

## Inquest into the death of Holly Winta Brown

Holly Winta Brown died on 27 June 2015 whilst camping at the Laura Rodeo and Race grounds for an annual horse event. The cause of Holly's death was a fatal arrhythmia caused by heart muscle scarring as a result of a previously undiagnosed rheumatic fever. The coroner examined the assessment of health and safety at the event and the medical emergency response.

Northern Coroner Nerida Wilson delivered her findings of inquest on 12 June 2019.

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

Within six months of these findings an interagency executive group be convened to consider reform for mass gathering events in Queensland and specifically to establish a standardised protocol to provide for an out of hospital emergency medical response at the annual Laura Rodeo and Race event.

The protocol must be sufficient to effect the chain of survival in compliance with international best practice standards addressing:

- access to and early and reliable emergency response communications system
- access to early CPR
- access to defibrillation within the first 3 – 4 minutes of a cardiac arrest
- access to advanced care by emergency services personnel within eight minutes of cardiac arrest.

The roundtable is to include executive representation from (not limited to):

- Laura Amateur Turf Club
- Laura Rodeo and Campdraft Association Inc.
- Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service
- Cook Shire Council
- Queensland Ambulance Service
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Service
- representatives of relevant state agencies (including departments with responsibility for health, event planning, emergency services, and local government).

The protocol should have regard to (although not limited to):

- the provision of effective communication systems
- marked and known access for emergency services to enter and exit the Laura Rodeo and race grounds
- the resourcing, staffing and skill mix of emergency responders
- the incorporation of an approvals / permit process for the event organisers that complies with contemporary risk managements and planning for mass events
- the context of the Laura Rodeo and Race weekend, including the significance to the local community, the unique location, the development of the event by community not for profit organisations over many decades; assistance to encourage and support the continuation of this important and unique community event.

I request that when the interagency group is formed that an authorised representative contact the Office of Northern Coroner to confirm its formation and so that I can consider the release of other

relevant material that I have relied on and considered in the preparation of these findings. I am prepared to release that material so that the group can have regard to a significant body of work prepared for this inquest to enable an expedited response.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agencies: Queensland Health (lead), supported by the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service.

On 1 October 2019, the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:

Queensland Health agrees with the recommendation and is currently finalising its approach in consultation with the coroner. It is proposed this will be an integrated effort led by the Department of Health with the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service and Queensland Ambulance Service in conjunction with Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Service and other key stakeholders.

Consideration will be given to the following possible approaches to address the recommendation:

1. Utilisation of existing established committees.
2. Establishment of two interagency executive level committees:
  - a state level committee responsible for development of a set of guidelines for medical care at mass gathering events that can be applied state wide
  - a local level committee responsible for operationalisation of these guidelines and based on this, the development of a standardised protocol to provide for an out of hospital emergency medical response at the annual Laura Rodeo and Race event.

Future actions will be identified following consultation with stakeholders.

**On 24 April 2020 the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

Queensland Health has established a state level interagency executive committee, chaired by the Department of Health and Queensland Ambulance Service, with membership comprising of Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, as well as other key stakeholders.

The initial meeting of the state level interagency executive committee has been delayed due to the Queensland Government response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Cook Shire Mass Gathering Executive Committee was established at the local level and includes representation of Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service in consultation with, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service, Cook Shire Council and the event sponsors/organisers. The committee conducted its inaugural meeting in October 2019, with a subsequent meeting in January 2020. Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service has attendance at all meetings, supporting the committee in continuing to assess the emergency medical response needs of events local to the Cook Shire, including the annual Laura Rodeo and Race event.

Future actions will be identified when the state level interagency executive committee meet and consult with identified key stakeholders.

**On 21 September 2020 the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships responded:**

Queensland Health and the supporting agencies remain strongly committed to progressing the recommendation in consultation with the coroner.

Due to the Queensland Government's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the inaugural meeting of the Queensland mass gathering health guidelines interagency steering committee was delayed and progress on the statewide component of this work has significantly slowed.

The development of standardised protocols and health guidelines for mass gathering events is underway with Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service and Queensland Ambulance Service continuing to conduct significant work in this area locally.

The Laura Rodeo and Race event was cancelled for 2020 due to COVID-19.

Future actions will be identified when the state level interagency executive committee meet and consult with identified key stakeholders. Meetings of the Queensland mass gathering health guidelines interagency steering committee are postponed until March 2021.

**On 8 July 2021 the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

Due to the continuing operational demands of the Queensland Government response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), progress on the statewide component of this work has been delayed.

The Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service is in the final stages of the development of an event protocol in partnership with Cook Shire Council. This was initially directly linked with the Laura Rodeo; however, it is envisaged that this process will be implemented for all community events. A trial of this protocol was undertaken successfully for the Cooktown Races in November 2020.

The Queensland Mass Gathering Health Guidelines Interagency Steering Committee will consider state-wide reform for mass gathering events in Queensland.

**On 17 December 2021 the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and Leader of the House, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

Queensland Health is developing a best practice guideline to assist in planning for, and responding to, medical incidents at mass gathering events held in Queensland. The guideline is titled 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events'.

Drafting of the guideline was initially delayed due to the whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, however this work has now progressed and has been distributed for initial consultation prior to the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Mass Gathering Health Guidelines Interagency Steering Committee after receiving support from key representatives of the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Local Government Association of Queensland in addition to a subject matter expert from Griffith University. Queensland Health has also coordinated discussion with stakeholders across rural and remote hospital and health service chief executives.

