

28 April 2023

Coroner Simon McGregor
Coroners Court of Victoria
69 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Coroner McGregor

Inquest into the death of Veronica Nelson

Your Ref: COR 2020 0021

This letter provides a response to your recommendations as they relate to Correct Care Australasia Pty Ltd (**Correct Care**) arising from your Finding into the death of Veronica Nelson dated 30 January 2023.

Reference is made to the written submissions made on behalf of Correct Care dated 17 June 2022, which provided responses to draft recommendations.

From 1 July 2023, the provision of Primary Health Services at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (**DPFC**) will be provided by Western Health. Correct Care has carefully considered each of the recommendations and where practical, further actions have been taken to implement steps in response to the findings. Many of the recommendations will necessarily fall to Justice Health to consider and work with the new provider of services.

Recommendation 23: As an interim measure, until a subacute unit on site at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre is operational, I recommend that an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding be agreed as a matter of urgency between Corrections Victoria, Justice Health and Correct Care Australasia and/or the Health Service Provider at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and the most appropriate proximate public hospital for the provision of equivalent community health services not presently provided at the Medical/Health Centre.

Correct Care staff are working collaboratively with Justice Health, Corrections Victoria and Western Health to determine interim arrangements. As stated, Western Health will be providing Primary Health Services at DPFC from 1 July 2023.

Recommendation 26: I recommend that Justice Health and Correct Care Australasia and/or the Health Service Provider at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre ensure that all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners have the option during the reception medical assessment of consulting with an Aboriginal

Health Practitioner or Aboriginal Health Worker, either in person or by telehealth, within 48 hours. The prisoner's response to this offer should be documented.

Correct Care is not currently contracted to engage Aboriginal Health Practitioners or Aboriginal Health Workers at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. As such, Correct Care is not in a position to implement this recommendation prior to the commencement of the new provider.

Recommendation 27: I recommend that Corrections Victoria and Correct Care Australasia and/or the Health Service Provider at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre develop and implement a robust procedure for 'clearance' of a prisoner (at initial reception or subsequently) from the Medical/Health Centre to a cell elsewhere at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre that requires certification in writing by a medical practitioner that the prisoner is fit to be confined in an unobserved cell.

Correct Care staff are working collaboratively with Justice Health, Corrections Victoria and Western Health to develop and implement a procedure whereby a medical officer or registered nurse (if medical officer not onsite/available) provides clearance of a prisoner to move from the health centre. Western Health will be providing Primary Health Services at DPFC from 1 July 2023.

Correct Care is not in a position to state with certainty whether this procedure will be finalised prior to 1 July 2023 as approval will be required from Justice Health and Western Health.

Recommendation 28: I recommend that Correct Care Australasia and/or the Health Service Provider at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, in collaboration with Corrections Victoria and Justice Health, develop and implement clear guidelines to assist custodial and clinical staff to identify a prisoner's clinical deterioration, including the indicators that must result in an escalation of a prisoner's care to clinical staff, a medical practitioner or transfer to hospital.

Correct Care clinical staff are trained and educated in undertaking clinical assessments, and there are policies, guidelines and procedures in place to support identification, treatment and escalation of clinical deterioration. Correct Care is actively participating in a Working Party chaired by Justice Health. The DPFC Improving Shared Care Working Party (which includes representatives from Correct Care, Justice Health, Corrections Victoria & Western Health) is tasked with identifying any further training and information relevant to custodial staff to assist them to identify a prisoner's clinical deterioration and the work is ongoing.

Recommendation 30: I recommend that Correct Care Australasia engage with Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to learn how it can embed culturally safe and culturally appropriate principles into their delivery of health services to Victorian prisoners. This process should be ongoing, guided by Victoria's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and be conducted in the manner determined by these communities.

Correct Care will continue to work with Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, via a range of services, advisors and providers including, but not limited to, Victorian Aboriginal Controlled

Community Health Organisations, Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations, Aboriginal Health Workers, Aboriginal Liaison Workers, Aboriginal consultants, recognised Aboriginal training organisations, Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal women in custody, etc.

Correct Care is currently participating in the Continuity of Care Project being implemented at DPFC (& Fulham) by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, in consultation with Justice Health, Corrections Victoria and other providers.

A number of sites have established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Forums where the Health Service Manager, Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Aboriginal Prisoners meet monthly to discuss health services specific to their cultural needs.

