



Department of Health

Secretary



50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne
Victoria 3000
GPO Box 4541
Melbourne
Victoria 3001
Telephone: 1300 253 942
Facsimile: 1300 253 964
www.health.vic.gov.au
DX 210311

e2868697

Ms Esther Reeves
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Reeves

Court Reference: COR 2009 002063 Damien Perceval

I am writing in response to your letter dated 1 October 2012 in relation to Coroner Kim Parkinson's recommendation directed to the Minister for Health in the finding into the death of Darren Perceval.

The Department of Health's (the department's) response to the Coroner's recommendation is as follows:

Recommendation:

That the Minister for Health take steps to prohibit the supply of 'take-away' doses of the Schedule 8 drugs Methadone by drug addicted persons and require that methadone therapy be delivered and administered at a pharmacy premises under the supervision of a registered pharmacist.

The department's response:

The overall long-term success of maintenance therapy and patient retention in treatment is contingent on providing patients the opportunity to normalise their lives through the provision of take-away doses. Take-away doses facilitate a patient's reintegration into the community and enable stable patients to meet work and family commitments with minimal disruption.

As noted by the Coroner, the department has responded to similar recommendations made in recent findings. In the findings into the deaths of Ms Melissa Irwin (Court ref: 5712/09) and Mr Michael Gledhill (Court ref: 5241/08), the Coroner was advised that the department's policy on the provision of pharmacotherapy, *Policy for Maintenance Pharmacotherapy for Opioid Dependence* (the policy), contains a number of safeguards to ensure the safe storage of



methadone take-away doses. The policy includes criteria which prescribers should consider when assessing a patient's suitability for take-away doses, as well as advice for pharmacists when supplying take-away doses.

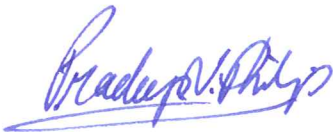
The responses to these recommendations still accurately reflect the department's position on the overall benefits of take-away doses.

My department had previously informed the Coroner that the review of the policy is underway. The revised policy will include explicit statements to address Coroners' concerns regarding the safe storage of take-away doses. The department will inform the Coroner when the policy has been finalised.

The department has also communicated Coroners' concerns to pharmacotherapy providers in Victoria both through direct correspondence and through various sector publications.

If you require further information, please contact Mr Matthew McCrone, Chief Officer, Drugs and Poisons Regulation on 9096 5066 or email matthew.mccrone@health.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Pradeep Philip
Secretary