



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

8 January 2013

Ms Lidia Lo Giusto
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000



Dear Ms Lo Giusto

Thank you for your letter dated 12 November 2012 regarding the Investigation into the death of Reagan Milstein. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Bob Carr. I am also replying on behalf of the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to your letter on the same subject also dated 12 November. I regret the delay in response.

The Department maintains the Smartraveller website to provide advice to Australians to assist them to make well-informed decisions about their international travel. It provides destination-specific advice for 167 different countries or territories, and general advice in the form of "travel tips" for a number of broad issues and demographic groups, such as on travel insurance, advice for seniors travelling overseas, and for backpackers. It is not possible for the Department to provide advice on all different circumstances that Australian travellers might encounter overseas.

An important underpinning to the advice provided is that the decision to travel overseas is a personal responsibility and Australians are responsible for their own safety. Consistent with this, one of the key messages is the importance of obtaining comprehensive travel insurance and checking the circumstances and activities that are not covered by the policy. The website also warns that the standard of services and support, including medical services, emergency services and services provided by operators of adventure activities, in overseas destinations may not match that available in Australia.

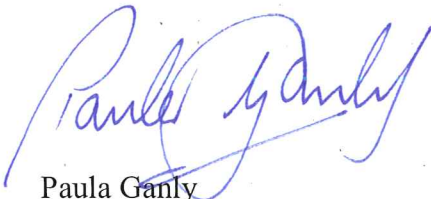
In preparing the advice, the Department uses a range of sources, including: information about local conditions obtained by Australian missions overseas; our experience of the common or recurring consular problems Australians experience overseas; advisories prepared by our consular partners; and where necessary, information from other Government departments and agencies. In presenting the advice, the Department seeks to avoid recommending or referencing particular non-governmental sources.

As the coroner's report notes, there is included within the advice currently some limited information about dive safety, beyond the general advice outlined above. In particular, where possible, the Department has sought to provide information in the relevant destination-specific travel advice on the location of decompression chambers. As with all of the travel advice, this information is subject to periodic review for its accuracy and relevance.

Taking into account the recommendations made by the coroner in this case, the Department will continue to explore ways to improve the advice presented on the Smartraveller website, consistent with the constraints set out above.

Thank you for bringing these matters to the attention of the Minister.

Yours sincerely



Paula Ganly
Assistant Secretary
Consular Policy Branch