health programs or allied health professionals.*

Barwon Health agrees with this recommendation and will review its procedure titled 'Consumer of No Fixed Abode' for the purpose of ensuring that the above steps are taken by staff when managing a patient experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness. As this procedure currently applies only to patients receiving services from Barwon Health's Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol programs, it will be revised to extend its application across the entire organisation and amended to include:

- (a) the requirement to provide the date and time of any scheduled outpatient appointment to a patient prior to their discharge;*
- (b) a recommendation to utilise other areas of Barwon Health that a patient might be engaged with for the purpose of notifying or reminding them about their specialist appointments at Barwon Health. For example, if a patient is scheduled to attend an outpatient appointment with Barwon Health's general medical team, communication to the patient regarding that outpatient appointment may also include a reminder that the patient has other appointments with Barwon Health's Specialist Clinics; and*
- (c) further clarity regarding the role of Barwon Health's Social Work team – i.e. to assist patients experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness with engaging housing services and other financial and/or practical supports where possible.*

Recommendation 3

Barwon Health review its process for referral to outpatient Drug and Alcohol Services (DAS) for at risk patients who are due to be discharged from hospital following an in-patient admission and who agree to a referral to, where appropriate:

- (a) facilitate direct referral to DAS;*
- (b) schedule an outpatient appointment with DAS and communicate the time and date of the appointment to the patient prior to discharge; and*
- (c) ensure clinicians in the general medical and psychiatry teams are aware of the process for referral to DAS, including where the patient may be directly referred or self-referred, and how this is to be communicated to the patient.*

Barwon Health notes that its DAS is part of a consortium of primary care providers that provide Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) treatment and management. AOD referrals are allocated to a

particular AOD provider based on their appropriateness and need. Where a patient's referral is being triaged or allocated to a particular provider, there is no capability to provide a patient with a fixed appointment time or date until that process has been completed.

In addition, Barwon Health notes that where a patient is allocated to an AOD provider other than its DAS, Barwon Health does not have any control over that provider's booking system (as it will be a separate external provider).

In relation to Barwon Health's DAS, it agrees with this recommendation and will:

- (a) provide a patient with details of their confirmed appointments (by providing them with a printed copy of their 'My Service Diary', an electronic form that is completed on BossNet) once they have been linked with DAS. For patients who do not have a scheduled DAS appointment, they will be provided an information brochure with the contact number for DAS;
- (b) update its *Barwon Health Procedure Manual: Alcohol Withdrawal Management* procedure to include this new requirement; and
- (c) clearly communicate this requirement to its general medical and psychiatry teams during unit meetings via email correspondence to its staff members (sent by the relevant Heads of Unit).

Barwon Health remains dedicated to continuing to invest and improve its system and processes in relation to all aspects of care, including its discharge processes and outpatient departments.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Ajai Verma
Chief Medical Officer
Barwon Health