

Elderly patient's death 'hurried'

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By Mark Scala, Andrew Hunter and wires

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POLICE are investigating claims an elderly woman was euthanased with a lethal dose of morphine to free a bed at Sydney's Liverpool Hospital.

In a statement by a nurse passed to Police Commissioner Ken Moroney's office by the Opposition, it is alleged the lethal drug cocktail was administered to vacate a bed for another patient.

However, police said today they could not find a record of the woman, prompting the State Opposition to suggest a cover-up may have occurred.

A police spokesman told [NEWS.com.au](http://www.news.com.au) there was no record of anyone of the patient's name at the hospital or morgue but the incident was being pursued nonetheless.

"Witnesses will be reinterviewed as police can find no record of the victim's name," the spokesman said.

"It's one of two things, either the spelling's wrong or there's nothing in it."

But a spokesman for Opposition Leader John Brogden said the fact the woman's record could not be found might indicate a cover-up.

"Given the allegations that have been made regarding document destruction and shredding in other hospitals in the (South Western Sydney) Area Health Service, the possibility of a cover-up is there," the spokesman said.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption also has started investigating the death and alleged cover-up.

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The death of a 22-year-old woman in Liverpool Hospital's psychiatric ward and large thefts of the addictive drug pethidine from Liverpool Hospital will also be investigated.

The watchdog also will examine allegations of harassment by a Liverpool nurse who spoke to the ICAC this week, revealing the deaths, thus broadening the commission's inquiries beyond Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals.

Yesterday Senior Constable Chris McKinnon confirmed information about the death of a woman at Liverpool Hospital had been forwarded to police.

"We are assisting the coroner at the moment, looking at a particular matter there," Constable McKinnon said.

"At this stage we're just looking into one death."

However one of the nurses involved in the incident - who, fearing further harassment, asked not to be identified - said yesterday the woman in her seventies was euthanased.

Despite raising concerns to management, nothing was done.

It is understood the dying woman had been in for routine surgery in February, 1999.

An Opposition spokesman called for a royal commission into health, with six bodies now investigating issues relating to Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals.

However despite the new investigation by police, Health Minister Morris Iemma said a broader inquiry into hospitals across NSW was not required.

This comes as Peter Bentley yesterday became the second man to signal his intention to sue for compensation over the death of his wife at Campbelltown hospital.

This report appears on NEWS.com.au.