



Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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BAC-CO-22902

Mr Will Doolan
Coroner's Registrar
Coroner's Support Services
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Mr Doolan

Investigation into the death of Baby A Court Ref: COR 2015/0868

I refer to your letter dated 6 January 2022.

I now provide a response to Her Honour's (amended) Finding into the death of Baby A dated 13 December 2021, in which three recommendations were made. The following recommendation was directed to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department):

'I recommend that consideration be given to the placement of a senior state-wide child protection officer at the Royal Children's Hospital to enhance information sharing and collaborative risk assessment and management'.

The department has considered Her Honour's recommendation, and following consultation with relevant program areas will not be pursuing the recommendation for the following reasons:

1. The department acknowledges the special place that the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) occupies in the health service system within Victoria, and the work it does for vulnerable children. Adopting this recommendation would create an equity issue across other hospitals and health services within Victoria, particularly those which have the same mandatory reporting obligation.
2. Child Protection relies on mandatory reporting by professionals across the state to its child protection intake services pursuant to the Children, Youth and Families Act¹. To place a senior state-wide officer within the RCH would undermine the mandatory reporting requirement of the practitioners at the RCH.
3. The RCH and the department already have a long-standing *Memorandum of Understanding between Royal Children's Hospital, the Department of Health and*

¹ Statement of Tracy Beaton dated 17 December 2019

Human Services, and Royal Children's Hospital and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, September 2018 (MOU). The MOU includes reference to (7.1) the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) meeting. SCAN meetings are multidisciplinary professionals-only meetings attended by health professionals, child protection practitioners, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care providers and police. The purpose is to share information, plan investigations and plan the multiagency response. SCAN meetings are instigated by the RCH.

The department is committed to working with the RCH to review the MOU. Child Protection Policy is in contact with the RCH Manager of Social Work and Pastoral Care Services to commence this review. This review will include consideration for strengthening collaborative practice and assessment.

I thank Her Honour for her recommendation and the opportunity for the department to provide its response. I trust that the information above assures Her Honour and Baby A's family of the gravity with which we have treated the investigation into this death.

On behalf of the department's Board and department staff, I extend my sincere condolences to Baby A's family.

If you require any further information, please contact Simone Corin, Executive Director Children and Families, Children, Families Communities and Disability Division at Simone.Corin@dffh.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Brigid Sunderland
Secretary

11/03/2022