

# Hospital care for Tyler questioned

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THE Austin Hospital's lack of co-ordinated care for troubled teenage outpatient Tyler Cassidy may have been a cause of his erratic behaviour on the night of his stand-off with police who shot him, an inquest has been told.

Ian Freckelton, SC, a barrister for the four police involved, said Tyler had received "some care" at the Austin, but it was mainly provided by a "wholly unqualified youth worker" within a mental health team.

*"The bizarre, labile, threatening behaviour of Tyler on the night was part of a pattern of instability which had been manifested over many years,"* he said yesterday.

*"That was well within the knowledge of the Austin, and should have been better within the knowledge of the Austin had they taken the trouble to acquaint themselves more fully. And we simply say that in those circumstances there is a tragic dearth of necessary attention that has been given to Tyler."*

Dr Freckelton, who signalled he wanted to develop this theme in his final submissions for the police, aired the criticisms of the Austin in court during a discussion about the scope of the inquest into the shooting.

Tyler, 15, was armed with two stolen knives when he was shot dead while confronting police at a Northcote skate park on December 11, 2008.

Paul Halley, for Austin Health, said the proposed submission on the hospital's conduct could well be outside the terms of the inquest, but if advanced, he would call expert evidence to refute such "serious matters".

*"My client came here understanding that the scope of the inquiry was to assist your honour understand the background of Tyler and what the police officers may have been met with on that evening,"* Dr Halley told State Coroner Jennifer Coate.

He added: *"I don't want to be facetious but it seems that Dr Freckelton has now become an expert in child psychiatry ... There is no evidence from any expert to say that the level of engagement of the Austin Hospital was other than appropriate."*

Judge Coate said she would consider whether she would allow the police to develop this theme. She noted, however, that Tyler's family had not raised concerns about his treatment, nor was the teenager under any legal order or compulsion to participate in mental health treatment there.

*"As I understand the material that's come from the Austin ... he was a very difficult young fellow to engage with,"* Judge Coate said.

The inquest has previously heard that Tyler was first seen by Austin youth mental health worker Vic Sant in December 2004, three weeks after his father's death from cancer.

Tyler was then aged 11. In early 2005, Tyler was also admitted to hospital for an evaluation.

Overall, Mr Sant saw Tyler 18 times as an outpatient and consulted on services for Tyler or met his mother, Shani, on 22 occasions.

Tyler's last face-to-face session was in August 2008. Mr Sant said that despite his difficulties, Tyler had harboured a great desire to grow up and "be normal".