



VICTORIA POLICE

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Chief Commissioner of Police

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Our ref: LEX 22781

State Coroner Judge John Cain
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Subject: Ms ZT - Finding into death without inquest
Court Reference: COR 2016 2733
Date of Recommendation: 15 May 2021

Dear Judge Cain,

Victoria Police response to recommendation arising from Finding without inquest into the death of Ms ZT

I refer to the letter sent to the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) by the Coroners Court dated 20 May 2021, enclosing a copy of your Finding into the death of Ms ZT without inquest, delivered on 15 May 2021.

The position of Victoria Police in response to Recommendation Five is set out below.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

That Victoria Police consider updating guidance to indicate that police members should consider undertaking a welfare check on residents in instances where there are repeated incidents reported to emergency services requesting police attendance and where incidents are described as 'violent or possibly family violence related'. This should also be considered as part of the training and guidance for police members when assessing whether a welfare check is required or not.

The State Coroner's recommendation will be implemented by Victoria Police.

In the letter dated 4 September 2020 sent to the Court by the VGSO on behalf of the Chief Commissioner of Police, it was indicated that Victoria Police Corporate Policy (**Corporate Policy**) had completed a review of chapters within the Victoria Police Manual (**VPM**) which related, albeit indirectly, to the issue of welfare checks. This review, which was completed in 2020, was undertaken in response to a number of coronial recommendations arising in relation to welfare checks (specifically, the investigations into the deaths of Rachel Mihail¹ and Janet Foster²) and involved input from Crime Command, State Emergencies and Support Command and the Centre for Law and Operational Development within People Development Command. At that time, Corporate Policy found the VPM provided adequate direction for members, when coupled with their training, for police members to

¹ COR 2017 5903.

² COR 2016 2544.

undertake their general duties, including the processes and responsibilities involved in responding to a request for a welfare check.

The manner in which police members respond to calls which may involve a request or a need for a welfare check is guided by the risk assessment applied by members to that particular set of circumstances. All police members receive foundational training in the processes of information gathering and conducting risk assessments. Further, all police members receive 'on the job' training and guidance in all aspects of general duties, including the processes involved in responding to a request for a welfare check.

Police members are expected to draw upon their training and experience, including the experience of their colleagues, to guide their response. When police members are in doubt or require further guidance, they are expected to seek direction from their patrol supervisor or other senior members. In this way, the police response should be appropriate to the circumstances, demonstrate sound judgement and reflect contemporary organisational and community expectations.

In addition to the review of VPMs conducted by Corporate Policy, Victoria Police has continued to develop and provide training and education to police members at all ranks and in all roles as part of its specialist response to family violence following the Royal Commission into Family Violence. In 2017, the Centre for Family Violence at People Development Command was established to provide career long family violence training and education, tailored to the rank and role of individual members. This is a significant organisation investment in training and education, which assists members to understand family violence. Further, this training and education supports members and supervisors to identify and assess the risk to affected family members and children when responding to both family violence incidents and welfare checks, particularly where previous family violence may have been identified.

There is now a greater emphasis on the oversight of family violence investigations by Section Sergeants, Family Violence Liaison Officers and Family Violence Investigation Units (**FVIUs**). FVIUs manage serious and complex investigations and high-risk, complex and repeat cases of family violence.

Victoria Police have already commenced implementing Recommendation Five into the VPM Instructions on 'Family Violence' and 'Protecting Children'. These amendments are currently in the draft stages and Victoria Police will shortly commence the consultation process to have these changes implemented across the organisation. Further, the 'Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence in 2021' is currently being reviewed in accordance with this recommendation and as part of ongoing updates and improvements.

Victoria Police will also continue to implement this recommendation through the ongoing reviews, updates to training, education and associated policies and materials to further strengthen guidance for police attendance at incidents that are described as 'violent or possibly family violence related'.

Yours sincerely


Shane Patton APM
Chief Commissioner

19/8/21