



## Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

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Coroner Audrey Jamieson  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
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Dear Coroner Audrey Jamieson

**Re: COR 2018 002583, COR 2018 004780, COR 2018 005104, COR 2019 003839 – Investigation into the death of Ms WX, Ms TP, Ms H and Ms YN**

Thank you for your letter of 7 September 2020 regarding the Finding without inquest into the death of Ms WX, Ms TP, Ms MH and Ms YN. My condolences go out to the families and loved ones of the deceased. I apologise for the delay in my response.

The Finding of this investigation highlights the common experiences of financial vulnerability, social isolation, family violence, and mental health issues faced by these women. Thank you for your recommendation. Please find my response below.

*Recommendation 1. With the aim of promoting public health and safety and preventing like deaths, I recommend that the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services review current services that support the health and wellbeing of South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea, and consult with relevant service providers and other stakeholders, to identify opportunities to improve South Asian women's access to and engagement with such services.*

This recommendation will be implemented. I am pleased to report that work has commenced on a coordinated response across the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (PHN), Whittlesea Council, local service providers, Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services, North East Melbourne Area. The Office for Women in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and Family Safety Victoria are also working closely with local organisations and community groups to understand how access to services for the South Asian community can be improved.

Under the *Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework 2016-2025*, the department and Victorian Primary Health Networks (PHN) are collaborating to deliver place-based approaches to suicide prevention across twelve locations. Eastern Melbourne PHN (EMPHN) place-based suicide prevention trials are in Maroondah and Whittlesea. These trials operate alongside existing mental health and suicide prevention services and do not establish a new service, or duplicate existing services. The role of the trials is to work with the community and local service system to identify how best to prevent suicide; how the community can better support those at risk and what solutions stakeholders would propose for saving lives. The coordination of the Crossroads working group is one of the activities funded through the EMPHN place-based suicide prevention trial.

As you are aware, the Crossroads to Community Wellbeing Group was established in direct response to community concern regarding these tragic deaths. The group comprises of representatives of City of Whittlesea, Whittlesea Community Connections, DPV Health, Victoria Police, EMPHN, Berry Street and Dr Manjula O'Connor (Private Psychiatrist).

In November 2020, the Director, North West Melbourne Area, Department of Health and Human Services, met with local stakeholders at the Crossroads to Community Wellbeing Group on my behalf. At this meeting Mr Chris Howse, Solicitor at Whittlesea Community Legal Centre, stated on behalf of the group that he would be pleased for the Director to represent the Department of Health and Human Services on this working group and consult with the local stakeholders.

I wish to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the local agencies participating in a coordinated response through the Crossroads to Community Wellbeing working group to prevent further deaths of women in similar situations.

Thank you once again for providing the Finding. I look forward to working closely with the Coroners Court of Victoria in the coming months and years to continue to reduce the incidence and impact of suicide in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



**Terry Symonds**  
A/Secretary

30 / 12 2020