Inquest into the deaths of Terrence Michael Malone and Garry Ronald Appleton

On 8 May 2019 State Coroner Terry Ryan delivered his findings into the deaths of Terrence Michael Malone and Garry Ronald Appleton. Mr Malone and Mr Appleton died in separate events from self-inflicted injuries caused by prison-issued razor blades at the Brisbane Correctional Centre. The state coroner examined the men’s mental health assessment at the correctional centre and the availability of razor blades. The state coroner made identical recommendations at both inquests.

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 to the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible minister named in the response.

**Recommendation 1**

Queensland Corrective Services develop a policy in relation to the management of the risks associated with the provision of razor blades to prisoners within the first month of entry to prison, particularly where a prisoner has recently expressed suicidal ideation or has recently been discharged from a hospital emergency department following an emergency examination authority.

Response and action: implementation of the recommendation is under consideration.

Responsible agency: Queensland Corrective Services.

On 12 December 2019 the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services responded:

Queensland Corrective Services is currently considering if and how such a policy regarding the provision of razor blades to prisoners could be managed. Factors requiring careful consideration include (but are not limited to):

- Queensland Corrective Services has implemented a process for identifying and managing prisoners identified as being an elevated risk of self-harm or suicide at any time during their custodial episode.
- Queensland Corrective Services already have a process of the removal of all property which may pose a risk inclusive of razor blades if a prisoner is under observation because of suicide ideation/self-harm.
- Assessment of the benefits or otherwise of such a requirement being imposed on a broader group of prisoners as recommended.
- Balancing the advantages and disadvantages of whether to continue with a focussed targeted approach with higher risk prisoners or develop a blanket approach with such prisoners considering the difficulties which would be associated with the management of this issue.
- The appropriateness of such a requirement being imposed on the prisoners, particularly given considerations under the Human Rights Act and also Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

The recommendation will be considered by the Queensland Corrective Services suicide management and governance working group.
Recommendation 2
Queensland Corrective Services, in partnership with Queensland Health, review its approach to suicide risk assessment and assertive responses to suicide risk in the context of best practice approaches.

Response and action: implementation of the recommendation is under consideration.

Responsible agency: Queensland Corrective Services (lead) supported by Queensland Health.

On 11 December 2019 Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services responded:

Queensland Corrective Services will commence scoping a project to undertake this work in consultation with Queensland Health.

Recommendation 3
These findings be provided to the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the strategic leadership group overseeing the implementation of the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan with a view to informing the enhancement of responses to persons with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders who are at risk of entering or have entered the criminal justice system.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Queensland Health.

On 11 December 2019 the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

The Queensland mental health commissioner met with the state coroner to discuss the findings, following this the findings were tabled by the Queensland Mental Health Commission at the Shifting minds strategic leadership group meeting on 29 May 2019 for noting.

The Shifting minds strategic leadership group is a cross-agency group which consists of senior level officers from state government agencies and is responsible for the collective implementation of Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023. This strategic plan includes a priority action to expand responses to people involved in the criminal justice system through better coordination across mental health, alcohol and other drugs, justice, housing, disability, employment and psychosocial supports.

The findings will continue to be considered by the Shifting minds strategic leadership group through the development, implementation and evaluation of the Shifting minds implementation roadmap which includes this priority action. The Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013 also requires the commission to report to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Ambulance Services on the implementation of the strategic plan.

Recommendation 4
The Queensland Government consider an increase in funding to enable Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) to enhance the integrated offender management system (IOMS) to support the recommendations of the Office of the Chief Inspector to enable risk assessment information to be displayed and accessible for QCS staff within a drop down menu.

Response and action: implementation of the recommendation is under consideration.

Responsible agency: Queensland Corrective Services.
On 12 December 2019 the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services responded:

Queensland Corrective Services intend to modernise the IOMS system and include this recommendation in an updated or replacement system. A business case for government consideration is due early in 2020. Until then Queensland Corrective Services is assessing short term options that may fulfil the coroner’s recommendation.

**Recommendation 5**

The Queensland Government consider an increase in funding to enable Queensland Corrective Services to be a competitive employer to attract and retain experienced psychologists and senior psychologists within custodial settings.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed to in part and implementation is in progress.

Responsible agency: Queensland Corrective Services.

On 12 December 2019 the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services responded:

Queensland Corrective Services develop a workforce strategy which will examine the role of psychologists within custodial settings.

**Recommendation 6**

The Queensland Government consider a trial program for ‘front end services’ of intake, health assessment and mental health assessment at the Brisbane City Watchhouse that involves collaboration between relevant stakeholders, including Queensland Corrective Services, Queensland Health, the Queensland Police Service and the Prison Mental Health Service.

Response and action: the recommendation is agreed to in part and implementation is in progress.

Responsible agency: Queensland Police Services (lead) supported by Queensland Corrective Services and Queensland Health.

On 26 November 2019 the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

Queensland Corrective Services, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health will work together in considering the implementation of this recommendation.

In 2018, prior to the completion of the coroner’s findings into Mr Appleton’s and Mr Malone’s deaths, QCS conducted a brief trial program of Queensland Corrective Services front end services at the Brisbane Watchhouse.

The findings of the trial program are still being considered by Queensland Corrective Services and will inform how Queensland Police Service, Queensland Corrective Services and Queensland Health progress implementation of this recommendation.