

Friday, 16 June 2023

## **HCSCC releases findings from investigation into treatment of consumer at WCH**

The Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner has today released findings following an investigation into the treatment of a consumer at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

The Commissioner, Associate Professor Grant Davies, has found that Mr J was physically restrained on two occasions and held in prone restraint contrary to SA Health's policy guidelines and the Chief Psychiatrist's Restraint and Seclusion Standard.

The Commissioner also found Mr J was secluded for a total of more than five hours over three separate periods. Each period of seclusion was in excess of the 30 minutes in the Restraint and Seclusion Standard.

The investigation report contains nine recommendations for the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) and Office of the Chief Psychiatrist (OCP).

The Commissioner began the investigation late last year after a referral from the OCP with concerns about treatment provided to Mr J during admission to the Mallee Ward at WCH between 17 August 2021 and 20 August 2021.

The Commissioner's findings include:

- Despite WCH documentation indicating Mr J was admitted to the Mallee Ward on the basis of an Inpatient Treatment Order (ITO) from his GP, which permits compulsive treatment including administration of medication, he was not detained under an ITO.
- Mr J was subject to restrictive practices which were not in line with expected standards or training provided to WCHN staff.
- WCH did not maintain accurate or contemporaneous records of Mr J's admission to hospital.

The Commissioner has not made a finding on the allegation of assault because he does not have the legislative responsibility of determining allegations of assault.

The Commissioner's recommendations include:

- WCHN to retrain all MSS Security Staff and Mallee Ward staff on the SA Health and OCP policies regarding restraint and seclusion.
- WCHN adopt injury charts for consumers which would record any injuries sustained while admitted.
- WCHN retrain staff in record keeping.
- The OCP develop a paediatric version of the SA Health restraint and seclusion policy.



**Health and Community Services**  
Complaints Commissioner

PO Box 199  
Rundle Mall SA 5000

(08) 7117 9313  
1800 232 007

**hcsc.sa.gov.au**

WCHN will be required to report regularly on implementation of the recommendations to the HCSCC over the next 12 months.

“This investigation focused on the difficult and complex issue of the use of restraint and seclusion in healthcare settings and in particular use in young people,” the Commissioner said.

“There is a clear policy and standard in South Australia for use of restraint and seclusion. This investigation found that Mr J was subject to practices not in line with the policy and standard which is very concerning.

“It is also clear there were significant gaps in the reporting of treatment and care while in hospital, and an absence of reporting on any injuries the consumer might have sustained while being subject to restrictive practices.

“The recommendations will guide reform in this area.

“I note this has been a very stressful and upsetting experience for Mr J and his family. I thank Mr J and his parents for their support in this investigation.”

A public summary of the investigation report can be found [here](#).

The Office of the HCSCC is a free, independent, statutory office. The HCSCC assists consumers, carers and service providers with complaints about health or community services in South Australia. This includes government, private and non-government health and community services.

