

Inquest into the death of Kevin Joseph John McDonnell

Kevin Joseph John McDonnell was an inpatient at the Prince Charles Hospital mental health service and was the subject of an involuntary treatment order. On 19 July 2012 Mr McDonnell left the ward. He was meant to be the subject of 15 minute observations but he was not restricted to the ward. He was seen by a motorist to enter a highly vegetated roundabout near the hospital. The following day his body was found in a shallow creek running through the roundabout. An autopsy found he had drowned although it could not be excluded that he had a cardiac event and fell and drowned.

Deputy State Coroner John Lock delivered his findings on inquest on 10 June 2015.

The Queensland Government responds to recommendations directed to government agencies at inquests by informing the community if a recommendation will be implemented or the reason why a recommendation is not supported.

The departments named in this response will provide implementation updates until the recommendation is delivered. Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible minister named in the response.

Recommendation 1

Any future version of the patient physical observations forms utilised by nursing staff at Metro North Mental Health Service include information as to the patient's observation regime as clinically recommended by their treating team. No doubt if there are changes to the policy of locked wards the observation sheets should also indicate whether patients are restricted to the ward or able to leave and for what periods.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed in part and is implemented.

Responsible agency: Queensland Health.

On 21 January 2016 the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

The Department of Health is considering the coroner's recommendation and will provide more information in early 2016.

On 10 May 2016 the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

A new visual observational form has been developed that enables staff to record the patient's observation regime, as clinically recommended by the treating team.

While the current statewide locked ward policy remains in place, the information regarding a client's restricted leave and for what periods of time is documented in the client record.