



Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

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Laura Royce
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Ms Royce

Investigation into the death of Jim Zanis (Court ref: COR 2014 000042)

Thank you for your letter dated 5 July 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 Jim Zanis.

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

Recommendation:

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 notes that numerous overdose deaths investigated by Victorian Coroners involve combinations of Schedule 8 and certain Schedule 4 medicines, including diazepam.

Victoria is moving ahead with implementing real-time prescription monitoring 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.

The department has established an external advisory group involving key medical and pharmacy organisations to advise on implementation matters such as which medicines should be monitored. Through this 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 before a decision is made.

The department has commissioned a Legislative Impact Assessment which will provide economic analyses of the legislative options for real-time prescription monitoring, including measuring the impact that would be imposed on doctors and pharmacists should the system monitor other high risk medicines in addition to Schedule 8 medicines.

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.

Yours sincerely



Kym Peake
Secretary

4 / 10 / 2016