



Clinical Practice Guidelines: Other/Recording of life extinct (ROLE)/management of a deceased person

Policy code	CPG_OT_RLE_0221
Date	February, 2021
Purpose	To ensure a consistent approach to the management of recording of life extinct (ROLE) /management of a deceased person.
Scope	Applies to Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) clinical staff.
Health care setting	Pre-hospital assessment and treatment.
Population	Applies to all ages unless stated otherwise.
Source of funding	Internal – 100%
Author	Clinical Quality & Patient Safety Unit, QAS
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Unless the obvious death criteria are met (refer to *CPG Resuscitation/Resuscitation – General guidelines* (withholding cardiopulmonary resuscitation), the following criteria must be present before a determination is made that life is extinct:

- No palpable carotid pulse and
- No heart sounds heard for 30 seconds, this should be confirmed by the use of a stethoscope and
- No breath sounds heard for 30 seconds, this should be confirmed by the use of a stethoscope and
- Fixed dilated pupils and
- No response to centralised stimuli.

Following determination that life is extinct, the clinician must complete a *Recognition of Life Extinct Form* and the eARF.

Details regarding the criteria relied upon to determine life extinct must be recorded on the eARF.

The clinician is then required to record the following in the eARF:

I declare life extinct at [record exact time of declaration]

Notification of a death to police

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) must be notified of all reportable deaths as defined in the *Coroners Act 2003* (Qld) (see below for the definition of a reportable death).

If there is any uncertainty whether the death is reportable then QPS should be called.

In circumstances where it is clear that a death is not a reportable death as defined under the Coroners Act, it would be appropriate for the patient's General Practitioner to be contacted for consideration of providing a cause of death certificate.

An example of a death that is clearly not reportable is one that is an expected outcome of a diagnosed condition, and the patient's medical practitioner has indicated that he or she will issue a cause of death certificate.

NOTE: *If the death has occurred in New South Wales, the NSW Police Service should be notified.*

Reporting a death to the coroner

When the QPS is notified of a death, the police officer in receipt of the information will determine if the death is one that must be reported to a coroner. The police officer will then report the death in writing to the Office of the State Coroner.

A reportable death is defined in S8 of the Coroners Act 2003 (Qld)^[1] and includes:

- The identity of the person is not known;
- The death was violent or unnatural;
- The death happened in suspicious circumstances;
- The death was a health care related death;
- It is unlikely that a death certificate will be issued;
- The death was a death in care;
- The death was a death in custody; or
- The death occurred in the course of, or as a result of, police operations.

Movement of a deceased person

In circumstances where the death is a reportable death, the body should not be moved until police have attended.

If movement of the body is deemed to be necessary for safety or compelling practical or cultural reasons, the clinician must consult with police beforehand and comply with any directions that police may issue.

If the death has occurred in a public place, cover the body with a sheet or similar item and if possible, create a reasonable barrier to protect the dignity of the deceased.

Transport of a deceased person

It is not the role of the QAS to transport deceased persons.

In limited circumstances, it may be necessary and appropriate for QAS clinicians to transfer a deceased person from the place at which the death occurred, to the closest mortuary.

Transfer of a deceased person must not take place without police authorisation.

QAS clinicians must comply with any direction issued by police as it relates to the transfer of the deceased person.

Death during transport

Road transport

If the death occurs during ambulance transport, the relevant QAS Communications Centre must be notified and the ambulance must be diverted to a facility as advised by the QAS Communications Centre.

Air transport

If the death occurs during aerial transport, the pilot of the aircraft must be advised of the death.

A decision regarding the appropriate destination will be decided in consultation with the Queensland Coordination Centre. Where possible, it would be appropriate to return to the port of origin and notify QPS accordingly.

