



Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

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Coroner Audrey Jamieson
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Coroner Jamieson

Thank you for the letter of 7 August 2018 that included a copy of your findings regarding the fatal overdose on 17 June 2016 of Samuel Morrison (Coroners reference: COR 2016 002730). In line with my obligations under the *Coroners Act 2008*, I am responding to your recommendation addressed to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is difficult to conceive of the pain experienced by the loved ones of those who have died in circumstances similar to those of Mr Morrison, and I wish to offer my sincere sympathy to his family and friends.

As you detail in your findings, Mr Morrison's death was in addition to 492 other Victorians who lost their lives to drug overdose in 2016, and I note the high rate of heroin-related overdoses in this state. In these circumstances the department acknowledges and accepts your recommendation that it consider the circumstances of Mr Morrison's death, and that it supports the need for continued development of risk reducing strategies for people who inject drugs.

I can advise that the department is seeking to address many of the issues you identified through the rollout of significant new initiatives and enhancements in drug and mental health services. Key elements of this investment are outlined further below.

Summary of current activity

In 2018-19, \$259.9 million is being invested in alcohol and other drug services, including:

- funding to more than double the number of residential rehabilitation beds across Victoria, including \$53.2 million to establish 100 additional residential rehabilitation beds in existing facilities (28 of which will be dedicated dual diagnosis beds), \$6.7 million over four years to operationalise the new Grampians residential rehabilitation facility, and \$40.6 million to build three new residential rehabilitation facilities in Barwon, Gippsland and Hume
- a new residential withdrawal and 28 day stabilisation service to support an extra 100 complex clients per year and reduce hospital admissions
- the establishment of the medically supervised injecting room in North Richmond, and capital works to construct a dedicated facility for this purpose

- the implementation of 'SafeScript', a real-time prescription monitoring system for pharmaceutical drugs
- subsidising the cost of the life-saving drug naloxone, and a commitment to expand access by allowing health workers in registered needle and syringe programs to directly dispense naloxone to clients who are at risk of, or may witness, an opioid overdose.

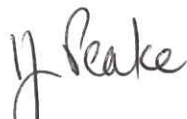
In 2018-19, \$657.8 million is also being invested in mental health services, including:

- \$232.4 million over four years to address growing demand for public clinical mental health services, including operational funding for 89 newly built and existing acute and sub-acute inpatient beds and funding for additional hours of community services
- \$153.9 million to provide intensive service packages to current high-need community mental health clients
- \$100.5 million to develop, build and implement an integrated mental health and alcohol and other drugs emergency model of care ("crisis hubs") at six major emergency departments, providing multidisciplinary assessment and treatment and a 28-day outreach function
- \$28.7 million over four years to improve the capacity of Prevention and Recovery Care Units to accept patients being discharged from acute inpatient units by providing extra clinical input at six units
- \$18.7 million over four years to support an additional 3,000 people per year experiencing mental health crises through extension of the Hospital Outreach Post-suicide Engagement program (HOPE) to another six sites.

As this death so tragically shows, while Victoria can be proud of our ongoing commitment to improve our drug and mental health treatment systems, it is clear we can always do more, and my department remains particularly concerned about recent trends relating to heroin-related overdose deaths in Victoria.

In our work to continuously improve existing programs and advise an incoming government on the future design and delivery of alcohol and other drug services, we will have regard to the circumstances you have identified in relation to Mr Morrison's death. In particular, we will give priority to strategic work with the alcohol and other drug and mental health sectors, on building and translating effective treatments for people with co-occurring drug and mental health issues.

Yours sincerely



Kym Peake
Secretary

17/10/2018

Cc Registrar, Coroners Court of Victoria, team7@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au