



VICTORIA POLICE



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**Chief Commissioner of Police**

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Coroner Audrey Jamieson  
Coroner's Court Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK Vic 3006

Dear Coroner Jamieson

**Victoria Police response to recommendations arising from the Inquest into the death of Odisseas Vekiaris**

This document provides the Victoria Police response to the Coroner's recommendations directed at Victoria Police (recommendation 1) and those jointly recommended to Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police (recommendations 2 and 3) arising from the Inquest into the death of Odisseas Vekiaris, at Dandenong on 21 December 2009. Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Coroners Act 2008, the following recommendations were made:-

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

***"I commend Victoria Police for the introduction of the OSTT training package that addresses the possible presenting signs and symptoms of 'Excited Delirium' in line with the approach adopted by the Canadian Mounted Police following the Braidwood commission, I recommend that Victoria Police remove from its' training materials/literature reference to "Excited Delirium" and/or "Excited Delirium Syndrome" until such time that it is recognised by Australian medical professional bodies as a discreet medical condition/entity. The interpretation of this recommendation by Victoria Police should not be so prescriptive so as to exclude the use of audio-visual materials obtained and already utilised from other jurisdictions such as the United States:***

***(1) Removal of reference to Excited Delirium/Syndrome***

Victoria Police appreciate the context in which this recommendation was made however the recommendation will not be implemented as there remain unresolved issues which need to be addressed. Victoria Police acknowledges that within the medical profession there is a level of disagreement whether "Excited Delirium" is a legitimate medical condition or not, as well as an

ongoing debate over the correct terminology. It is acknowledged that this is ultimately a matter for Australian medical professional bodies to resolve.

Victoria Police understands that the delirium state, and/or mix of symptoms, occurs in circumstances that cannot be entirely explained. Within this context, it is necessary for first responders to have an awareness of the condition and associated risks posed by people presenting in such a manner. It is awareness of the risk, rather than the need to diagnose a medical condition or make a clinical judgement, which is the focus of this and all mental health program training provided to police. The objective is to equip them with the skills to identify the physical signs and behaviours and respond appropriately.

Victoria Police will continue to educate members on the signs and symptoms associated with "excited delirium" until all medical bodies reach agreement. If the eventual cause, title and/or medical research see all medical bodies in agreement, Victoria Police will reconsider training materials and the education delivered accordingly.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2**

***"I recommend that Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria convene a working group in consultation with the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine with the aim of developing a working protocol/clinical practice guidelines or operational work instructions between the organisations including but not limited to, exploring the development of a readily accessible reference tool such as, but not necessarily limited to, a pocket card such as developed by the NIJ's Technology Working Group on Less-Lethal Devices. The development of such a readily accessible reference tool (which could take the form of an application for telecommunication devices) should be consistent with Recommendation 1 and should instead adopt nomenclature for 'delirium' as it is referenced in the DSM-5."***

### ***(2) Development of Guidelines or Work Instructions***

Victoria supports this recommendation and it has, in many respects, been implemented. In 2012, in consultation with key agencies including Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police's Centre for Operational Safety produced a training package on critical incidents involving the mentally ill. An online learning package and quick reference card were developed and provide information, signs and symptoms on a number of mental illnesses. The quick reference card is distributed to all members when they attend their Biannual OSTT and remains in circulation. The package also now forms part of all recruit training.

## **RECOMMENDATION 3**

***"I recommend that Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria develop a joint training package including but not limited to, scenario based training which is focussed on the implementation of any newly developed joint protocol, and the use of the readily accessible reference tool."***

### ***(3) Development of Joint Training Package***

Victoria Police supports the recommendation in principle however there are unresolved issues with the recommendation which need to be addressed. Both logistically and organisationally this recommendation is difficult to accomplish given competing organisational priorities. Victoria police intends to scope re-engagement with Ambulance Victoria in order to review the relevant Victoria Police training package and materials to ensure their currency and ongoing relevancy. Any recommendations made by Ambulance Victoria will be considered by Victoria Police's Centre for Operational Safety for inclusion in the current training package. Within this re-engagement the 'quick reference card' referred to in recommendation two will be given additional consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Graham Ashton', with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

**Graham Ashton AM  
Chief Commissioner**

12 / 4 / 16