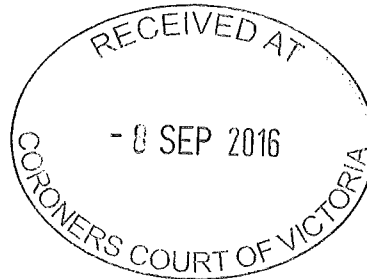




Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

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Cheryl Vella  
Coroners Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Ms Vella

**Investigation into the death of Benjamin Albert Appelman (Court ref: COR 2010 004762)**

Thank you for your letter dated 1 June 2016 relating to Coroner Paresa Spanos' recommendation to the Department of Health and Human Services in her finding into the death without inquest of Mr Benjamin Appelman.

The department's response to the Coroner's recommendation follows:

**Recommendation 1:**

*I recommend that the Department of Health and Human Services' Real Time Prescription Monitoring Taskforce consider the inclusion of diazepam and other Schedule 4 drugs within the RTPM scheme.*

**The department's response:**

The department has noted with concern that numerous overdose deaths investigated by Victorian Coroners involve combinations of Schedule 8 and certain Schedule 4 medicines, particularly benzodiazepines.

Victoria is moving ahead with implementation based on Commonwealth-developed software, the Electronic Recording and Reporting of Controlled Drugs. This software will allow for a nationally consistent system to be implemented when other states and territories follow Victoria's lead. Some enhancements to the Commonwealth software will need to be made to ensure it meets Victoria's needs.

Governance arrangements for implementation of the project include establishing an External Advisory Group involving key medical and pharmacy professional stakeholder organisations to advise on matters such as which medicines should be monitored. Through this External

Advisory Group, the department will seek advice on how best to bring high risk medicines which are not in Schedule 8, such as diazepam, into the real-time prescription monitoring system.

In Victoria, the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* places additional regulatory requirements when prescribing or supplying Schedule 8 medicines, which do not currently apply to Schedule 4 medicines. While it may be possible for the software to be modified to include diazepam and other Schedule 4 medicines, the regulatory impact of creating new, additional controls on Schedule 4 medicines and the timelines needed to make the additional software and regulatory changes will need to be thoroughly considered by the department before a decision is made.

An essential part of the roll out a real-time prescription monitoring system in Victoria will include providing training and resources for prescribers and pharmacists to enhance the safer prescribing of opioids and benzodiazepines in the community.

If you require further information, please contact Matthew McCrone, Director, Medicinal Cannabis and Real-Time Prescription Monitoring Taskforces on 9096 5066 or via email [matthew.mccrone@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:matthew.mccrone@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Kym Peake**  
Secretary

6/9/2016