



Department of Justice & Regulation

Community Operations and Victims Support Agency

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7 May 2015

Our ref: BC/15/8591

State Coroner
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank
Victoria 3006



Dear Coroner

Court ref: COR 2012 005106 - Investigation into the death of [REDACTED] and recommendations for the Victims Support Agency

Thank you for your correspondence dated 13 April 2015. I note that the Coroner has made recommendations pursuant to section 72(2) of the Coroners Act 2008 on 13 April 2015 and recommendations that are relevant to the Victims Support Agency (VSA) as follows;

1. That the Victims Support Agency should consider publicising the role of the Victims Register to the general public so that victims whose cases pre date its establishment are aware of its existence and the services available, and
2. Policy makers, funders and the service providers in the field of victim support consider how ongoing safety is made available to people who have been sexually assaulted to reduce the incidence of deaths in these circumstances.

In relation to recommendation 1, the VSA launched an interactive web site in 2010 that provides resources for all support services including the Victims Register. The website receives over 100,000 visits each year. VSA produce a brochure about the Victims Register and this has recently been updated and simplified. Copies can be ordered from the website or the VSA operated Victims of Crime Helpline.

Further Information about the Victims Register can be found on the VSA website www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au.

VSA fund a network of services across Victoria under the Victims Assistance Program (VAP) and they provide case management support to victims throughout the criminal justice journey. If this journey ends with the offender convicted and imprisoned the victim will be supported to apply for registration on the Victims Register. The role of the Victims Register in Victoria is to provide the victim with key information about the offender whilst under sentence, including the status of sentence, death of a prisoner and support to make a submission to the Adult Parole Board when parole is pending.



VSA also works closely with Court Network and the Office of Public Prosecutions Witness Assistance Service and these agencies advise eligible victims about the Victims Register and provide them with resource material produced by the VSA. Child witnesses are supported by the Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) funded Child Witness Service during the court process.

In relation to recommendation 2, an important strategy to promote victims' safety is to provide services that can support them. The Department of Health & Human Services funds a 24 hour sexual assault crisis line and a network of specialist Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA), some of which are co-located at police stations. CASAs provide advocacy and therapeutic counselling to victims of sexual assault and police have standing orders to take victims to a CASA within six hours of an assault occurring if reported. The VAP also provide case management support and counselling to sexual assault/abuse victims if police do not refer them to CASA.

VSA will enhance the Victims Assistance Program Strategic Plan. Priority three in this Plan relates to stakeholder engagement. The 2015-18 Plan will include explicit stakeholder engagement activities to raise awareness of Victims support services with mental health/child and adolescent mental health services.

Lifeline also provides training for its telephone counsellors to support people in crisis and at risk of suicide. Additional support is available to victims of crime who call the VSA state-wide Victims of Crime Helpline on 1800 819 817. The Victims of Crime Helpline operates from 8 am to 11 pm seven days a week. Highly trained Victims Support Officers also support callers at risk of suicide, or victims of sexual assault/abuse and can refer them to local services.

Yours sincerely



Clare Morton
Director