

WINE NEWS

Mother tells disability royal commission that doctors didn't give son with quadriplegia proper care before death

By Alison Xiao

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PHOTO: Harrison Creevey was born healthy but contracted encephalitis virus, which left him with a brain injury and spastic quadriplegia. (Supplied: Creevey family)

A mother has told a royal commission her son's death in the Queensland healthcare system was "preventable", saying "he didn't need to die".

Kim Creevey gave evidence about her son's death at the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability in Sydney.

She said although her son Harrison, who lived with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), would have had a shortened life, "he didn't need to die at the hands of people that knew better than to let him go that way".

He died just weeks after his 18th birthday in September 2015 and did not have a chance to open his presents.

Harrison was born healthy but at the age of three contracted Murray Valley encephalitis virus from a mosquito bite, which left him with a brain injury and spastic quadriplegia.

His official cause of death was from an infection after complications with the flu, but his parents believed doctors did not give them treatment options.

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Key points:

- Harrison Creevey was born healthy but contracted encephalitis virus from a mosquito bite
- His official cause of death was a flu infection just days before his 18th birthday in September 2015
- His mother said doctors questioned whether his respiratory problem was influenced by his disability



PHOTO: Matthew and Kim Creevey, parents of Harrison Creevey who died from flu complications. (ABC News: Josh Bavas)

Ms Creevey said doctors questioned whether Harrison's respiratory problem was influenced by his disability and did not observe him appropriately.

And when oxygen alarms sounded, Ms Creevey said nurses adjusted the machines to stop alarms.

Harrison's mother said her son was denied "the gold standard care".

The commission was told Harrison's "passing was far from gentle", after he spent two weeks in Mater Public Hospital just after his 18th birthday.

The senior counsel assisting the commission Kate Eastman SC asked Harrison's mother if he had any peace or dignity when he died.

"No, absolutely not," she said.



PHOTO: Harrison Creevey as a toddler, on his third birthday, before contracting an encephalitis virus. (Supplied)

Ms Creevey said despite living with a disability, Harrison was "quite comfortable in his own abilities" and "wanted to participate in life".

"He was certainly a victim of unconscious bias without a shadow of a doubt," she said.

Although his ABI was not the cause of death, it is listed on Harrison's death certificate as the first reason.

Ms Creevey said mandatory reporting standards need to change so that deaths in care were reported to the coroner.

She also said this was not the first time her son had experienced discrimination in the healthcare system.

She told the royal commission that a paediatrician had asked in front of Harrison, "How much more money are we going to spend on him, keeping him alive. Do you have an end of life plan for him?"

The royal commission continues in Sydney next week.

Topics: law-crime-and-justice, royal-commissions, health, disabilities, education, nsw, qld

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