

When does a COVID-19 death need to be reported to the coroner?

The death of a person who has tested positive for or is thought to have died of COVID-19 will generally NOT need to be reported to the coroner.

This is because the death is from a natural cause and the probable cause of death is known.

The fact that COVID-19 is a *notifiable condition* under the *Public Health Act 2005* does not of itself make the death reportable to the coroner.

Doctors are encouraged to issue a cause of death certificate in these cases and notify their local Public Health Unit.

A COVID-19 death will only be reportable to the coroner if:

- the death is a death in custody – while the death a person from any cause while being detained under the Public Health Act is reportable to the State Coroner as a death in custody, the COVID-19 death of a person whose clinical care is being managed in a hospital, as a Hospital in The Home patient or by virtual care monitoring in the community while a general Public Health Direction issued by the Chief Health Officer regarding isolation under section 362B of the Public Health Act is in force is NOT reportable to the coroner as a death in custody;
- the death is a death in care¹; or
- the person died as a result of the care they received or did not receive, for example, a missed diagnosis or failure to treat COVID-19 appropriately.

However, a COVID-19 death will NOT be reportable for failure to provide health care because of inadequate resourcing in the event of an overwhelming demand for critical care services, provided the clinical decision-making for the person was consistent with the relevant Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS) COVID-19 Guidelines.

Similarly, the death of a person from another natural cause will not be reportable for failure to provide health care where the person was triaged as not suitable for intensive care management in accordance with the ANZICS Guidelines.

If a person dies as a direct result of having received the COVID-19 vaccine, for example, anaphylaxis, or an adverse event following immunisation is considered to have significantly contributed to or hastened the person's death, the death is reportable under the *Coroners Act 2003* as a health care related death.

The death is to be reported to the Coroners Court of Queensland by Form 1A Medical practitioner report of a death to a coroner in the first instance. If the person dies in hospital, the body is to remain in the hospital morgue pending further advice from the Coroners Court. If the person dies in the community, the body may be transferred to the family's nominated funeral director pending further advice from the Coroners Court of Queensland.

¹ [Deaths in care version 4 – April 2021](#), [Deaths in care \(Disability\) version 3 – April 2021](#)

If a doctor is comfortable the death is from a natural cause unrelated to the vaccine, the death does not need to be reported or discussed with the Coronial Registrar and a cause of death certificate should be issued.

If it is unclear whether the COVID-19 vaccine has played a significant role in the person's death, the death should be discussed with the coroner in the first instance.

General enquiries about reportable deaths should be directed to the Coroners Court of Queensland during business hours on (07) 3738 7050.

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