

# NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

## CORONERS ACT 1993

As in force at 14 April 2021

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# NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

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As in force at 14 April 2021

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## CORONERS ACT 1993

**An Act to provide for the office of coroner, the holding of inquests into the manner and cause of deaths, inquiring into the cause and origin of disasters and for related purposes**

### Part 1 Preliminary matters

#### 1 Short title

This Act may be cited as the *Coroners Act 1993*.

#### 2 Commencement

This Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by the Administrator by notice in the *Gazette*.

#### 3 Definitions

In this Act:

**Attorney-General** means the Minister responsible for the Agency administering this Act.

**Chief Executive Officer**, see section 3(1) of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*.

**coroner** includes a deputy coroner.

**death** includes suspected death.

**disaster** means an occurrence due to natural or other causes that:

- (a) causes or threatens to cause:
  - (i) substantial loss of life or property; or
  - (ii) substantial injury to persons or property; or
- (b) in any way substantially endangers the safety of the public in any part of the Territory.

**disposal**, in relation to a body, includes burial, cremation and disposal at sea.

**investigation** includes an inquest.

**married** includes being in a de facto relationship.

**person held in care**, see section 12(1).

**person held in custody**, see section 12(1).

**reportable death** means a death mentioned in section 12(1).

**senior next of kin**, in relation to a deceased person, means:

- (a) where a person was, immediately before death, married – the person's spouse; or
- (b) where the person was not, immediately before death, married or, if married, the spouse is not available – the person's son or daughter of or over 18 years; or
- (c) where a spouse, son or daughter is not available – the person's parent; or
- (d) where a spouse, son, daughter or parent is not available – the person's brother or sister of or over 18 years; or
- (e) where a person is an Aborigine – a person who, according to the customs and tradition of the community or group to which the person belongs, is an appropriate person; or
- (f) where paragraphs (a) to (e) do not apply or a person who would be the senior next of kin under those paragraphs is not available – a person who immediately before the death of the deceased person had a relationship with the deceased person that, in the opinion of the coroner, is sufficient for the purpose of being the senior next of kin.

**spouse** includes a person's de facto partner.

## **Part 2                      Coroners**

### **4                      Coroners**

- (1) There is an office of coroner.
- (2) The Administrator may appoint a Local Court Judge to be the Territory Coroner.

- (3) A person who is a Local Court Judge is a coroner.

#### **4A Functions of Territory Coroner**

- (1) The functions of the Territory Coroner are to:
- (a) ensure that the coronial system in the Territory is administered and operates efficiently; and
  - (b) oversee and co-ordinate coronial services in the Territory; and
  - (c) ensure that all reportable deaths reported to a coroner are investigated; and
  - (d) ensure that an inquest into a death is held where there is a duty to do so under this Act or where it is desirable that an inquest be held.
- (2) The Territory Coroner has the power to do all things necessary and convenient to be done for or incidental to the performance of his or her functions.

#### **4B Acting Territory Coroner**

- (1) The Administrator may, in writing, appoint a Local Court Judge to act in the office of the Territory Coroner:
- (a) during a vacancy in the office; or
  - (b) during any period, or all periods, when the person holding the office is absent from duty or unable to perform the duties of the office.
- (2) A person appointed under subsection (1) holds office until:
- (a) the expiry of the period (not exceeding 12 months) specified in the appointment; or
  - (b) the person ceases to be a Local Court Judge.
- (3) An acting Territory Coroner has all the functions and powers of the Territory Coroner.

#### **5 Deputy coroners**

- (1) The Administrator may appoint a person to be a deputy coroner.
- (2) An appointment under subsection (1) may be:
- (a) limited in duration; or

- (b) subject to terms and conditions; or
- (c) terminated at any time.
- (3) A deputy coroner must take an oath of office in accordance with Schedule 1 before proceeding to exercise the powers or discharge the duties of office.
- (4) A deputy coroner may resign by notice in writing given to the Attorney-General.

## **6 Jurisdiction of coroners and deputy coroners**

- (1) A coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death or disaster, or to hold an inquest into a death or disaster, in accordance with this Act.
- (2) A coroner has:
  - (a) jurisdiction conferred by any other Act; and
  - (b) jurisdiction and power conferred by the common law.
- (3) Subject to subsection (4) and a limitation or condition mentioned in section 5(2), a deputy coroner has the same jurisdiction, powers and duties as a coroner.
- (4) A deputy coroner must not conduct an inquest into:
  - (a) the death of a person:
    - (i) held in custody; or
    - (ii) caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while the person was held in custody; or
    - (iii) held in care; or
  - (b) a suspected unlawful killing.

## **7 Protection of coroner**

A person exercising the jurisdiction of a coroner has the same protection and immunity as a Local Court Judge has in the performance of his or her duties as a Local Court Judge.

## **8 Delegation**

A coroner may, by instrument in writing, delegate to a coroner's clerk any of his or her powers and functions under this Act other than the power to conduct an inquest and this power of delegation.



