

A WOMAN who died on Sunday in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has tested positive to **listeria**. Health Minister John Hill received test results yesterday afternoon confirming the elderly woman had tested positive for the **listeria** monocytogenes bacteria.

But the **listeria** is not being blamed for the woman's death, her treating specialist saying she died of advanced liver cancer.

"I am concerned and we are taking it very seriously," Mr Hill said. "But the evidence to date is not indicative of any faults in South Australia. Mr Hill said the source of the **listeria** was not known.

"We just don't know where it came from," he said. "It can take up to three months to incubate.

"There is a very strong chance it was from a source other than the hospital."

Initial advice from the QEH was that the woman had been fed no high-risk foods by the hospital, Mr Hill said.

"They don't serve Conroy's (a smallgoods company linked to the poisoning death of a Royal Adelaide Hospital patient) at the QEH and they didn't serve her cold meat," he said.

Further tests will show as early as today whether the strain found in the woman was the same as in any other SA cases.

Listeria has been linked to the deaths of diabetic Richard Formosa in October at the RAH and cancer patient David Davies-Colgate in November at the Gawler Hospital.

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Positive **listeria** test after QEH death

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Another two non-fatal cases were also revealed late last year. Tests have identified the **listeria** in Conroy's corned beef as the same strain that was linked to the death of Mr Formosa, however, the source of the **listeria** which infected Mr Davies-Colgate remains unknown.

The South Australian Health Department has alerted its interstate counterparts of Sunday's case and the hospital will notify the State Coroner.

Mr Hill said the QEH had a "very thorough regime" and the patient had been "given the appropriate food for someone who is in a high-risk category".

The QEH would undergo a routine investigation and its kitchen would be tested.

The processes used by the hospital had already been examined yesterday after the test results.

The woman, who was in her late 70s, was from Victoria and was in South Australia to visit her family. She had not been admitted to any other South Australian hospital.

She was first admitted to the QEH on December 31, about a week after she arrived in SA.

"She was there in the general area for a while and then in the hospice part of the hospital," Mr Hill said

"She was very, very ill, probably iller than any of the other (**listeria**) patients."

Health Department chief medical officer Professor Chris Baggoley said "there are no indications at this time that this case is linked to the **listeria** cases last year".

"The hospital has strict food hygiene standards in their kitchen and these were reviewed following the December **listeria** cases," he said.

Mr Hill last night issued another reminder to the public, including immuno-suppressed people and pregnant women, about the potential risks of eating foods that may be contaminated with **listeria**.

"It is important that people identified as vulnerable ensure that their diets do not include foods that may be risky," he said.