Recommendation 31: I further recommend that Correct Care Australasia:

31.1 encourage and facilitate the doctors it employs to become members of the RACGP to enable them to access RACGP training programs; and

Correct Care will continue to encourage its employed non-specialist doctors to become members of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and continue to provide support to doctors who take up specialist training whilst employed by Correct Care. Correct Care will support these doctors with supervision, continued professional development and other supports within its capacity.

31.2: identify alternative alcohol and other drugs training programs for CCA medical practitioners; and

From 1 July 2023, Correct Care will mandate the RACGP Medicated Assisted Treatment of Opiate Dependence (MATOD) course or an equivalent for all its employed doctors, to be completed within 6 months of commencing employment with Correct Care. Correct Care provides regular continued professional development courses for its clinical staff, the October 2022 and March 2023 topics were on AOD from specialists in the field. Correct Care will continue to provide AOD education to its staff through its formal educational sessions. Correct Care will also continue to encourage and support its regular Locum Doctors to complete the MATOD training.

31.3: ensure medical practitioners employed or contracted by CCA for a period of more than six months, have completed training which is equivalent to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' Alcohol and Other Drugs GP Education program;

See response to 31.2 above.

31.4: ensure registered nurses employed by the Health Service Provider complete the Australian College of Nursing's Continuing Professional Development modules in addressing AOD Use in Diverse Communities and Opioid Withdrawal Nursing Care and Management:

All Correct Care registered nurses have been advised of these courses and will be fully supported to complete the modules. CCA is presently in the process of transitioning out of providing health services at

DPFC and it is not feasible for CCA to ensure this training is completed by all registered nurses prior to 1 July 2023.

31.5: employ medical practitioners and nurse practitioner qualified to practise opioid pharmacotherapy; and

Correct Care will continue to support medical practitioners to complete the relevant training for opioid management. CCA is presently in the process of transitioning out of providing health services at DPFC and it is not feasible for CCA to ensure all of its medical practitioners have completed the further training relevant to opioid pharmacotherapy prior to 1 July 2023.

Correct Care does not currently employ nurse practitioners.

31.6: employ a full-time specialist who has completed Advanced Training in Addiction Medicine.

Correct Care do not currently employ any Addiction Medicine Specialists and such a resource were it to be provided would require additional State funding. Justice Health are best placed to advise whether this will be an expectation in the new contract for services that commences at DPFC from 1 July 2023. Correct Care will continue to ensure that medical practitioners have access to Addiction Medicine Specialists as required for advice and support.

Recommendation 32: I recommend that Correct Care Australasia report the deficiencies in care identified in this Finding to its current accreditation providers before it participates in any further tender for the provision of custodial health services in Victoria.

Correct Care will do so.

Recommendation 37: I recommend that Justice Health, Corrections Victoria and Correct Care Australasia and/or the Health Service Provider at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre each review, and if necessary, amend any policy or practice relating to staff ‘debriefs’ following a death in custody or other sentinel events. The review should consider and clarify:

37.1 the purpose of debriefs, including whether they are intended to serve a staff welfare function, evaluate practice and/or policy to identify systems or other deficits, or a combination of these matters; and

37.2 a process to optimise the participation of relevant staff in any debrief.

Debriefs are conducted by Corrections Victoria, and therefore, this recommendation is better responded to by Corrections Victoria. Correct Care does not have any policies or practices relating to staff ‘debriefs’ because it is a process conducted by Corrections Victoria, which Correct Care staff are invited to participate in. In this context, Correct Care has not conducted a review and as it will not be providing primary health services at DPFC after 1 July 2023 it does not anticipate that it will do so prior to 1 July

2023. If a review is conducted by Corrections Victoria prior to 1 July 2023 then Correct Care is agreeable to participating.

Recommendation 39: I recommend that no later than 12 months from the date of this Finding, Corrections Victoria, Justice Health and Correct Care Australasia, as public authorities under the Charter request that the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission conduct a review under Section 41(c) of the Charter of any improvements to programmes, practises, and facilities made in response to the recommendations above, and provide an overview of the results of that review for publication on the Coroners Court of Victoria website along with the responses to the Recommendations made in this Finding.

From 1 July 2023, Western Health will provide services at DPFC, and from that date, it will have its own programmes and policies guided by the requirements of Justice Health for the new service provider. In this context, Correct Care does not consider it beneficial to seek a review at this stage, and considers it a decision for Justice Health.

Yours faithfully



John Hoogeveen
Managing Director
Correct Care Australasia Pty Ltd