**9 Appointment of coroner's clerk**

- (1) A coroner may appoint a person to be a coroner's clerk.
- (2) A registrar of the Local Court may act as a coroner's clerk.

**10 Functions and powers of coroners' clerks**

- (1) The function of the coroner's clerk is to assist a coroner to exercise his or her jurisdiction.
- (2) A coroner's clerk may:
  - (a) on behalf of a coroner, receive information about a death or disaster; and
  - (b) witness an affidavit; and
  - (c) issue a summons requiring a witness to attend an inquest to give oral evidence or to produce documents.

**11 Records of findings etc.**

- (1) A coroner or a coroner's clerk must keep a record of findings, evidence and comments in relation to each investigation into a death or disaster.
- (2) A record mentioned in subsection (1) is not admissible as evidence of a matter contained in it.

**11A Records and exhibits**

Part 4, Division 2 of the *Local Court Act 2015* applies to a coroner as if:

- (a) a reference to the principal registrar were a reference to the coroner's clerk; and
- (b) a reference to proceedings in the Local Court were a reference to an investigation conducted by a coroner.

## **Part 3                      Reporting deaths**

### **12                      Obligation to report deaths**

(1) In this section:

***person held in care*** means:

- (a) a child who is in the CEO's care as defined in the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*; or
- (b) a patient who, under the *Mental Health and Related Services Act 1998* is in custody whether in a hospital or temporarily removed from a hospital.

***person held in custody*** means:

- (a) a person in the custody or control of:
  - (i) a police officer; or
  - (ii) a member of the Police Force of a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth or of the Australian Federal Police; or
  - (iii) the Commissioner of Correctional Services; or
  - (iv) a sheriff appointed under the *Sheriff Act 1962*; or
- (b) a person detained in:
  - (i) a custodial correctional facility (as defined in section 11(1)(a) of the *Correctional Services Act 2014*); or
  - (ii) a detention centre approved under the *Youth Justice Act 2005*;

and includes a person in the process of being taken into or escaping from:

- (c) the custody or control of a person mentioned in paragraph (a); or
- (d) detention in a place mentioned in paragraph (b).

**reportable death** means:

(a) a death where:

- (i) the body of a deceased person is in the Territory; or
- (ii) the death occurred in the Territory; or
- (iii) the cause of the death occurred in the Territory;

being a death:

- (iv) that appears to have been unexpected, unnatural or violent or to have resulted, directly or indirectly, from an accident or injury; or
- (v) that occurred during an anaesthetic; or
- (vi) that occurred as a result of an anaesthetic and is not due to natural causes; or
- (vii) of a person who, immediately before death, was a person held in care or custody; or
- (viii) that was caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while the person was held in custody; or
- (ix) of a person whose identity is unknown; or

(b) the death of a person who ordinarily resided in the Territory at the time of death that occurred at a place outside the Territory where the cause of death is not certified by a person who, under a law in force in the place, is a legally qualified medical practitioner.

(1A) For the definition of **person held in custody** in subsection (1), a person is also taken to be held in custody if he or she:

- (a) is detained anywhere in the Territory by a person authorised to do so under any Act or law in force in the Territory, including a law of the Commonwealth; or
- (b) is in the process of escaping from detention mentioned in paragraph (a).

(2) A person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a reportable death has not been reported must report the death as soon as possible to a coroner or police officer.

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units.

- (3) A medical practitioner who is present at or after the death of a person must report the death as soon as possible to a coroner if:
- (a) the death is a reportable death; or
  - (b) the medical practitioner does not view the body of the deceased person; or
  - (c) the medical practitioner is unable to determine the cause of death.

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units.

- (4) If more than one medical practitioner is present at or after a death and one of them reports it to a coroner, the other medical practitioners need not report the death but must give to the coroner investigating the death any information that may help the investigation.
- (5) The death of a person held in care or custody immediately before death must be reported to a coroner as soon as possible by the person under whose care or in whose custody the deceased person was held.

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units.

### **13 Information to coroner**

- (1) A person who reports a death must give to the coroner investigating the death any information that may help the investigation.

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units.

- (2) A police officer who has information relevant to an investigation must report it to the coroner investigating the death.

## **Part 4 Investigation of deaths**

### **Division 1 Coroners' general powers and duties**

#### **14 Coroners' jurisdiction to investigate deaths**

- (1) A coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death if it appears to the coroner that the death is or may be a reportable death.
- (2) A coroner to whom a death is reported must, if it appears to the coroner that the death is or may be a reportable death, investigate it.

- (3) A coroner need not investigate a death if an investigation or inquest is held in a State or another Territory.
- (4) A coroner may direct that more than one death be investigated at one inquest.

