

MEDIA RELEASE

17 September 2020

Commission reviews WA Health reforms in handling dangerous drugs

The Corruption and Crime Commission has tabled its *Review of recommendations made following reports on dangerous drugs in hospitals in Western Australia* in State Parliament today.

The report confirms WA Health has made substantial progress in responding to significant misconduct risks surrounding the management of controlled drugs in public hospitals.

Today's report shows:

- better defined accountability, including clarification of roles and responsibilities;
- improved policies, procedures and practices, including information and knowledge sharing across hospitals;
- better checks and balances, reconciliation processes and audit procedures;
- implementation of modern automated systems, which allow for greater oversight of drug and register management, auditable reports and increased security measures;
- heightened drug discrepancy management, including strengthened reporting requirements, improved investigative processes and exploration of intelligence software options for trending data; and
- enhanced education and training.

The misconduct risks were detailed in two reports published by the Commission in 2017 and 2018. The Commission made 19 recommendations to address them. WA Health's response was reviewed against those recommendations.

The serious misconduct risks came to light as result of a Commission investigation into the theft of drugs at two large metropolitan hospitals by a pharmacist who was addicted to opioids and stole large quantities of controlled drugs. He exploited each hospital's processes to work unsupervised and to falsify records, which went undetected for 14 months.

The Commission's review found that 17 of the Commission's 19 recommendations are currently adequately addressed. Two of the recommendations depend on implementation of a major policy review by WA Health.

In a year, the Commission will conduct a further review of the two remaining recommendations and assess the overall impact of the Department of Health's new consolidated medicines handling policy.

The Commission's review spanned the Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Health Service, North Metropolitan Health Service, South Metropolitan Health Service, East Metropolitan Health Service, and WA Country Health Service.

Contact the Corruption and Crime Commission

Commission officers attended nine regional and metropolitan hospitals to engage directly with operational staff, and saw the practices associated with access to and management of controlled drugs in those facilities.

While it is evident to the Commission that significant variations in drug management processes and practices exist across WA Health and within individual Health Service Providers, all agencies appear driven by a common commitment to better manage the risks associated with controlled drugs.

ENDS

Read the report

[*Review of recommendations made following reports on dangerous drugs in hospitals in Western Australia*](#)

Related reports

20 June 2017 - [*Report on the Supply and Management of Schedule 8 Controlled Drugs at Certain Public Hospitals in Western Australia*](#)

25 May 2018 - [*Report on serious misconduct risks around dangerous drugs in hospitals*](#)

Media contacts

Marie Mills: (08) 9421 3600 or 0418 918 202

Louisa Mitchell: (08) 9421 3600 or 0434 308 208