

25 October 2021

Alice Wickett  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006  
Via email: [cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

Dear Alice

**Re: Coroner's Report COR 2019 000504 - Investigation into the death of Seth James Haddow**

I write regarding Coroner Bracken's finding into the death of Seth James Haddow, and related correspondence to the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) dated 12 February 2021. The TAC CEO has asked me to respond to the letter issued to the TAC on his behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding to this correspondence.

I was saddened to hear of the death of Seth, and I extend my condolences to his family. Every life lost on our roads is a tragedy and our hearts go out to those impacted by Seth's death.

Coroner Bracken made two recommendations in his report. These were:

*(1) The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Kidsafe Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission and the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (the Organisations) together consider the circumstances of Seth Haddow's death and undertake research to identify the factors that contributed to it and to like deaths between 2015 and 2019.*

*(2) That the Organisations together develop a strategy aimed at reducing, if not eradicating such deaths and increase the public awareness of the identified factors, their associated dangers and developed strategies.*

**About the TAC**

The TAC was established by the *Transport Accident Act 1986* (the Act) to provide compensation to Victorians injured as a result of a transport accident, assist people to rehabilitate following an accident, and reduce the incidence of accidents on Victorian roads. Every year, the TAC provides over \$1.5 billion worth of services and compensation to Victorians who have been injured as a result of a transport accident; and invests in infrastructure and public education to engage with Victorians about road safety and reduce road trauma. The TAC works with Department of Transport and other Victorian government agencies as part of the Victorian Road Safety Partnership in its road safety efforts.

The TAC supports the coroner's recommendations and we have been working to implement them.

**Response to Recommendation 1**

In response to Recommendation 1, the TAC has recently undertaken extensive research into the factors influencing road trauma among children and young people. Under Victoria's new Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, one of the actions is to develop a new strategic approach to delivering best practice education programs for children, young people, families, and the general community to prevent road trauma.

The TAC is leading this work on behalf of the Victorian Road Safety Partnership. As a part of the development of the strategy to reduce trauma among children and youth people, a review of crash data and trauma was undertaken. Some particular findings of note to this coronial investigation are:

- Approximately 7% of pedestrian<sup>1</sup> related trauma (defined as those killed or seriously injured) for children aged 0-4 years old occurs on or near driveways and some of this trauma may involve reversing vehicles.
- Trauma at driveways is the fifth most common form of pedestrian trauma for children aged 0-4 years, with road crossings either at intersection or midblock accounting for the largest proportion of trauma.
- For other age groups driveway related trauma for pedestrians was not noted as significant. However trauma for bicyclists within the 13-15 year old age group was noted to occur at driveways and these incidents may occur in similar circumstances to the case reviewed by the corner – i.e. involving a reversing vehicle.

This research is informing the development of the detailed strategy and action plan to reduce road trauma among children and young people, due to be released by early 2022, which will focus on:

- road safety issues and risks across the lifespan
- equity, access and flexibility for schools and school communities
- the role that parents and carers play as the primary educators of their children
- recognising that to reduce road trauma among young people, improving the safety of road environments where children and young people live and the vehicles they travel in will be crucial
- Victoria's approach to providing best practice education, interventions and programs for children, young people, families and communities to prevent road trauma.

## **Response to Recommendation 2**

In response to recommendation 2, in addition to developing the children and youth road safety strategy and action plan, the TAC has also implemented a number of related initiatives. These include funding a specific promotional campaign about driveway safety, funding the Starting Out Safely Program for 0-5 year olds, as well as improving the information about driveway safety on the TAC's vehicle safety website. Each of these initiatives is outlined in more detail below.

### **(a) Driveway Safety campaign with Kidsafe Victoria.**

The TAC is pleased, as a response to this recommendation, to be able to provide funding and support for a dedicated campaign focusing on Driveway Safety, being led by Kidsafe Victoria. The Campaign will include the distribution of a range of materials to help inform and alert families to the issues surrounding driveway safety. It is anticipated that the campaign will be launched later in 2021.

### **(b) Starting Out Safely Program**

The Starting Out Safely Program is Victoria's primary road safety education program for children aged up to 5 years. The program provides a wide range of road safety information to parents, early childhood educators and maternal child health professionals. The TAC is pleased to be funding this program from 2022 onwards and will work with the provider of this program to ensure the systemic inclusion of driveway safety materials and advice through all of the communication mechanisms this state-wide program provides.

### **(c) Vehicle Safety information**

The TAC maintains and extensively promotes the [howsafeisyourcar.com.au](https://www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au) website. Extensive vehicle safety data, information and ratings are published on this site to help inform the public about the safest vehicles they can purchase. The TAC promotes the website and its content through activities including social media campaigns, targeted Search Engine Marketing (SEM) promotion as well as through partnership activities and across our school based education programs.

As part of a recent upgrade to the website, new or reconfigured content and new functionality was introduced. Two particular sections of the new website describe and promote the way in which vehicle technology could assist in preventing driveway deaths such as that observed in this case.

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<sup>1</sup> For the 0-4 year old age group pedestrian trauma represents 20% of all trauma. This is second to passenger related trauma with represents 77% of all trauma for this age group



The first of these is in the “safety features” sections of the website. The new content introduces reversing camera technology which is shown outlining that it can reduce the likelihood and severity of reversing trauma. Such content is presented to visitors to the website who wish to know more about these technologies and is also promoted through targeted SEM.

In addition to this content, the new *howsafeisyourcar.com.au* website also promotes the protection reversing technology provides by allowing users who use the website to search for cars to select ‘safer cars for families’. This selection box allows a user’s search to pinpoint cars with safety technology, which will protect their families, including reversing technology.

I trust the above information addresses Coroner Bracken’s recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions related to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samantha Cockfield', is written in a cursive style.

Samantha Cockfield  
Head of Road Safety  
Transport Accident Commission