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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy code</th>
<th>CPG_OT_RLE_0919</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>September, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To ensure a consistent approach to the management of recording of life extinct (ROLE) /management of a deceased person.</td>
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<td>Scope</td>
<td>Applies to Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) clinical staff.</td>
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<td>Health care setting</td>
<td>Pre-hospital assessment and treatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Applies to all ages unless stated otherwise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source of funding</td>
<td>Internal – 100%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Clinical Quality &amp; Patient Safety Unit, QAS</td>
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<td>Review date</td>
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All feedback and suggestions are welcome. Please forward to: Clinical.Guidelines@ambulance.qld.gov.au

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Unless the obvious death criteria are met (refer to CPG Resuscitation – General guidelines/withholding cardio-pulmonary 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 paramedic is to complete a Recognition of Life Extinct form and the eARF.

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

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

\[I \text{ declare life extinct at [record exact time of declaration]}\]

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) 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.

**Notification of a death to police**

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

**Transportation 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 paramedics 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 paramedics 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 is to be notified and the ambulance is to 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 is to 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.
- Offer condolences to the patient’s relatives (if present)
- Complete a ROLE Form
- Assist the family as appropriate for the circumstances
- Complete and forward necessary DCARF, eARF and in cases where monitoring or defibrillation has been performed, a complete Mission Protocol printout and ECG rhythm strips to the QAS Information Support, Research and Evaluation Unit.

**Note:** Clinicians are only to perform procedures for which they have received specific training and authorisation by the QAS.