## **15 Coroners' jurisdiction to hold inquest into death**

- (1) Where a coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death and either the body of the deceased person is in the Territory or it appears to the coroner that the death or the cause of the death occurred in the Territory, the coroner must hold an inquest if:
  - (a) the deceased was, immediately before death, a person held in care and custody; or
  - (b) the death was caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while the deceased was held in custody; or
  - (c) the identity of the deceased is not known.
- (1A) Where a coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death, the coroner may, if he or she thinks fit, hold an inquest if:
  - (a) the body of the deceased person is in the Territory or it appears to the coroner that the death, or the cause of death, occurred in the Territory; and
  - (b) the coroner suspects unlawful killing.
- (2) A coroner who has jurisdiction to investigate a death may hold an inquest as the coroner thinks fit.
- (3) A coroner who has jurisdiction to investigate a death may hold an inquest even if:
  - (a) the body of the deceased person is not in the Territory or is in a place from which it cannot be recovered or has been destroyed; or
  - (b) the cause of death occurred outside the Territory.

## **16 Decision not to hold inquest to be notified**

- (1) Where a coroner who has jurisdiction to hold an inquest into a death makes a decision not to hold an inquest, the coroner:
  - (a) must record the decision in writing; and
  - (b) must specify the reasons for the decision; and

- (c) as soon as practicable after making the decision:
    - (i) must notify the senior next of kin of the deceased person; and
    - (ii) may notify any person;
- of the decision, in writing, including the reasons for the decision.
- (2) Within 14 days after receiving notice of the decision mentioned in subsection (1)(b), the person may apply to the Supreme Court for an order that an inquest be held.
  - (3) The Supreme Court may if it thinks fit, make an order that an inquest be held.

## **17 Control of body pending certificate permitting disposal**

- (1) Where a reportable death has occurred and the body of a deceased person is in the Territory, the body is under the control of the coroner investigating the death until the coroner or coroner's clerk has issued a certificate permitting its disposal.
- (2) Where the Supreme Court makes an order under section 16(3), a coroner or coroner's clerk must not issue a certificate mentioned in subsection (1).

## **18 Aid to coroners in other places**

A coroner may use his or her powers under this Act to help a coroner of a State or of another Territory of the Commonwealth to investigate a death.

## **Division 2 Coroners' powers of investigation**

### **19 Powers of entry etc.**

- (1) A coroner who has jurisdiction to investigate a death may, with such assistance as the coroner thinks fit:
  - (a) enter, if necessary with such force as is reasonable, and inspect a place and anything in it; and
  - (b) take a copy of a document relevant to an investigation; and
  - (c) take possession of a thing that the coroner reasonably believes is relevant to an investigation and keep it until the investigation is finished.

- (2) A coroner may, in writing, authorise a police officer, at or between specified times or during a specified period, to do one or more of the following:
  - (a) enter, if necessary with such force as is reasonable, a specified place;
  - (b) inspect a specified place and any thing in it;
  - (c) take a copy of specified documents or classes of documents;
  - (d) take possession of specified things or classes of things.
- (3) A police officer must, on request, produce a copy of the authority mentioned in subsection (2) to the owner or occupier of the place or the person in possession of the document or thing inspected, copied or taken.
- (4) A coroner may release a thing kept under subsection (2)(d) and may require a person to whom the thing is released to give an undertaking to comply with a reasonable condition of release and the person must comply with the undertaking.

Maximum penalty for an offence against this subsection:  
40 penalty units.

## **20 Autopsies**

- (1) If a coroner reasonably believes that it is necessary for an investigation of a death, the coroner may direct a medical practitioner to perform an autopsy on the body of the deceased person.
- (2) A medical practitioner performing an autopsy may cause to be preserved any material that appears to the coroner or the medical practitioner to bear on the cause of death.

## **21 Application for autopsy**

- (1) If a coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death, a person may ask a coroner to direct that an autopsy be performed on the body of the deceased person.
- (2) If a coroner refuses a person's request under subsection (1), the coroner must immediately give to the person notice in writing including reasons for the refusal.
- (3) Within 48 hours after a person receives a notice of refusal mentioned in subsection (2), the person may apply to the Supreme Court for an order for an autopsy.

- (4) The Supreme Court may, if it thinks fit, make an order:
- (a) directing the coroner to require a medical practitioner to perform an autopsy; and
  - (b) prohibiting disposal of the body of the deceased person until the coroner has the results of the autopsy and has ordered its disposal.

## **22 Senior next of kin of deceased to be notified**

Where the coroner directs a medical practitioner to perform an autopsy on a deceased person who was a person held in custody, the coroner must take reasonable steps to advise the senior next of kin of the deceased person of the direction.

## **23 Objections to autopsy**

- (1) Where the senior next of kin of the deceased person asks a coroner not to direct that an autopsy be performed but the coroner decides that an autopsy is necessary, the coroner must immediately give notice in writing of the decision to the senior next of kin.
- (2) Unless the coroner believes that an autopsy needs to be performed immediately, where a request has been made under subsection (1), an autopsy must not be performed until 48 hours after the senior next of kin of the deceased person has been given notice of the coroner's decision under that subsection.
- (3) Within 48 hours after receiving notice of the coroner's decision under subsection (1), the senior next of kin of the deceased person may apply to the Supreme Court for an order that an autopsy not be performed and the Court, in its discretion, may make an order that no autopsy be performed.