Queensland Health is preparing to convene the inaugural Queensland Mass Gathering Health Guidelines Interagency Steering Committee by December 2021.

Feedback on the consultation draft of the 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events' guideline will be consolidated and tabled at the inaugural meeting. This will inform future statewide guidance on mass gathering events.

Further actions will be identified through the State level interagency executive committee meeting and from consultation with key stakeholders. This will include extensive consideration of statewide reform for mass gathering events in Queensland.

**On 7 July 2022 the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and Leader of the House, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

Following initial consultation of the guideline 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events', the project experienced further delays due to renewed workloads associated with COVID-19 and concurrent natural disaster events. Such delays impacted Queensland Health and other stakeholders that would be required to participate in the Queensland Mass Gathering Health Guidelines Interagency Steering Committee and guidance revision/consultation.

Queensland Health was therefore unable to convene the inaugural Interagency Steering Committee by December 2021.

As an interim measure, in December 2021 a meeting between core stakeholders (Proxy for Deputy Chief Health Officer, Queensland Health; Acting Deputy Commissioner, Queensland Ambulance Service; Assistant Commissioner Strategic Operations, Queensland Ambulance Service and State Manager, Local Government Association of Queensland) occurred to discuss the committee co-chair model, membership, scope and plan for recommencement of the committee and guideline work.

Queensland Health intended to recommence the Interagency Steering Committee in March 2022, however the severe rainfall event in Southeast Queensland has required dual activation of the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre and delayed the scheduling of this meeting.

Queensland Health will recommence the Steering Committee as soon as possible. The next meeting will include a presentation on the draft project, scoping and consultation plan that has been developed, and tabled for discussion and endorsement.

Queensland Health continues to collaborate with the Office of Rural and Remote Health to ensure alignment and clear distinction between the Mass Gathering Project and the First Responder Project.

**On 7 May 2023 the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and Leader of the House, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

The inaugural Queensland Mass Gathering Health Guidelines Interagency Steering Committee met in March 2022. Actions from the meeting included group feedback on the proposed project plan and the establishment of an interagency project working group.

Queensland Health consulted with a number of identified key stakeholders, including Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Queensland Ambulance Service and a Mass Gathering Subject Matter Expert to discuss the proposed 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events' guideline content and provide input into the guideline's development prior to the working group.

The Working Group met in July 2022 to discuss the proposed guideline content and provide input and guidance on the development of the document.

Initial proposed working structure, based on consultation and engagement to date, was discussed with the working group and determine next development steps. Ongoing feedback on the proposed content is due to continue throughout the stakeholder consultation process.

Queensland Health is set to continue stakeholder consultation over the coming weeks. Once consultation is complete, a draft guideline will be distributed for review and initial endorsement by the Steering Committee.

**On 9 September 2023 the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

Consultation on the 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events' guideline commenced with Local Governments, based on advice from the Local Government Association of Queensland, to ensure that the guideline fits within the arrangements described under Local Laws for event approval.

The intention of this guideline is to provide practical advice to event organisers on the health resources recommended by Queensland Health when holding public events approved by Local Governments. Initial consultation has highlighted the need to ensure that the draft guideline works within the legislative framework, and that it works well for event operators.

Based on initial feedback from Local Governments, the 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events' guideline will be amended for further consultation with Local Governments and endorsement by the Steering Committee.

The coroner's recommendation for a standardised protocol to provide for an out-of-hospital emergency medical response at the annual Laura Rodeo and Race event has been addressed by the development of Holly's Protocol Mass Gatherings (April 2021) in partnership between Cook Shire Council and Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service. Queensland Health is now building upon this work to develop a standardised Queensland Health approach to out-of-hospital emergency medical response for events across the state.

Queensland Health will continue the development of a standardised statewide approach to out-of-hospital emergency medical response, in consultation with Hospital and Health Services, particularly those with rural and remote populations.

**On 22 March 2024 the Minister for Police and Community Safety, on 30 January 2024 the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women and on the 11 November 2023 the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services responded:**

A standardised protocol was developed in April 2021 in partnership between the Cook Shire Council and Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service to provide for an out of hospital emergency medical response within the Torres and Cape region and has been attributed to Holly Winta Brown. The Cook Shire Council's [Event Information Kit – A guide for Event Organisers](#), refers to Holly's Protocol – Mass Gatherings as a guide for community planning and preparation prior to a public mass gathering event and also identifies how key information is communicated before, during and after an event.

Holly's Protocol identifies possible risk, aiming to ensure the health and safety of attendees, event organisers and emergency responders for the duration of the event and subsequent travel. The Cook Shire Council has since incorporated the standards identified in Holly's Protocol in its Temporary Entertainment Event Application to ensure the Coroner's recommendations are met by all event organisers. A copy of Holly's Protocol is available by contacting Council.

Queensland Health has also undertaken to develop a best practice guideline to assist in planning for, and responding to, medical incidents at mass gathering events held in Queensland. Publication of the statewide guideline 'Medical Care at Mass Gathering Events' is expected to occur by 31 December 2023 following further consultation with the Interagency Steering Committee, including Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Queensland Police Service.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Holly's name be attributed to the standardised process referred to in recommendation 1.

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:

Queensland Health supports attributing Holly's name to standardised emergency planning and risk assessments as discussed in recommendation 1, when the preferred option is finalised.