



VICTORIA  
POLICE FORCE

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Our ref: FF-193402

Coroner Jacqui Hawkins  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

**Subject:** Stanley Weaver - Finding into death without inquest  
**Court Reference:** COR 2019 4563  
**Date of Recommendation:** 18 March 2021

Dear Coroner Hawkins

**Victoria Police response to recommendation arising from Finding without inquest into the death of Stanley Bruce Weaver**

This document provides the response to your Recommendation to Victoria Police, arising from the Finding into the death of Stanley Bruce Weaver (without inquest), delivered on 18 March 2021 (**Finding**). The Finding raises issues relating to suspect welfare management of alleged family violence perpetrators.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*I recommend that Victoria Police review the relevant Victoria Police Manual and Guidelines to ensure that there is clear and consistent guidance regarding suspect welfare management in relation to family violence perpetrators. Suspect welfare management should be considered in all interactions between Victoria Police and family violence perpetrators, including during the service of family violence related documentation. This guidance should be included in the updated Code of Practice for the investigation of Family Violence and be reflective of the advice already provided in the Code of Practice for the investigation of Sexual Crime.*

**RESPONSE**

Victoria Police accepts the Recommendation and will take steps to review relevant policies and guidelines to ensure to ensure guidance on managing the welfare of family violence perpetrators is clear and consistent. This response sets out the current Victoria Police family violence policy framework insofar as it relates to suspect welfare management, and the actions Victoria Police will take in response to the Recommendation.

**Current policy framework**

Victoria Police is cognisant of the mental health issues that can be faced by family violence perpetrators and has already taken steps to provide guidance to its members in respect of this issue through the Victoria Police Manual - Family Violence (**VPM - Family Violence**), associated policy material and member training.

## Risk Assessment and Referral

The VPM - Family Violence contains a requirement to the effect that *'appropriate referrals must be made for all parties involved in a family violence incident'*.

The new VP Form L17 (also referred to as the Victoria Police Risk Assessment and Management Report or Family Violence Report) plays a key part in the risk assessment and referral framework. It is an evidence-based actuarial risk assessment and, as identified in the Finding, has been updated and now contains explicit questions about the mental health of a perpetrator (including whether they have any mental health issues and have expressed suicidal ideation). Information gathered on L17 informs how police investigate and manage family violence risk.

Formal and informal referrals for the perpetrator are automatically generated via the L17. The L17 (including any information about perpetrator mental health issues and suicidality recorded in the L17) is also shared with referral agencies, including specialist services for men who perpetrate family violence. This automated referral process is an important feature of Victoria Police's integration with the family violence service system. In addition to the L17 and, as noted in the Finding, person warning flags should be submitted on an individual's LEAP record if there are concerns relating to their mental health or risk of suicide.

Victoria Police acknowledges the Court's finding that some of Victoria Police's policy framework relating to suspect welfare management does not explicitly extend to the service of family violence related documentation.

The VPM - Family Violence does instruct members to provide a copy of an Information and Support Referral Brochure (**Brochure**) to family violence perpetrators during the initial response to a family violence incident, and at the point of service of family violence orders. As at April 2021, the Brochure has been made available in an Easy English version and translated into 200 community languages. The Brochure provides a list of counselling support services individuals can contact to seek assistance.

### Additional guidance and training on identifying and responding to perpetrators who are affected by serious mental illness

The Victoria Police Practice Guide - Family Violence Priority Community and Diverse Community Responses advises members that there is a significant correlation between mental health issues and family violence, including for perpetrators. It states that perpetrators who experience mental health issues *'may require a high level of support, depending on their wellbeing prior to police responding.'* When completing the L17, members are advised that *'it is important to ask about the presence of current or previous suicidal thinking or acts by the [perpetrator] in addition to asking specifically about diagnosed mental health issues'* and that the presence of active symptoms of mental health issues *'is a clear target for referrals during risk management for [perpetrators]'*. Members are to ensure that all parties are *'supported to access appropriate mental health services'*. The practice guide advises members to make a *'continual risk assessment of the person's mental health'*.

As identified in the Finding, case strategies to better identify perpetrators with mental health issues are also set out in the Practice Guide - Family Violence Report (L17) and Frontline Response. This includes making further enquiries with perpetrators in respect of suspected mental health issues and their contact with referral/support agencies.

The rollout of the new L17 was accompanied by a new online education course which is mandatory for all ranks up to and including Superintendent. Targeted face-to-face training for frontline members was also included in the rollout. This training was developed by the Centre for Family Violence Learning, People Development Command. Content covered includes the nature and dynamics of family violence, myths and misconceptions about the behaviour of affected family members and perpetrators, understanding risk factors, the L17 risk assessment and risk management process, responses to priority communities and working with partner agencies. As noted in the Finding, perpetrator suicide risk is being incorporated into family violence training for members.

**Actions to be taken**

To implement the Recommendation, Family Violence Command will review all relevant policy and practice instruments to ensure that expectations and advice to members regarding suspect welfare management in family violence matters is clear, consistent and reflects best practice.

As recommended, the existing suspect welfare management guidance in the Code of Practice for the investigation of Sexual Crime will be considered for expansion into the family violence context.

Yours sincerely



Shane Patton APM  
Chief Commissioner

22/6/21