## **24 Exhumation**

- (1) The coroner may order that the body of a deceased person be exhumed if the coroner reasonably believes that it is necessary for an investigation of a death.
- (2) The coroner must ensure that at least 48 hours notice in writing is given to the senior next of kin of the deceased person and to the trustees or owners of the cemetery, burial ground or place of burial where the body of the deceased person is buried before the body is exhumed unless the coroner is satisfied it is not possible to give the notice.



- (3) If the senior next of kin of the deceased person asks the coroner not to exhume the body of the deceased person, the body must not be exhumed until 48 hours after the request has been made.
- (4) Within 48 hours after receiving notice of the order under subsection (2), the senior next of kin of the deceased person may apply to the Supreme Court for an order that the body of the deceased person not be exhumed and the Supreme Court may, in its discretion, make an order that the body not be exhumed.

### **Division 3 Deaths in custody**

#### **25 Coroner may give directions to police**

- (1) A coroner may give directions to a police officer for the purpose of investigating the death of a person held in custody or caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while being held in custody.
- (2) A police officer must not refuse or fail to comply with a lawful direction by a coroner given under subsection (1).

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units or imprisonment for 6 months.

#### **26 Report on additional matters by coroner**

- (1) Where a coroner holds an inquest into the death of a person held in custody or caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while being held in custody, the coroner:
  - (a) must investigate and report on the care, supervision and treatment of the person while being held in custody or caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while being held in custody; and
  - (b) may investigate and report on a matter connected with public health or safety or the administration of justice that is relevant to the death.
- (2) A coroner who holds an inquest into the death of a person held in custody or caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while being held in custody must make such recommendations with respect to the prevention of future deaths in similar circumstances as the coroner considers to be relevant.

#### **27 Coroner to send report etc. to Attorney-General**

The coroner must cause a copy of each report and recommendation made under section 26 to be sent without delay to the Attorney-General.

## **Part 5 Investigation of disasters**

### **Division 1 Coroners' general powers and duties**

#### **28 Coroners' jurisdiction to investigate disasters**

A coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a disaster if it occurred in or partly in the Territory.

#### **29 Referral by Attorney-General for investigation**

The Attorney-General may refer a disaster to the Coroner and the Coroner must carry out an investigation into the disaster.

#### **30 Jurisdiction to hold inquest into disaster**

A coroner who has jurisdiction to investigate a disaster may, if the coroner thinks fit, hold an inquest.

#### **31 Police to report to Coroner**

A police officer who has information relevant to an investigation of a disaster must report it to the coroner investigating the disaster.

### **Division 2 Coroners' powers of investigation**

#### **32 Restriction of access to disaster area**

- (1) A coroner investigating a disaster may take reasonable steps to restrict access to the place where the disaster occurred and for that purpose may cause a prescribed notice to be put up at the place.
- (2) A person must not, without good reason, enter or interfere with an area to which access is restricted under subsection (1).

Maximum penalty for an offence against this subsection:  
40 penalty units or imprisonment for 6 months.

#### **33 Powers of entry for disaster**

- (1) A coroner who has jurisdiction to investigate a disaster may, with such assistance as the coroner thinks fit:
  - (a) enter, if necessary with such force as is reasonable, and inspect a place and a thing in it; and
  - (b) take a copy of a document relevant to the investigation; and

- (c) take possession of a thing that the coroner reasonably believes is relevant to the investigation and keep it until the investigation is finished.
- (2) A coroner may, in writing, authorise a police officer, at or between specified times during a specified period, to do one or more of the following:
  - (a) enter, if necessary with such force as is reasonable, a specified place;
  - (b) inspect a specified place and any thing in it;
  - (c) copy specified documents or classes of documents;
  - (d) take possession of specified things or classes of things.
- (3) A police officer must, on request, produce a copy of the authority mentioned in subsection (2) to the owner or occupier of the place or the person in possession of the document or thing inspected, copied or taken under that subsection.
- (4) A coroner may release a thing kept under subsection (2)(d) and may require a person to whom the thing is released to give an undertaking to comply with reasonable conditions of release and the person must comply with the undertaking.

Maximum penalty for an offence against this subsection:  
40 penalty units.

## **Part 6                      Investigations and inquests into deaths and disasters**

### **34                      Coroners' findings and comments**

- (1) A coroner investigating:
  - (a) a death must, if possible, find:
    - (i) the identity of the deceased person; and
    - (ii) the time and place of death; and
    - (iii) the cause of death; and
    - (iv) the particulars needed to register the death under the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996*; and
    - (v) any relevant circumstances concerning the death; or

- (b) a disaster must, if possible, find:
  - (i) the cause and origin of the disaster; and
  - (ii) the circumstances in which the disaster occurred.
- (2) A coroner may comment on a matter, including public health or safety or the administration of justice, connected with the death or disaster being investigated.
- (3) A coroner must not, in an investigation, include in a finding or comment a statement that a person is or may be guilty of an offence.
- (4) A coroner must ensure that the particulars mentioned in subsection (1)(a)(iv) are provided to the Registrar as defined in section 4 of the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996*.

