

## **A better public health system for people with disabilities**

The Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) today has released a public summary about an own motion investigation into the care of people with a disability by SA Health in acute settings in South Australia.

The own motion commenced after the HCSCC received several complaints about the provision of health services to people living with a disability in these settings.

Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner Associate Professor Grant Davies said the investigation revealed some aspects of those services posed an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of people living with a disability.

“SA Health was found to be in breach of the [HCSCC Charter’s five guiding principles](#),” Associate Professor Davies explained.

“The evidence shows there was a failure in service delivery.

“Every South Australian is entitled to have their rights respected when using a health or community service.

“I am pleased SA Health accepts the findings and acknowledge the issues raised in the investigation were concerning.

“They have shown a willingness to improve their services, have collaborated with my office, have implemented changes and have committed to more, and have undertaken to keep me informed of those changes, with an update on progress by 4 December 2020.

“I acknowledge a great deal of work is being carried out by SA Health to implement the necessary changes required to ensure people with disabilities access and receive quality care when hospitalised.

“Therefore, I consider the various initiatives and actions taken by SA Health to be reasonable and that they will adequately resolve the systemic concerns identified in the investigation.

“This will lead to better services.”

As part of the investigation, the former Commissioner engaged an independent expert to assist in the process. The expert spoke with complainants and provided a report to the HCSCC. This report formed part of the own motion investigation and was taken into account with all of the other information gathered to make my findings and recommendations.

Associate Professor Davies extended his thanks to those families for speaking with the investigator and sharing difficult experiences.

“It will not have been easy to share those experiences,” he said.

“I am aware of calls for the expert opinion and the investigation report to be released to the public. I will not be doing so.

“I can think of no situation in my career as a complaints resolution practitioner where the release of an expert opinion was appropriate or warranted.

“The process of investigation gathers information from various sources to inform the office’s findings and recommendations.

“I would not release the transcript of a witness to an investigation publicly and will not release expert opinions for the same reason.

“The benefit of an office like the HCSCC is that consumers, complainants, service providers, witnesses and experts offer their information in the knowledge it will not be shared more broadly.

“To do so would fundamentally damage the integrity of the office.

““The public summary allows for an examination of the issues raised collectively in these complaints and for the proposed resolutions to be published while maintaining the privacy of those involved.”