



Ms Zoiee King
Coroner's Registrar
Coroner's Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition St
Melbourne Vic 3000

21 August 2013

Court Ref: COR 2008 005266

Dear Ms King

**Response to the Coroner's recommendation
Investigation into the death of NIKOS VOURDOULIDIS**

We refer your letter of 28 May 2013 and note that Coroner Parkinson made the following recommendation:

1. That the Public Advocate review OPA policy in relation to the scope of the exercise of guardianship powers in particular in relation to the level of supervision and follow up of delivery of medical treatment.

The above recommendation is being implemented, in that a review of the relevant OPA policy is underway.

In carrying out the policy review we are mindful of the need to ensure that the level of supervision and follow up of delivery of medical treatment for a represented person corresponds appropriately to the degree of regulation of their accommodation setting as far as practicable, given that supported residential services, for example, are much less strictly regulated than aged care facilities.

We are also taking steps to investigate and address practical issues that are highlighted by the coronial findings. OPA currently provides health care guardianship for approximately 300 individuals per year. To assist in determining whether files relating to those people contain adequate health information, the Advocate Guardian program reviewed a significant sample of guardianship files that included health care. The primary conclusion of that review was that while a considerable amount of health information is often held on file it is not always available in a readily accessible form. This conclusion has been referred to an existing working group that is looking at ways to improve our computer database.

We are also developing new health care plans to be incorporated into guardianship plans to help in obtaining health care information and following up delivery of services.

Timely receipt of information from medical practitioners is something that we have long sought to improve and the investigation findings provide further stimulus for our efforts in this area. In particular, we struggle to obtain information from general practitioners, and we are



frequently unable to obtain hospital discharge summaries. We recognise that it can be difficult for doctors to find time for such communications, but we plan to engage in discussions with the relevant professional bodies in the hope of ensuring doctors are aware that as decision makers for patients, we have a real need for the information. We are also developing form letters that can be sent to doctors and care providers, to make it easier for information to be provided in a timely way.

OPA guardians are not clinicians and our office has limited financial resources. Our aim within these constraints is to ensure that persons represented by our office receive a level of health care that is comparable to that available to well informed consumers of health services.

Thank you for bringing the Coroner's recommendation to our attention.

Yours faithfully

John Chesterman
Acting Public Advocate