### **35 Coroners' reports**

- (1) A coroner may report to the Attorney-General on a death or disaster investigated by the coroner.
- (2) A coroner may make recommendations to the Attorney-General on a matter, including public health or safety or the administration of justice connected with a death or disaster investigated by the coroner.
- (3) A coroner may report to the Commissioner of Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions appointed under the *Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1990* if the coroner believes that an offence may have been committed in connection with a death or disaster investigated by the coroner.

### **36 Compliance with coroner's direction**

- (1) Where a coroner believes on reasonable grounds that a person has information relevant to an investigation, the coroner may direct the person to give the information to a coroner, a coroner's clerk or a police officer.
- (2) A person must not, without reasonable excuse, refuse or fail to comply with a lawful direction by a coroner given under subsection (1).

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units.

**37 Advertisement of inquest**

A coroner's clerk must, not less than 14 days before an inquest, publish in a newspaper circulating generally in the area, the date, time, place and subject of the inquest.

**38 Statements made by witnesses**

(1) If:

- (a) a person summoned to attend at an inquest as a witness declines to answer a question on the ground that his or her answer will criminate or tend to criminate him or her; and
- (b) it appears to the coroner expedient for the purposes of justice that the person be compelled to answer the question;

the coroner may tell the person that, if the person answers the question and other questions that may be put to him or her, the coroner will grant the person a certificate under this section.

- (2) A person who has been offered a certificate under subsection (1) is no longer entitled to refuse to answer questions on the ground that his or her answers will criminate or tend to criminate him or her and, when the person has given evidence, the coroner must give the person a certificate to the effect that the person was summoned to attend at an inquest as a witness, the person's evidence was required for the purposes of justice and the person gave evidence.
- (3) Where a person is given a certificate under this section in respect of evidence given at an inquest, a statement by the person as part of that evidence in answer to a question is not admissible in evidence in criminal or civil proceedings, or in proceedings before a tribunal or person exercising powers and functions in a judicial manner, against the person other than on a prosecution for perjury.

**39 Rules of evidence not binding**

A coroner holding an inquest is not bound by the rules of evidence and may be informed, and conduct the inquest, in a manner the coroner reasonably thinks fit.

**40 Rights of interested persons**

- (1) The Attorney-General may, at an inquest, appear or be represented, call and examine or cross-examine witnesses, and make submissions.

- (2) A coroner may make available a statement that the coroner intends to consider at an inquest to a person who, in the opinion of the coroner, has a sufficient interest.
- (3) A person who, in the opinion of the coroner, has a sufficient interest may, at an inquest, appear or be represented, call and examine or cross-examine witnesses, and make submissions.

#### **41 Coroner's powers at inquest**

- (1) A coroner may:
  - (a) summon a person to attend at an inquest as a witness or to produce a document or materials; and
  - (b) inspect, copy and keep for a reasonable period a thing produced at an inquest; and
  - (c) subject to section 38, order a witness to give evidence on oath; and
  - (d) give directions and do anything as the coroner thinks fit.
- (2) A coroner:
  - (a) may appoint a person to assist the coroner for the purpose of an inquest; or
  - (b) must appoint a person to assist the coroner for the purpose of an inquest into a death in custody.
- (3) A person must obey a summons, order or direction under subsection (1).

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty units. or imprisonment for 6 months.
- (4) If a person to whom a summons is issued does not appear, the coroner may issue a warrant to arrest the person.

#### **42 Exclusion from inquest**

- (1) Subject to this section, a coroner must conduct an inquest in open court.
- (2) A coroner may, if he or she thinks fit, for the administration of justice or national security or personal security at an inquest, order that all or any persons must go and remain outside and beyond the hearing of an inquest.

- (3) The coroner's clerk must place a copy of an exclusion order under subsection (2) in a conspicuous place on or in the building where the inquest is held.
- (4) A coroner:
  - (a) must order the removal from an inquest of a person who disobeys an exclusion order under subsection (2); and
  - (b) may order the imprisonment of the person for not more than 2 hours if the coroner reasonably believes that the person will continue to disobey the exclusion order.

#### **43      Restriction on publication of reports**

- (1) A coroner must order that a report of an inquest or of part of the proceedings, or of evidence given at an inquest, not be published if the coroner reasonably believes that, to publish the report, would:
  - (a) be likely to prejudice a person's fair trial; or
  - (b) be contrary to the administration of justice, national security or personal security; or
  - (c) involve the disclosure of details of sensitive personal matters including, where the senior next of kin of the deceased have so requested, the name of the deceased.
- (2) A person must not publish a report in contravention of an order under subsection (1).

