



Forensicare

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19 February 2013



Coroner White
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11
222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne 3000 VIC

Re: Timothy Casey Court Reference COR 2008 001277

Dear Coroner

I refer to the above inquest and to the findings and recommendations made on 30 November 2012 and provide the following response.

Recommendation 1

1. That a written discharge note be prepared in respect of all MAP prisoners earlier housed in either Unit 13 or the AAU, for reasons connected to psychosis or suicide/self-harm. Such discharge note to be prepared by a consultant psychiatrist, or registrar or psychiatric nurse as deemed appropriate by the Senior Consultant. Further, any psychiatric nurse prepared discharge notes should be reviewed and counter signed by the duty psychiatric registrar or above.

In accordance with section 72(3) of the *Coroners Act 2008*, I wish to inform the Coroner that the following alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has been implemented.

It is Forensicare's practice to provide a written discharge summary for all Acute Assessment Unit (AAU) patients at the time of discharge. This paperwork is completed by a psychiatric registrar.

In regard to transfers out of Unit 13, Forensicare now has a consistent practice of making a note in the prisoner's health record setting out a summary of the person's current presentation, Forensicare's involvement and the short term follow up and plans post clearance from Unit 13.

These discharge notes are generally prepared by psychiatric nurses. Forensicare considers that this is appropriate and that the nursing staff employed by Forensicare at the Melbourne Assessment Prison are appropriately qualified to perform this task.

Further, information collected during July, August and September 2012 showed a monthly average of 20 prisoners per month being transferred out of Unit 13.¹ On average, one fifth of these prisoners were transferred from Unit 13 to the AAU and would therefore receive a full discharge summary subsequently when discharged from the AAU.

Recommendation 2

2. That the reception summary form be amended to withdraw the present stipulation that a reference to a psychiatrist for psychiatric assessment or medication review should only be ordered in respect of prisoners classified as P1 or P2.

In accordance with section 72(3) of the Coroners Act 2008, I wish to inform the Coroner that this recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 3

3. That the training of Forensicare psychiatric nursing staff should better instruct on this matter, and better emphasise the need to seek advice upwards concerning the position of a prisoner, who like Mr Casey, has a documented history of suicidal behaviour and who demonstrates a fluctuating mental state presentation.

In accordance with section 72(3) of the Coroners Act 2008, I wish to inform the Coroner that the following alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has been implemented.

Mental state examination is a core mental health nursing skill. The nurses employed by Forensicare at the MAP are well qualified to assess mental state and suicide and self-harm risk.

Forensicare's minimum qualification and training requirements for nurses working at the Melbourne Assessment Prison are a Bachelor of Nursing with mental health specialisation. All nurses who work at the MAP are employed at a minimum level 3 classification, in recognition of the demanding nature of the environment and the higher degree of clinical autonomy expected of nurses working there. Under Forensicare's Enterprise Bargain Agreement, level three nurses are defined as undertaking the duties of an advanced practitioner and elsewhere in Forensicare will typically lead a team on a shift. Level three nurses will generally have at least two years' relevant work experience.

Key responsibilities for nurses at this level include:

- Demonstrate highly developed skills in the mental and physical assessment of patients in a custodial setting.
- Demonstrate initiative in the delivery of nursing care and an ability to practise autonomously.
- Provide crisis intervention psychiatric assessment to prisoners throughout the facility as appropriate.
- Provide emergency medical care, within scope of practice, to prisoners throughout the facility after hours.

¹ Forensicare is not required to collect data or to report on the number of prisoners who are placed in Unit 13, however, records were kept of this for July, August and September 2012 for provision to the Coroner.

- Undertake initial and ongoing risk assessment of patients and liaises with the Inter-disciplinary team to provide a safe environment.

All Forensicare nurses participate in ongoing professional development. Forensicare is currently putting in place a program of mandated ongoing professional development relating to suicide and self-harm assessment skills for all nurses employed in the prison system. This program should be in place by the middle of 2013.

Where a patient's presentation suggests the presence of mental disorder or the need for psychotropic medication, nurses are able to make referrals to psychiatrists for further assessment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Dalton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Dalton.
Chief Executive Officer

