



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CORONIAL JURISDICTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

REPORT TO BE TABLED INTO THE CORONIAL JURISDICTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

FOR RELEASE 8.30AM FRIDAY 29 APRIL 2022
29 April 2022

An Upper House Select Committee into the coronial jurisdiction in New South Wales will today at approximately 11.00 am hand down its report and recommendations.

This inquiry followed the important work undertaken by the select committee on the high level of First Nations people in custody and oversight and review of deaths in custody in 2019 and 2020, which found that a thorough review of the coronial jurisdiction had not been undertaken since 1975 and was badly needed.

The committee was composed of members of Parliament from across the political spectrum. With one exception, its deliberations were unanimous, providing a strong foundation for the implementation of the report recommendations.

The Chair, the Hon Adam Searle MLC, said, "The Coroners Court of New South Wales and all those who work in the jurisdiction deliver a high quality service to the community. In meeting with the NSW State Coroner, Deputy State Coroners and the numerous staff across the various agencies and teams at the Court, the passion and sense of vocation shared by all was highly visible and admirable. However, despite everyone's best efforts, evidence given to this inquiry shows that the Court is experiencing very heavy workloads for coroners as well as for forensic and other staff and lacks sufficient resources to undertake the important work before it. This has led to delays in finalising matters, further grief for bereaved persons and families and a significant and growing backlog of cases. There are workforce constraints across the system and the current structure of the court is out of date; it does not recognise and support the specialist nature of the jurisdiction and the unique role it plays in our system of justice."

The Chair continued, "The conclusions and recommendations in this report are intended provide a roadmap to ensure that New South Wales has a modern, specialist and better resourced coronial system which has at its centre the object of preventing future loss of life while enhancing the therapeutic and restorative aspects of the jurisdiction."

The Select Committee makes 35 recommendations to address the challenges facing the Court and the jurisdiction. Key parts of this roadmap include recommendations to reform the structure of the Coroners Court of NSW to enhance its independence and specialisation, improved resourcing to address the backlog of cases and ongoing high workload of coroners, forensic and other staff, and the establishment of a specialist preventive death review unit, similar to the Coroners Prevention Unit in Victoria, to undertake specialised collection, analysis and review of research and data to better support the work of coroners.



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Other recommendations in the report include measures to strengthen the accountability and oversight of responses to coroners' recommendations from both government and non-government bodies, proposed amendments to the Court's powers and scope, particularly in relation to findings, inquests and evidence, and the provision of more timely information and improved support to bereaved persons and families.

The Chair concluded, "The committee also received evidence of the significant decline in coronial hearings into workplace deaths over the last two decades, meaning that there is often only limited fact-finding and a limited review of systemic causes of workplace fatalities and related issues, especially when a defendant pleads guilty and/or matters proceed by way of agreed statement of fact. Recommendations are made in the report that address this and other issues raised by unions and other inquiry participants in relation to deaths in the workplace."

The NSW Government will now have six months to respond to the committee's recommendations. The committee's report and other inquiry documents can be found on the committee's [website](#).

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Adam Searle MLC, on 0418 381 636