Maximum penalty for an offence against this subsection:  
85 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years.

#### **44      Orders by Supreme Court to hold new inquest and re-open inquest**

- (1) A person may apply to the Supreme Court for an order that some or all the findings of an inquest are void.
- (2) The Supreme Court may declare that some or all the findings of an inquest are void and may order a coroner:
  - (a) to hold a new inquest, or direct a coroner, other than the coroner who held the first inquest, to hold a new inquest; or
  - (b) to re-open (or direct another coroner to re-open) an inquest and to re-examine a finding.

- (3) The Supreme Court may make an order under subsection (2) if it is satisfied that:
- (a) it is necessary because of fraud, consideration of evidence, failure to consider evidence, irregularity of proceedings or insufficiency of inquiry; or
  - (b) there is a mistake in the record of the findings; or
  - (c) there are new facts or evidence; or
  - (d) the findings are against the evidence and the weight of evidence.

#### **44A Coroner may re-open inquest**

- (1) If:
- (a) a coroner has under section 16 decided not to hold an inquest into a death; and
  - (b) a coroner (who may be the coroner who made the decision not to hold the inquest or another coroner who has jurisdiction to hold an inquest) is satisfied, despite the decision under section 16, that there are new facts or there is new evidence that make it necessary or desirable to hold an inquest into the death;
- the coroner mentioned in paragraph (b) may hold an inquest into the death.
- (2) A coroner who has jurisdiction to hold an inquest may, on the coroner's own initiative, re-open an inquest if the coroner is satisfied that new facts or evidence make it necessary or desirable to re-open the inquest.

#### **45 Coroner not to be called as witness**

- (1) A coroner must not be called to give evidence in a court or judicial proceedings about anything coming to his or her knowledge in carrying out a coroner's powers, duties or functions under this Act.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to proceedings against a coroner for an offence.



**46 Contempt**

A person must not:

- (a) insult a coroner in relation to the exercise of his or her powers or functions as a coroner; or
- (b) interrupt an inquest; or
- (c) create a disturbance or take part in creating or continuing a disturbance in or near a place where an inquest is being held.

Maximum penalty: 40 penalty or imprisonment for 6 months.

**Part 7 Miscellaneous matters****46A Reports etc. under section 27 or 35 to be forwarded to Agencies etc.**

- (1) If the Attorney-General receives a report or recommendation from a coroner under section 27 or 35 that contains comment relating to an Agency or the Police Force of the Northern Territory, the Attorney-General must, without delay, give a copy of the report or recommendation to the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency or the Commissioner of Police, as the case requires.
- (2) If the Attorney-General receives a report or recommendation from a coroner under section 27 or 35 that contains comment relating to a Commonwealth department or agency, the Attorney-General, must without delay, give a copy of the report or recommendation to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for the administration of the department or agency.

**46B Response to reports**

- (1) If a Chief Executive Officer or the Commissioner of Police receives a copy of a report or recommendation under section 46A(1), the Chief Executive Officer or Commissioner must, within 3 months after receiving the report or recommendation, give to the Attorney-General a written response to the findings in the report or to the recommendation.
- (2) The response of the Chief Executive Officer or the Commissioner of Police is to include a statement of the action that the Agency or the Police Force is taking, has taken or will take with respect to the coroner's report or recommendation.

- (3) On receiving the response of the Chief Executive Officer or the Commissioner of Police, the Attorney-General:
  - (a) must, without delay, report on the coroner's report or recommendation and the response to the coroner's report or recommendation; and
  - (b) may give a copy of his or her report to the coroner; and
  - (c) must lay a copy of his or her report before the Legislative Assembly within 3 sitting days after completing the report.
- (4) The coroner may give a copy of the Attorney-General's report to:
  - (a) the senior next of kin of a deceased person mentioned in the report (or a representative of the senior next of kin); and
  - (b) a witness who appeared at the inquest the subject of the report; and
  - (c) any other person who the coroner considers has sufficient interest in the inquest or investigation the subject of the report.

#### **47 Regulations**

- (1) The Administrator may make regulations, not inconsistent with this Act, prescribing matters:
  - (a) required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed; or
  - (b) necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.
- (2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the Regulations may prescribe:
  - (a) the qualifications of a medical practitioner who may be requested by the coroner to conduct an autopsy; and
  - (b) the persons to be notified of an autopsy requested by the coroner; and
  - (c) conditions relating to the conduct of an autopsy; and
  - (d) issue of burial certificates; and
  - (e) rules for the conduct of an investigation or inquest, including adjournment and resumption of an investigation or inquest; and
  - (f) methods of dealing with exhibits; and

- (g) circumstances in which death or events causing or threatening to cause death must be reported by a person to a coroner; and
- (h) the manner of complying with obligations imposed by this Act or the Regulations; and
- (j) forms issued under or for this Act; and
- (k) fees payable for a matter or thing under this Act.

