



WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE

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Ms Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA  
Chair  
Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ms Sanderson

**INQUIRY INTO THE NEED FOR LAWS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA TO ALLOW CITIZENS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR OWN END OF LIFE CHOICES**

Thank you for your letter dated 29 March 2018 requesting information to respond to questions taken on notice at my appearance before the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices on 27 February 2018.

Please find below the Western Australia Police Force response to each of the questions.

1. *In relation to reportable deaths under section 3 of the Coroners Act and the Criminal Code, can you advise how many reportable deaths have been investigated over the last five years, in the following categories:*
  - a) *deaths potentially resulting from a refusal of life-sustaining medical treatment, including artificial nutrition or hydration, by a competent adult or alternatively decision makers;*
  - b) *deaths potentially resulting from voluntary palliated starvation when a competent individual chooses to stop eating and drinking and receives palliative care to address pain, suffering and symptoms that may be experienced as the individual approaches death;*
  - c) *deaths associated with the doctrine of double effect where the administration of medication is intended to relieve pain but may hasten death;*
  - d) *deaths associated with a medical practitioner's assessment that the administration of medical treatment would be futile and, therefore, not required in order to provide the necessities of life in accordance with section 262 of the Criminal Code;*
  - e) *deaths associated with terminal or palliated sedation (the use of pharmacological agents to reduce consciousness, reserved for treatment of*

*intolerable and refractory symptoms) where artificial nutrition and hydration are withdrawn; and*

*f) deaths which arose from a do not resuscitate recommendation?*

None of the deaths referred to in a) to f) fall within the definition of a Reportable Death, (section 3 of the *Coroners Act 1996*). Ordinarily the treating doctor would issue a Death Certificate for their patient.

None of the deaths referred to at a) to f) have been reported to the WA Police Force within the past five years.

2. *Under the Coroners Act, WA police have an obligation to report suspicious deaths to the State Coroner, what section of the Act sets out this obligation and does it apply to other agencies?*

Section 17 of the *Coroners Act 1996* sets out the obligation for 'a person' to report a death. I have attached copy of section 17 for your information.

3. *Are there any matters that have been referred to WA Police which arose from a "do not resuscitate" recommendation?*

Deaths under these circumstances have not been reported to the WA Police Force within the past five years.

I trust the above information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

CHRIS DAWSON  
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

9 May 2018

Att.