



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

SECRETARY

Ms Kate Doherty
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Doherty

Court Ref: COR 2008 004042

Thank you for your letter of 1 October 2012, inviting the Department's response to recommendations made by Coroner Jamieson subsequent to the investigation into the death of David Andrew TRENGROVE. The relevant recommendations, and my responses, are given below.

Recommendation 3:

To reduce the harms and death associated with benzodiazepine use in Victoria, within 12 months the Therapeutic Goods Administration of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing should move all benzodiazepines into Schedule 8 of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons.

I referred this recommendation to the Therapeutic Goods Administration for consideration, and note that the Administration's response was received by the Court on 13 November 2012.

I note also the recommendation directed to the Victorian Department of Health:

Recommendation 1:

The Victorian Department of Health implement a real-time prescription monitoring system within 12 months, in order to reduce deaths and harm associated with prescription shopping. The system should be implemented in such a way that it is readily accessible via the internet to Victorian prescribers and dispensers during consultations, so they can check patients' histories and therefore make informed prescribing and dispensing decisions 'on the spot'.

As referenced in Coroner Jamieson's report, the Australian Government is supporting the development of the Electronic Recording and Reporting of Controlled Drugs (ERRCD) system which will provide the vehicle for nationally consistent collection and reporting of data relating to the dispensing of Controlled Drugs to help address problems of forgery, abuse and doctor-shopping.

I am pleased to advise that the ERRCD system build was completed on 30 November 2012, and is now subject to acceptance testing to ensure the system operates as intended. The Commonwealth has offered licences to each state and territory to 'hand over' a copy of the system for their evaluation and eventual implementation. The timing of the release of the ERRCD system in each state and territory is dependent on the states and territories accepting the licensed software, timing of any state and territory legislative changes to support the initiative, and jurisdictions undertaking the necessary work to migrate and integrate the new system with their existing processes as needed.

It is important to note that the system is based on recording of *dispensing* transactions, rather than *prescription writing* transactions, in accordance with the state regulatory frameworks currently in operation. Once implemented fully by the states, pharmacists and prescribers will benefit from real-time access to relevant information about patients at risk, including dispensing information from other jurisdictions. This vital feature will help address any Controlled Drugs doctor-shopping behaviour in border regions such as Albury-Wodonga.

I trust this information will be of assistance. If you have any questions about the implementation of this initiative please contact Mr Kim Bessell, Principal Pharmacy Advisor and Assistant Secretary, Pharmaceutical Access Branch directly on (02) 6289 8372.

Yours sincerely

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

Prof Jane Halton PSM
Secretary

24 December 2012