#### **48 Repeal**

The Acts specified in Schedule 2 are repealed.

#### **49 Transitional**

- (1) In this section the **former Act** means the *Coroners Act 1974* as in force immediately before the commencement of this Act.
- (2) An inquest or inquiry commenced under the former Act and not completed before the commencement of this Act must, on that commencement, be taken to be an investigation under this Act and the coroner conducting the investigation has the jurisdiction, powers and functions vested under this Act.

## Schedule 1

section 5

### OATH

I, \_\_\_\_\_ *[promise/swear etc. as required by Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010]* that I will well and truly serve in the office of deputy coroner and that I will do right to all manner of people according to law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. *[So help me God! or as appropriate]*

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## Schedule 2 Repealed Acts

section 48

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| Ordinance, Act                     | Number and year |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Coroners Ordinance 1974</i>     | No. 51, 1974    |
| <i>Coroners Ordinance 1975</i>     | No. 6, 1975     |
| <i>Coroners Amendment Act 1982</i> | No. 60, 1982    |
| <i>Coroners Amendment Act 1986</i> | No. 36, 1986    |

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## ENDNOTES

### 1 KEY

Key to abbreviations

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| amd = amended         | od = order                   |
| app = appendix        | om = omitted                 |
| bl = by-law           | pt = Part                    |
| ch = Chapter          | r = regulation/rule          |
| cl = clause           | rem = remainder              |
| div = Division        | renum = renumbered           |
| exp = expires/expired | rep = repealed               |
| f = forms             | s = section                  |
| Gaz = Gazette         | sch = Schedule               |
| hdg = heading         | sdiv = Subdivision           |
| ins = inserted        | SL = Subordinate Legislation |
| lt = long title       | sub = substituted            |
| nc = not commenced    |                              |

### 2 LIST OF LEGISLATION

#### **Coroners Act 1993 (Act No. 30, 1993)**

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Assent date | 9 July 1993                           |
| Commenced   | 3 April 1994 (Gaz S24, 31 March 1994) |

#### **Statute Law Revision Act 1994 (Act No. 50, 1994)**

|             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Assent date | 20 September 1994 |
| Commenced   | 20 September 1994 |

#### **Statute Law Revision Act 1995 (Act No. 14, 1995)**

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| Assent date | 23 June 1995 |
| Commenced   | 23 June 1995 |

#### **Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration (Consequential Amendments) Act 1996 (Act No. 27, 1996)**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Assent date | 28 June 1996   |
| Commenced   | 1 January 1997 (s 2, s 2 <i>Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996</i> (Act No. 26, 1996) and Gaz G49, 4 December 1996, p 5) |

#### **Coroners Amendment Act 1998 (Act No. 22, 1998)**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Assent date | 30 March 1998  |
| Commenced   | s 8: 3 April 1994; rem: 29 April 1998; (s 2 and Gaz G16, 29 April 1998, p 2) |

#### **Mental Health and Related Services (Consequential Amendments) Act 1999 (Act No. 11, 1999)**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Assent date | 25 March 1999   |
| Commenced   | 1 February 2000 (s 2, s 2 <i>Mental Health and Related Services Act 1998</i> (Act No. 63, 1998) and Gaz G3, 26 January 2000, p 2) |

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**Coroners Amendment Act 2002 (Act No. 6, 2002)**

Assent date 28 March 2002  
Commenced 8 May 2002 (*Gaz* G18, 8 May 2002, p 7)

**Law Reform (Gender, Sexuality and De Facto Relationships) Act 2003 (Act No. 1, 2004)**

Assent date 7 January 2004  
Commenced 17 March 2004 (*Gaz* G11, 17 March 2004, p 8)

**Coroners Amendment Act 2004 (Act No. 48, 2004)**

Assent date 13 September 2004  
Commenced 27 October 2004 (*Gaz* G43, 27 October 2004, p 3)

**Youth Justice (Consequential Amendments) Act 2005 (Act No. 33, 2005)**

Assent date 22 September 2005  
Commenced 1 August 2006 (s 2, s 2 *Youth Justice Act 2005* (Act No. 32, 2005) and *Gaz* G30, 26 July 2006, p 3)

**Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (Act No. 37, 2007)**

Assent date 12 December 2007  
Commenced Ch 1 and pts 3.3 and 5.1: 7 May 2008 (*Gaz* G18, 7 May 2008, p 4); Ch 2 (exc pt 2.1, div 6 and s 127), Ch 3, pts 3.1 and 3.2 (exc s 187) and Ch 5, pts 5.2 to 5.6: 8 December 2008 (*Gaz* G47, 26 November 2008, p 6); s 127: nc

**Justice Legislation Amendment (Penalties) Act 2010 (Act No. 12, 2010)**

Assent date 20 May 2010  
Commenced 1 July 2010 (*Gaz* G24, 16 June 2010, p 2)

