



VICTORIA POLICE

**Shane Patton APM**  
**Chief Commissioner of Police**

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Our ref: LEXD 31302

Coroner David Ryan  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 2006

**Subject:** Colleen South - Finding into Death following Inquest  
**Court Reference:** COR 2022 004478  
**Date of Recommendations:** 15 March 2024

Dear Coroner Ryan

### **Response to recommendations arising from the Finding into the Death of Colleen South**

This letter provides the response to your recommendations made in your Finding into the Death of Colleen South, delivered on 15 March 2024.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were two recommendations directed to Victoria Police, namely:

*(A) Victoria Police continue its assessment to consider the practicality and viability of establishing a Human Remains Detection Dog Capability within the Dog Squad; and*

*(B) In the meantime, Victoria Police liaise with New South Wales Police to utilise the resources of its Human Remains Detection Dog training facility.*

### **Recommendation A**

*Victoria Police continue its assessment to consider the practicality and viability of establishing a Human Remains Detection Dog Capability within the Dog Squad.*

Victoria Police supports this recommendation.

Victoria Police has already commenced an assessment as to the practicality and viability of establishing a Human Remains Detection (**HRD**) dog capability within the Victoria Police Dog Squad (**VPDS**).

The assessment undertaken to date has revealed a number of ethical, legal and practical difficulties in implementing a program to develop a HRD dog capability.

In order to establish a HRD dog capability within the VPDS, dogs will require exposure to training materials, which presents the most significant challenge in implementing this capability. The VPDS considers that strong partnerships will be required with the Coroners Court of Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and the Australian Facility for Taphonomic Experimental Research (**AFTER**). Victoria Police would also require additional investment to establish the capability within the VPDS.

If established, Victoria Police emphasise that a HRD dog would only be an additional resource amongst many resources utilised by Victoria Police in searches for missing persons. The use of such dogs would still be subject to a number of key limitations, relevantly including terrain and environmental conditions, as well as the quality of the relevant intelligence available.

### **Recommendation B**

*In the meantime, Victoria Police liaise with New South Wales Police to utilise the resources of its Human Remains Detection Dog training facility.*

Victoria Police accepts this recommendation, although notes that any implementation would necessarily occur after Victoria Police has concluded its assessment of the practicality and viability of establishing a HRD dog capability within the VPDS.

Victoria Police will liaise with New South Wales Police regarding the HRD dog capability. Victoria Police will also seek to expand its partnership with AFTER to encompass the use of its training facility to assist in the development of a HRD dog capability.

Yours sincerely,



Shane Patton APM  
Chief Commissioner

8/7/24