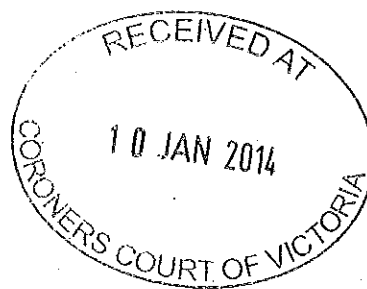




Australian Government
Department of Health



SECRETARY

Mr Josh Munro
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Munro

Thank you for your letter of 31 October 2013 regarding the recommendation made by the Coroner under section 72 (2) of the Coroner's Act 2008 (Vic) following the inquest into the death of Helen Stagnoll (Court reference number COR 2010 001624).


In Recommendation G of her findings, Coroner Jacinta Heffey, suggested that 'The Secretary to the Commonwealth Department of Health amend the current Poisons Standard to require that containers of methadone dispensed as takeaway doses for opioid pharmacotherapy are adequately labelled with the caution "*Never leave a person who has taken methadone to sleep it off. Call an ambulance immediately. Dial 000*".'

I am unable to implement the Coroner's recommendation because it is not within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth's *Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons No.4, June 2013* (the SUSMP). Appendix L Part 1 of the SUSMP, describes the General Requirements for Dispensing Labels for medicines such as methadone. The SUSMP also identifies model provisions for the labelling of medicines which includes signal headings for labels. These general requirements and provisions are intended to integrate with existing legislative instruments for labelling in each Australian jurisdiction, and adapted according to local requirements and local poisons or controlled substances acts. Details of the labelling requirements under the SUSMP can be found at <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012L01200>.

Therefore, I suggest that you approach the Victorian Department of Health to implement this recommendation under the Victorian *Drug, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*.

For further information, please contact Ms Colleen Krestensen Assistant Secretary Drug Strategy Branch on (02) 6289 4054 or by email at colleen.krestensen@health.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Halton', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jane Halton PSM
Secretary

24 December 2013