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The influence of health inquiries on clinical governance systems: A case study of the Douglas Inquiry

Heather Gluyas

University of Notre Dame Australia

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2.4.14 Before December 2000, the Inquiry commenced a process to obtain a number of CDs containing KEMH e-mails covering the period, with some gaps due to missing or unreadable backups. About 55,000 e-mails were included on these CDs. They were an important source of information for the Inquiry’s investigation. The e-mails expressed views, and related events, with a good deal more candour that was evident in many of the Inquiry’s interviews with current and former KEMH staff members.

2.4.18 Over a total of 6 days between 7 and 14 December 2000, 12 Inquiry staff members attended the Hospital. They inspected and removed documents held in areas including –

1. KEMH/PMH Executive;
2. Medical Administration and HR Department at the PMH site;
3. clinical care units, including Obstetric Clinical Care Unit, Gynaecology Clinical Care Unit and Neonatal Clinical Care Unit;
4. wards;
5. Theatre;
6. Anaesthetic Department;
7. Delivery Suite;
8. Emergency Centre;
9. Clinics;
10. Family Birth Centre;
11. After Hours Nurse Managers;
12. Research Fellow’s rooms;
13. Department of Nursing and Midwifery Education and Research;
14. Postgraduate Education;
15. Library;
16. A Block/Storeroom;
17. B Block basement;
18. Agnes Walsh House basement; and
19. Computor off-site records.
The documents included electronic and hard copies of –

1. ward documents, such as communication books and ward registers;
2. accident/incident files;
3. statistical data;
4. quality assurance documentation;
5. general correspondence files;
6. rosters and diaries;
7. personnel files;
8. recruitment, selection and performance management documentation; and
9. committee minutes.

Over the 6-day period, 556 boxes of documents, estimated to comprise over 800,000 pages, were removed and taken to the Inquiry’s offices.

(iii) Documents from other agencies

The Inquiry also sought and obtained a wide range of information and documentation from other agencies including –

1. Australian College of Midwives;
2. Australian Council of Healthcare Services;
3. Australian Patient Safety Foundation;
4. Coroners Court;
5. Curtin University, School of Nursing and Midwifery;
6. Edith Cowan University, School of Nursing and Public Health;
7. Health Department of Western Australia;
8. Medical Council;
9. Metropolitan Health Service Board;
10. National Health Medical Research Council;
11. Nurses Board of Western Australia;
12. Office of Health Review;
13. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists;
14. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons; and
15. Women’s Hospitals Australasia.

(Douglas et al., 2000: 76-79)