



Business Rules for requesting a confidential Post Mortem Report from the Office of the State Coroner

Background

The Office of State Coroner (OSC) routinely sends copies of all forensic Post Mortem Reports (PMR) to hospitals for inclusion in the deceased patient's medical record. Medical staff may request a copy in addition to this routine process for **quality improvement purposes** (e.g. completing mortality review or investigation of a SAC 1 clinical incident). The OSC sends the ad hoc report to medical staff at the same time as the routine report is provided to the hospital.

Prior to 1 July 2018, the Coronial Liaison Unit (CLU) at the Department of Health (DOH) was responsible for forwarding requests for PMRs from WA Health Service Providers (HSP) to the OSC. From 1 July 2018, should a HSP wish to request PMRs in addition to the reports routinely provided by the OSC, these requests should be sent directly to the OSC in accordance with these business rules.

The CLU at the DOH remains responsible for these business rules which have been developed in partnership with the OSC.

PMRs may be requested from the OSC only:

- For quality improvement purposes;
- For deaths which occurred in a public health service, or following health care provided by a public health service; and
- Where the date of death was on or after 1 August 2008.

Process for requesting an ad hoc confidential PMR

Should a health service elect to request PMRs from the OSC in addition to the routine PMR, this must be done via the following process.

All correspondence with the OSC must be via the nominated liaison person(s) from each HSP. **For information on the nominated liaison person(s) for each HSP, contact the respective HSP's Safety & Quality team.**

To request a PMR from the OSC:

1. Ensure site records indicate the death was a reportable death under the *Coroners Act 1996* and was reported to the Office of the State Coroner.
2. Email the HSP nominated liaison person(s) the following information:
 - Acknowledgement that the request for a PMR is for quality improvement purposes only
 - Full name of the deceased person
 - Date of birth of the deceased person
 - Date of death of the deceased person

- Place of death of the deceased person
 - Name of Medical Officer requesting the PMR.
3. The nominated liaison person(s) for each HSP is responsible for reviewing PMR requests to ensure compliance with the above requirements and lodging the request with the OSC via Coroner@justice.wa.gov.au
 4. Once available, a copy of the requested PMR will be directed to the HSP nominated liaison person(s) for distribution to the Medical Officer or individual requesting the PMR on behalf of the Medical Officer. The PMR will be marked with the nominated liaison person's name.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who has responsibility for the PMR?

All evidence gathered for or on behalf of a coroner belongs to a coroner as if it belongs to the deceased person. As a consequence the coroner (on behalf of the deceased) has to preserve the deceased's confidentiality as much as possible. Thus the PMR remains the property of the OSC at all times. Provision of copies or details from the PMR are restricted to individuals directly involved in the quality improvement activity. The recipients are responsible for the security of the information contained in the PMR. Any breach could lead to a suspension of the service until reassurances are given to prevent a reoccurrence.

Why isn't the PMR available yet?

There can often be significant delay in obtaining PMRs if the cause of death has not yet been determined. This is particularly true for cases where toxicology or other specialist testing is required. There may also be circumstances where the OSC is not able to release the PMR; for example, the death is subject of a coronial inquest or criminal proceeding. In the event that a PMR is not yet available, the HSP's request will be kept on file and the PMR will be forwarded once available.

Is a preliminary PMR available?

The OSC does not provide PMRs until a cause of death has been determined, or it has been found to be 'unascertainable' despite all efforts and investigations. Therefore, preliminary reports will not be available for release.

Will the PMR contain information about the time of death?

The PMR does not contain information about the time of death, only the cause of death (unless unascertainable).

Further Information

For further information, contact your HSP Safety & Quality/Clinical Governance team.

Alternatively, the Coronial Liaison Unit at the Department of Health can be contacted at CoronialLiaisonUnit.RoyalSt@health.wa.gov.au

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