

STATE CORONER — CASE BACKLOG

932. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the parliamentary secretary's statement to the house on 8 August 2023 in which he clarified the answer to question on notice 1267 and advised that there are 28 cases of post-abortion neonatal deaths with the Coroner's Court, including one reported in May 2021.

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware that on 19 September 2018, I reported 27 deaths to the coroner after his then representative, the Leader of the House, had informed the house the previous day that pursuant to advice from the State Solicitor's Office those deaths were reportable?
- (2) Is the Attorney General aware that on 10 May 2022, the Leader of the House advised on behalf of the Minister for Health that a further four such deaths had been reported to the coroner?
- (3) In light of this prima facie discrepancy, will the Attorney clarify why there are not 31 cases presently before the Coroner's Court?
- (4) Other than 19 September 2018 and May 2021, were cases reported on any other date?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer was provided to me on 15 August by the Attorney General.

- (1)–(4) By letter on 26 April 2019, the Department of Health reported 26 matters to the State Coroner. Review of the medical records provided to the Coroner's Court by the Department of Health at that time indicated a total of 28 distinct matters, two more than reported.

Following review of the medical records associated with the 28 matters, it was determined that two were not reportable deaths within the meaning of the Coroners Act 1996. On 18 December 2019, two further matters were reported to the State Coroner. However, review of the associated medical records disclosed only a single death—the death of the child was a relevant reportable death, but records of both the child and the surviving patient who gave birth had been provided to the State Coroner. On 26 May 2021, one additional matter was reported to the State Coroner. As such, while there were 31 matters reported to the State Coroner, only 28 are reportable deaths for the purposes of the Coroners Act 1996.