

Inquest into the death of Marcia Anne Kathleen Maynard

Marcia Anne Kathleen Maynard died on 3 October 2015, her cause of death was consistent with insulin overdose. The coroner found Ms Maynard took her own life in the context of a number of stressors, most prominent was her anxiousness about having to give evidence in a mandatory death in custody inquest.

Deputy State Coroner John Lock delivered his findings of inquest on 5 September 2018.

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

The Queensland Government facilitate and fund a program that provides counselling for families as well as witnesses or others who may be involved in and impacted by a coronial investigation and/or inquest, similar to the program currently being facilitated by the Office of Industrial Relations.

Response and action: the recommendation was not implemented.

Responsible agency: Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

On 15 May 2019 the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice responded:

The department is currently considering the supports required by families and witnesses involved or impacted by a coronial investigation and/or inquest as part of a broader package of reforms associated with a recent performance audit of coronial services by the Queensland Auditor-General.

This includes ensuring sufficient counselling services are available and coordinated across agencies to support families and inquest witnesses.

On 3 September 2019 the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice responded:

In acknowledging that families and witnesses have a diversity of support needs, a series of consultation sessions will be held in 2019 to bring together those who play a role in supporting people bereaved or otherwise affected by a death reported to a coroner.

This will assist all stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the differing roles and responsibilities of agencies in providing support to families and witnesses, identify opportunities for improvement, and discuss examples of new and emerging practice.

Agencies are also continuing their focus on improving the case management and legal assistance they provide to coroners and the counselling support provided to families, through the allocation of additional temporary staff within the Coroners Court of Queensland and additional coronial counsellors within Queensland Health.

On 29 August 2020 the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Leader of the House responded:

After significant consultation with stakeholders and relevant experts in 2019, and taking into account findings from a recent performance audit of coronial services by the Queensland Auditor-General, the Coroners Court

of Queensland is satisfied a counselling program similar to that facilitated by the Office of Industrial Relations is not required.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Police Service, and Queensland Health share responsibility for the delivery of services to families and witnesses affected by a reportable death. Supported by an allocation of \$3.9 million in the 2019-20 state budget, agencies are taking action to improve supports to families and witnesses by:

- building capacity to deliver regional support and provide more tailored assistance
- enhancing referral processes and stakeholder understanding of the coronial system
- improving inter-agency coordination and collaboration
- providing ongoing training, guidance and assistance to staff
- driving continuous improvement in case management practices.

These system improvements are supported by the addition of extra coronial counsellors in Coronial Family Services, Queensland Health. These counsellors are skilled social workers and psychologists who are available to support the next of kin of people whose deaths are being, or have been, investigated by a reportable death.