

Inquest into the death of Gavin Lyle Woods

Mr Woods was found deceased in his motor vehicle on 26 June 2011 on a private rural property. He suffered from a major depressive disorder for almost 10 years prior to his death. Mr Wood had been taking antidepressant medication which had not been monitored in the six months preceding his death.

Mr Woods, a school teacher, was transferred from a school in Cairns to Burpengary State Primary School at the beginning of 2011 as a deputy principal. There were reports of alleged workplace harassment or bullying by the principals at Whitfield State School in Cairns in 2010 and then Burpengary State Primary School.

The now Deputy State Coroner John Lock delivered his findings of inquest on 11 December 2013.

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.

Recommendation 1

I recommend that the Department [of Education and Training] in consultation with appropriate stakeholders (such as the Queensland Teachers' Union), develop an appropriate policy, procedure or guideline that provides staff with clear direction on information concerning their medical, mental health, rehabilitation and grievance history that should and can be communicated or which can be communicated with their consent (and if relevant, information that should not be communicated), when staff are being considered for transfer or relocation, to enable regional staff (either at a human resources level and/or other sections of the administration and/or the vacancy review panel) to better place employees to best fit the needs of the employee and the school and to determine if any particular level of support is required.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Department of Education and Training.

On 19 June 2015 the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games responded:

During 2014 representatives from the then Department of Education and Training (DET) met with the Queensland Teachers' Union representatives to develop an information protocol to support the coroner's recommendation.

DET used the privacy/confidentiality standards of the public sector as the basis for an information protocol and adopted changes to its transfer and relocation documentation. The following departmental forms now reflect the adopted changes:

- Teacher Application for Transfer and Expression of Interest
- Relocation Application Form – Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of School, Head of Campus, Head of Department, Head of Special Education Services, Head of Curriculum and Guidance Officer
- Remote Area Relieving Placement Application form.

The changes were implemented at the start of the 2015 school year and were communicated to relevant DET officers.

An evaluation process will be built in, with the changes reviewed and evaluated in 2015 as to their effect in practice, including whether they have resulted in better placing employees to best fit the needs of the employee and the school and determining, if any, particular levels of support required.