**Statute Law Revision Act 2010 (Act No. 29, 2010)**

Assent date 9 September 2010  
Commenced 13 October 2010 (*Gaz* G41, 13 October 2010, p 2)

**Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations (Consequential Amendments) Act 2010 (Act No. 40, 2010)**

Assent date 18 November 2010  
Commenced 1 March 2011 (s 2, s 2 *Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010* (Act No. 39, 2010) and *Gaz* G7, 16 February 2011, p 4)

**Statute Law Revision Act 2011 (Act No. 30, 2011)**

Assent date 31 August 2011  
Commenced 21 September 2011 (*Gaz* G38, 21 September 2011, p 5)

**Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act 2013 (Act No. 17, 2013)**

Assent date 28 June 2013  
Commenced 1 July 2013 (s 2)

**Correctional Services (Related and Consequential Amendments) Act 2014 (Act No. 27, 2014)**

Assent date 4 September 2014  
Commenced 9 September 2014 (*Gaz* S80, 9 September 2014, p 2)

**Local Court (Repeals and Related Amendments) Act 2016 (Act No. 9, 2016)**

Assent date 6 April 2016  
Commenced 1 May 2016 (*Gaz* S34, 29 April 2016)

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***Justice and Other Legislation Amendment (Records of Depositions and Other Matters) Act 2016 (Act No. 16, 2016)***

Assent date 8 June 2016  
Commenced 1 July 2016 (*Gaz S59*, 1 July 2016)

***Alcohol Harm Reduction Act 2017 (Act No. 16, 2017)***

Assent date 30 August 2017  
Commenced 1 September 2017 (*Gaz S61*, 31 August 2017)

***Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021 (Act No. 7, 2021)***

Assent date 13 April 2021  
Commenced 14 April 2021 (s 2)

### 3 SAVINGS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

s 67 *Law Reform (Gender, Sexuality and De Facto Relationships Act 2003*  
(Act No. 1, 2004)

### 4 GENERAL AMENDMENTS

General amendments of a formal nature (which are not referred to in the table of amendments to this reprint) are made by the *Interpretation Legislation Amendment Act 2018* (Act No. 22, 2018) to: ss 1, 3, 11A, 12, 34, 35 and 49 and sch 1.

### 5 LIST OF AMENDMENTS

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| pt 1 hdg | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 3      | amd No. 14, 1995, s 3; No. 22, 1998, s 4; No. 6, 2002, s 4; No. 1, 2004, s 62; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| pt 2 hdg | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 4      | amd No. 22, 1998, s 5; No. 30, 2011, s 3; No. 9, 2016, s 62  |
| s 4A     | ins No. 22, 1998, s 6<br>amd No. 29, 2010, s 7   |
| s 4B     | ins No. 7, 2021, s 15  |
| s 5      | amd No. 22, 1998, s 7; No. 40, 2010, s 16; No. 30, 2011, s 3   |
| s 6      | amd No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3   |
| s 7      | amd No. 9, 2016, s 63  |
| s 8      | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 9      | amd No. 9, 2016, s 64  |
| s 10     | amd No. 40, 2010, s 17   |
| s 11     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 11A    | ins No. 16, 2016, s 4  |
| s 12     | amd No. 11, 1999, s 4; No. 48, 2004, s 3; No. 33, 2005, s 5; No. 37, 2007, s 337; No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3; No. 17, 2013, s 151; No. 27, 2014, s 57; No. 16, 2017, s 60 |
| s 13     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 30, 2011, s 3   |
| s 14     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 15     | amd No. 22, 1998, s 8; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 16     | amd No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3   |
| s 17     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 19     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| ss 21–24 | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 25     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 30, 2011, s 3   |
| s 26     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 27     | amd No. 6, 2002, s 5; No. 29, 2010, s 7  |



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|          |  |
|----------|--|
| s 29     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 31     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 32     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 30, 2011, s 3                                       |
| s 33     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3                    |
| s 34     | amd No. 27, 1996, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3                    |
| s 35     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3; No. 9, 2016, s 65                                       |
| s 36     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 30, 2011, s 3                                       |
| s 37     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 38     | sub No. 6, 2002, s 6   |
|          | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 41     | amd No. 6, 2002, s 7; No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 40, 2010, s 18; No. 30, 2011, s 3 |
| s 42     | amd No. 50, 1994, s 16; No. 30, 2011, s 3                                      |
| s 43     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3                    |
| s 44     | amd No. 29, 2010, s 7  |
| s 44A    | ins No. 6, 2002, s 8   |
|          | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 45     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 46     | amd No. 12, 2010, s 3; No. 29, 2010, s 7                                       |
| pt 7 hdg | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| s 46A    | ins No. 6, 2002, s 9   |
| s 46B    | ins No. 6, 2002, s 9   |
|          | amd No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3                                       |
| s 47     | amd No. 29, 2010, s 7; No. 30, 2011, s 3                                       |
| s 49     | amd No. 30, 2011, s 3  |
| sch 1    | amd No. 40, 2010, s 19   |