



VICTORIA POLICE

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Coroner Sarah Gebert
C/O Lindsay Spence
Principal In-House Solicitor
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Dear Coroner Gebert

Victoria Police response to recommendations arising from the Finding into the death of Jacqueline Vodden COR 2017 4768

1. This document provides the response to your recommendations to Victoria Police arising from the Finding into the death of Jacqueline Vodden (**Finding**), delivered on 14 March 2023.

Recommendations Directed to Victoria Police

2. I refer to paragraph 260 of the Findings which set out the following recommendations directed towards Victoria Police –
 - (i) Police vehicles should be fitted with appropriate equipment to undertake pursuits such that estimations of speed are improved, to maximise the mitigation of risks.
 - (ii) Victoria Police should examine ways to improve the operational environment of a pursuit in circumstances where well known issues such as task loading and the limitation with radio communications, have the potential to affect risk assessments with detrimental consequences.
 - (iii) Victoria Police training should ensure that there is an emphasis on how higher risk factors are given consideration in the application of the risk assessment and decision making guide, in order to minimise the risks associated with pursuits.

Victoria Police Response

3. The relevant policies applicable at the time of Miss Vodden's death were the Victoria Police Manual (**VPM**) Pursuits and VPM / Victoria Police Manual Procedures and Guidelines (**VPMG**) Urgent Duty Driving.

4. In May 2022, Victoria Police released the new VPM Road Policing – Operations as part of the VPM Review Project. The following VPMs were consolidated as part of this review: VPM Pursuits, VPM / VPMG Urgent Duty Driving, VPM Hostile Vehicles, VPM Vehicle Immobilising Devices, and relevant sections from the VPM Road Policing and VPMG Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs.
5. The VPM Road Policing – Operations has been updated with inclusions to address the extended following of vehicles, following of vehicles, the Pursuit Coordinator role, reviews, and operational control and radio communications.
6. It is also noted at the outset of this response that Victoria Police is committed to service delivery excellence and community safety, including ensuring that its resources and members are adequately equipped to carry out their duties and functions.
7. These priorities are supported by a number of ongoing continuous improvement initiatives aimed at improving its service capability, having regard to resourcing limitations and operational priorities. These initiatives are evidence-led and are informed by coronial inquest findings and recommendations, along with research and evaluations undertaken internally and in partnership with external consultants.

Recommendation (i)

8. This recommendation is under consideration.
9. Victoria Police Operational Infrastructure Department is due to roll-out in-vehicle data recorders (**IVDR**) across its fleet.
10. The IVDR's have the capability to provide live GPS tracking that all OICs, pursuit controllers and police dispatchers will be able to view via the software. This software is not designed to specifically display visual speed indicators, however the live-tracking system will assist members to assess the speeds that are being travelled during a pursuit against the posted speeds of a geographical location.
11. The IVDR's will also be configured to provide an audible alert once the safety classification of the vehicle has been breached. This will allow all passengers to hear when a driver has exceeded the speed of their vehicle classification licence (either silver, bronze or white class licences).
12. While there is currently no capability for the IVDR's to visually display the speed of the vehicle inside the cabin, the audible alert will assist with the estimation of speed in certain circumstances, depending on which class of driver is driving the vehicle.
13. Victoria Police will continue to consider how the IVDR technology may assist with speed estimations and what requirements will exist under policy to maximise the mitigation of risks.

Recommendation (ii)

14. This recommendation has been implemented.
15. The VPM Road Policing – Operations sets out the current requirements for radio communications during a pursuit.

16. In particular, paragraph 23.2 states the following:

To support clear and constant radio communications during a pursuit:

- *the observer in the primary unit, or cover unit of the motorcycle patrol team, is primarily responsible for radio communications and must communicate the reasons for the pursuit, speed, direction, environmental conditions, vehicle description and any other relevant information.*

- *the Police Communications radio dispatcher must:*
 - *relay relevant information*
 - *assist with the coordination of police resources*
 - *alert neighbouring police on different communication channels of the pursuit where radio channel or division cross over is anticipated*
 - *discourage non-pursuit or non-urgent related police radio communications*

- *other police members must refrain from any non-pursuit related or non-urgent police radio communications and, if required, cross over to another channel for routine matters.*

17. Furthermore, section 24.2 sets out how Police Air Wing have priority over radio communications. This section is aimed at alleviating task loading across Police communication channels –

Communications – give priority to any police aircraft radio communications. Police Communications dispatchers or notified supervisors should allow the police aircraft to relay relevant information without the dispatcher needing to repeat it.

18. Victoria Police acknowledge paragraph 245 of your Finding that notes that task loading in a pursuit, and the busyness of radio communications, may affect the quality of information broadcast.

19. Noting the above requirements under the existing policy regime, Victoria Police acknowledges the circumstances of the pursuit and will continue to examine ways in which the above requirements under policy may be strengthened to improve the emergency service communications and associated risks during pursuits.

Recommendation (iii)

20. This recommendation has been implemented.

21. The VPM Road Policing – Operations sets out the risk assessment and decision-making considerations

22. Paragraph 22.4 contains the risk assessment and decision-making matrix to assist members to assess when a pursuit may be conducted. The matrix contains several risk factors that members must apply to their assessment, including –

- Speed of vehicle
- Driver age / passengers
- Impairment
- Condition of road

- Location
 - Other traffic / road users
 - Driving behaviour
 - Vehicle type
 - Any other known factors / risks
23. The matrix accounts for lower and higher risk factors (including whether the driver or passengers in the vehicle are young). It should be noted the policy provides guidance when a risk is unable to be assessed and defaults to being considered a higher risk. For example, if the driver/passenger age is unable to be determined, this would automatically be considered as higher risk.
24. Victoria Police acknowledge paragraph 259 of your Finding that suggests training should ensure there is an emphasis on how higher risk factors are given consideration in the application of the risk assessment and decision making guide, in order to minimise the risks associated with pursuits.
25. Similar to Recommendation (ii) and noting the above requirements under the existing policy regime, Victoria Police acknowledges the circumstances of this matter and will continue to examine ways in which the above requirements under policy may be strengthened to mitigate the risk factors during pursuits.
26. Victoria Police thanks you for your recommendations and will endeavour to address the issues identified in your Finding.

Yours sincerely



Shane Patton APM
Chief Commissioner

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