



Department of Health

Secretary

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15 APR 2014

e3398378

Ms Emma Lindsey
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11 / 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Lindsey

**RE: Findings into the Death of Mr Bernard Wilkie (without inquest)
Court Reference 2010/1037**

Thank you for your letter of 24 January 2014 regarding the above finding.

The Department of Health (Department) acknowledges the tragic death of Mr Bernard Wilkie who died as a result of a head injury sustained in a fall from a ladder.

I refer to the Coroner's recommendation, in this matter:

"that the Department of Health consider the magnitude and cost of injuries and deaths from ladder falls in Victoria, and determine whether the Injury Prevention Plan could implement effective safety interventions to reduce the incidence and severity of ladder falls, particularly amongst older Victorians."

The Department's response: The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration.

The Department is aware of the fatalities and hospitalisations associated with ladder falls.

The Department's Emergency and Trauma Program has recently commenced a project into domestic falls from ladders. The objective of the project is to identify opportunities to reduce ladder fall mortality and morbidity. The project is expected to scope gaps in domestic ladder safety and explore the potential for interventions and actions that can be undertaken by government, agencies and industry to reduce the incidence of ladder-related injury in Victoria.

In addition, over the past 4 years the Department's Ageing and Aged Care branch has been involved in a NHMRC Partnership Grant with Monash University "Reducing falls among older people in Victoria: Better evidence, better targeting, better outcomes". Investment of \$1.6M



has been made with the aim of translating research into policy and embedding evidence based falls prevention interventions within a range of existing Department programs and policies rather than treating falls prevention as a stand-alone issue.

Within this project the Department has specifically funded implementation of falls prevention interventions within Primary Care Partnerships, Community Health, Home and Community Care and the Hospital Admission Risk Program. These include:

- Exercise groups including balance challenge, plus components of strength, endurance, or flexibility
- Exercise: individual, home-based including balance challenge, plus components of strength, endurance, or flexibility
- Home safety intervention delivered by Occupational Therapists for higher risk groups
- Medication review and withdrawal of psychotropic medications

Final analysis of the research results is currently being conducted and will be available in mid-2014. This will guide the ongoing work of the Department in falls prevention. However, based on preliminary results work has already commenced to improve falls prevention interventions within the Home and Community Care Program, Health Independence Program and through partnerships with organisations such as General Practice Victoria.

The Coroner's recommendation is noted in the context of (1) the magnitude and cost of injuries and deaths from ladder falls in Victoria and (2) the broader injury prevention planning undertaken at the Department. In this regard the Coroner's Findings and comments are relevant to the following matters: Mr Jian Shi (COR 2011/0498), Mrs Erica Kilner (COR 2010/2858), Mr Crescenzo Cantelmi (COR 2010/1192) and Mr Mervyn Maslin (COR 2013/0867).

If you require further information please contact Dr Shelley Bowen, Senior Public Health Advisor, Prevention and Population Health Branch, on Tel 9096 5209 or email shelley.bowen@health.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Dr Pradeep Philip
Secretary