

**KIERAN WATMORE**

*Statement by Minister for Health*

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Minister for Health)** [9.10 am]: I rise to make an apology to the family of Kieran Watmore. Kieran, who was a healthy 17-year-old, died on 28 August 2008 in Albany Regional Hospital where he had presented at the emergency department with tonsillitis. Sadly, a relatively common condition turned into a tragedy for Kieran and his family.

State Coroner Mr Alistair Hope handed down his findings into Kieran's death on 30 September 2009. The report found that the care provided at Albany Regional Hospital was not followed up in a manner that was adequate under the circumstances. The coroner found that Kieran passed away due to a series of factors that may have had a cumulative effect. These included severe compromises of his upper airway, which had resulted from his acute tonsillitis and very swollen tonsils, the fact that he was receiving relatively high doses of morphine, and breathing problems resulting in possible carbon dioxide retention. These factors together appear to have caused Kieran's death by way of fatal asphyxia. The findings of the coroner were that Kieran's death arose by way of misadventure and that Kieran would not have died if robust action had been taken in response to obviously abnormal clinical observations. I agree with the assessment of the coroner, whose report I have read in detail—Kieran should not have died when he did, there were a number of systemic deficiencies that led to his death and these cannot be ignored.

I intend to ensure that all six recommendations of the coroner's report are implemented by the Department of Health in order to prevent a tragedy of this nature affecting another family in the future. The recommendations relate to matters regarding contacting on-call doctors, rostering arrangements for medical practitioners at Albany Regional Hospital, medical review criteria, oxygen therapy and observations of patients on patient-controlled analgesia. These recommendations extend in some cases to all hospitals in Western Australia, and I will ensure that these are implemented.

I have personally contacted Kieran's father, Mr Jim Watmore, and his mother, Ms Helen Soerink, and apologised on behalf of the government and the Department of Health. This apology is extended to Kieran's siblings, Liam and Shae. I make this apology unreservedly and understand that Kieran's family, in addition to losing a dear son and brother, have had to endure the distress over the past year of waiting for the outcome of the coronial investigation. As a father, I can only imagine the pain they must be going through knowing that Kieran's death was preventable. I offer them all my sincerest sympathy on their great loss.