

21 December 2015

Private & Confidential

Ms Nicole D'Rozario
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006

Court ref: COR 2012 131

Dear Ms D'Rozario

INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF ZARAH RAHIMZADEGAN

I am writing in response to your letters, both dated 30 November 2015, and addressed to Mr Mark Conner and myself, Mr Peter Leigh, pertaining to the Coroner's finding without inquest in relation to the investigation into the death of Zarah Rahimzadegan (also known as Mandy Ahmadi).

Background

I acknowledge with great sympathy and sadness the tragic death of Ms Ahmadi who was killed by her husband in the family home on 16 December 2011.

CityLife Community Care (CLCC) is a not-for-profit organisation, associated with the CityLife Church, which provides community support and professional services to individuals experiencing hardship. Ms Ahmadi and various members of her family were clients of CLCC to whom we were able to provide advocacy and support (both material and financial) in times of crises over a number of years. We were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely death of Ms Ahmadi.

The organisation is mindful of its duty of care obligations owed to its clients and is committed to providing its clients with support and assistance to facilitate their safety and wellbeing.

As previously communicated to the Coroner, I confirm that CLCC has a zero tolerance when it comes to family violence. Further, we are committed to continuously improving the services that we provide to clients in a bid to ensure that the support we provide assists them in the most beneficial way possible.

Response to the recommendations

The Coroner's findings included recommendations to CLCC pursuant to subsection 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (VIC).

I wish to advise that CLCC is treating the implementation of the Coroner's recommendations as a matter of the utmost priority. In fact we have already taken

significant steps to review and implement changes to our structure, general policies and specifically our intake processes and procedures, and to provide further training of staff and volunteer workers.

To ensure compliance with best practice, CLCC has engaged an independent and impartial consultant with specific expertise in the area of child and family welfare. Specifically, the consultant and CLCC are undertaking the following key projects:

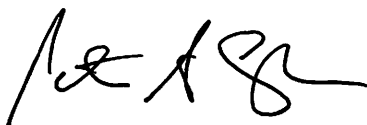
- Implementation of the Coroner's recommendations;
- Improving the organisation's intake and referral policies and procedures in line with best practice industry standards;
- Restructuring staffing to include a new position, Manager – Intake and Policy Development, which will ensure that all areas of client intake adhere to our policies and procedures and the organisation is operating in accordance with best practice, particularly relating to family violence and child abuse;
- Conducting an audit and assessment of the training provided to current staff and volunteers;
- Providing training and education to staff at CLCC (particularly those that receive the initial concerns raised by community members such as youth workers, pastors and counsellors) in relation to areas such as family violence, risk assessment and intake procedures; and
- Strengthening the organisation's overall strategy to protect the safety and wellbeing of its clients through development of policies, procedures and training that are being progressively workshopped with staff and volunteers to create awareness for those who will implement these changes.

These projects are expected to be completed early in the New Year and will form a key component of the strategy of CLCC for 2016.

In closing our response, I again want to reiterate the great sadness that Ms Ahmadi's tragic death has brought to the staff and volunteers of CLCC. We are committed to supporting those who come to us in times of crisis, financial need and distress. To this end we will apply the learnings of the Coroner's findings as we continue to enhance our policies and practices.

We would be happy to provide any further information in relation to this response as required, please do not hesitate to contact me via email (peter.leigh@citylife.care).

Kind regards,



Peter Leigh
Secretary
CityLife Community Care Inc.