



Palliative Care Council of South Australia

Deposition Pathway for Reportable Deaths in Palliative Care Cases

The Palliative Care Council of South Australia Inc would like to advise general practitioners that a Palliative Care Report of Death – Medical Practitioner's Deposition Pathway has been developed with the State Coroner's Court and is now effective.

The Deposition Pathway refers specifically to section (e) of the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act*, that is, to a death that occurs within 24 hours of the person having been discharged from a hospital.

It is not unusual for palliative patients who are hospital inpatients to wish to be discharged home to die. 'Home' can refer to a private residence, or to a nursing home if that was where the person was living before their admission to hospital. The Palliative Care Council believes that a Coroner's Inquest is not appropriate in these cases, because the death is expected and the inquest would be likely to significantly compound the emotional impact of the death and to make the course of mourning more difficult for the person's loved ones.

Under the Deposition Pathway, the discharging doctor telephones the Coroner's Court, and the deposition form is then faxed to either the discharging doctor or the patient's GP. If the patient dies within 24 hours of discharge from hospital, the completed Deposition form is returned to the Coroner. If the patient dies overnight, it is not necessary to contact the Coroner's Court until the morning.

It is not necessary to call an ambulance or the police. The body can be released to a funeral director without delay.

For more information about the Palliative Care Report of Death – Medical Practitioner's Deposition, or to obtain the Deposition Form, contact the State Coroner's Court, Telephone: 8204 0618, Email: coroner@courts.sa.gov.au. Office hours are 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Monday – Friday, and 8:00 am – 4:00 pm Weekends and Public Holidays.