

Inquest into the death of Herbert John Mitchell

On 18 April 2011, Herbert John Mitchell died at the Townsville Hospital from global hypoxic brain injury after suffering a cardiac and respiratory arrest whilst in custody at the Townsville watch-house the previous day.

State Coroner Michael Barnes delivered his findings of inquest on 14 December 2012.

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.

Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible agency named in the response.

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Queensland Ambulance Service policies should be developed to cater for the specific needs of watch-house prisoner patients. For example, the presumption that busy watch-house staff can give the same level of monitoring to an intoxicated prisoner as can be expected of a family member caring for a drunk relative at home seems unrealistic.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Queensland Health.

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

In collaboration with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the Chief Forensic Medical Officer, the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) developed a new clinical practice guideline titled *Patients in police custody*. A prisoner observation recommendation form was also developed and is located at all Queensland watchhouses. The form is completed by paramedics when a prisoner is not transported to a health facility. Observation instructions are clearly outlined to QPS officers as advised by the paramedics or through consultation with the forensic medical officer.

The *Clinical practice guideline* and prisoner observation recommendation form came into effect on 6 November 2014 with their introduction supported through a QAS local ambulance service directive and QAS clinical quality and safety information communique.