



VICTORIA POLICE

Graham Ashton AM
Chief Commissioner of Police

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Our Ref: FF-094578

Judge Sara Hinchey
State Coroner of Victoria
Coroners Court Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank Vic 3006

Dear Judge Hinchey,

Subject: James Colin Tomlinson
Case No: 2011/2865
Date of Rec: 20 April 2015

This document provides the response to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into the death, without Inquest, of James Tomlinson who died between 3 and 4 August 2011 at Centenary Street, Seaford, Victoria. The recommendations were delivered in relation to five suicide deaths, which occurred following police interview and charge for child sex offences. The findings were combined and recommendations were made within the James Tomlinson finding and were referenced in the finding into the deaths of Stephen Wite, Lewis Arthur Tankard, Wilfred Charles Martin and Philip Reynolds.

Recommendation one: *"That Victoria Police be commended for the measures implemented following a previous finding relating to a suicide in similar circumstances and that Victoria Police should consider reviewing the training provided to officers with the interviewing of persons suspected of child related sex offences. Training should encompass an understanding of the psychological reactions of individuals arrested or interviewed for these types of offences. These reactions include, the loss of psychological defences, difficulties dealing with arrest, isolation, effects on those with children, community attitudes, ignorance of the criminal justice system, and cultural, linguistic and mental health issues. The purpose of this training is to increase the police awareness regarding the ongoing risk of self-harm among this cohort of alleged offenders while an investigation is in progress."*

Victoria Police supports this recommendation and it has been implemented. A training package has been developed which informs on the psychological reactions of individuals arrested or interviewed


for child sex offence matters. The package also informs members of new policy, procedures and reporting relating to the risk assessment of self-harm or suicide undertaken by members who have a suspect in custody. The training itself has been inserted into the SOCIT/VARE course syllabus, which is a mandatory 4 week course, run 4 to 5 times per year, for all investigators (across all ranks) of sexual crimes.

Recommendation two: *“The pamphlet currently provided by police to suspects regarding support information, should also include information about the police investigation, the judicial process regarding police charges, the potential involvement of other agencies, and how to seek appropriate assistance for well-being and mental health. Victoria Police is the obvious point of dissemination for such a pamphlet; however the material should be prepared in conjunction with relevant bodies, such as the Law Institute of Victoria, Victoria Legal Aid, and agencies such as Suicide Prevention Australia and Beyond Blue.”*

Victoria Police supports this recommendation and it has been implemented. The suspect pamphlet has been updated in consultation with the suggested agencies and includes information as directed by Her Honour.

Additionally, policy has been developed to ensure compliance of these measures. Updated policy documents include The Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Crime (Section 8 ‘Suspect Welfare Management), Victoria Police Manual (VPM) – Sexual Offence Investigations (Section 6), VPM – Safe Management of Persons in Police Care or Custody and VPM – Interviews with Vulnerable Persons.

Yours sincerely,



Graham Ashton AM
Chief Commissioner of Police

15/12/16