



Department of Justice and Community Safety

Police, Racing, Victims and Coordination

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Our ref: EBC 24083022

Sofia Hajdari
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Hajdari

Statement of action - Coroners Court recommendation - death of [REDACTED] - COR 2019 001076

Thank you for your letter to the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) of 2 July 2024 enclosing Coroner Paul Lawrie's findings in the above matter.

DJCS notes Coroner Lawrie's findings, including that '*the support services who engaged with RB acted appropriately and within their respective remits*' (paragraph 174), and acceptance of DJCS' suggested framing of Recommendation Two directed at Victim Services, Support and Reform (VSSR).

Recommendation Two of Coroner Lawrie's findings states:

That the Department of Justice and Community Safety – Victim Services, Support and Reform publish additional information for victims of crime that provides guidance on the key elements of safe and effective victim support services, including the importance of receiving support through structured and trauma informed processes. This information is to be readily accessible to victim survivors, family and friends and supporting services.

Pursuant to sections 72(3) and 72(4) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic), DJCS provides this statement of action outlining the steps it has taken in response to Recommendation Two.

Following receipt of Coroner Lawrie's findings, VSSR implemented Recommendation Two by publishing guidance on the key elements of safe and effective victim support services on the Victorian Government's Victims of Crime website at www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/service-standards-you-can-expect on 25 September 2024 (the Guidance Information - refer Enclosure 1: screen-print of this webpage).

The Victims of Crime website is the central public information hub about services and supports for people affected by crime offered by the Victorian Government. It is readily accessible to victim survivors, their family and friends, and supporting services. The Guidance Information emphasised the importance of seeking help from trained professionals who practice in a trauma-informed manner.

In addition, VSSR will send an email to all Victims Assistance Program (VAP) providers notifying them of the publication of the Guidance Information on the Victims of Crime website. VSSR will also communicate the publication of the Guidance Information at the next VAP State-wide Forum to be held in February 2025 that is attended by all VAP providers.

DJCS thanks the Coroners Court for the opportunity to engage in the investigation into the death of [REDACTED]. I again extend my sympathies to [REDACTED] family, friends and loved ones for their loss. I hope the Guidance Information provided by VSSR will assist victims of crime to make informed and safe choices about how to access victim support services.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss DJCS' response.

Yours sincerely



Carly Edwards
Executive Director
Victim Services, Support and Reform

25/9/2024

Encl. Victims of Crime webpage – Service standards you can expect

Service standards you can expect

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We value diversity, inclusion and social justice, and are committed to treating people of all cultures, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, and religions with dignity and respect.

Overview

We want to make sure you get the best possible service and create a safe and respectful environment for all people accessing our programs and services. We want to ensure our workplace is welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe for all clients.

Knowing a little more about you will help us to tailor the support we provide. To do that, we need to ask you lots of questions and some of those questions are going to seem quite personal — that's because they are!

The first thing you need to know is that we have strict rules about privacy. There are laws about how your personal information can be collected and stored, and all our staff understand exactly what that means. Our staff will only share your information with your permission, or when required by law.

We need to ask:

- basic information like your name, date of birth and contact details

- whether you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- your preferred language and cultural identification
- your gender identity and sexual orientation, and what pronouns you use
- if you have any ability needs.

You don't have to answer any of these questions. Knowing this information will help us make sure you get the services and referrals that are right for you. If you have any questions or concerns, we are happy to discuss them.

Victims' rights

The [Victims' Charter Act 2006](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/victims-charter-act-2006/) states how criminal justice system services and victim support services should treat victims of crime. We want to make sure you get the best possible service when you deal with us. This is a guide to what you can expect from us and what we expect from you. It also tells you what to do if you are not happy with our service.

Victims of violent crime in Victoria can expect:

- access to assistance through the Victims of Crime Helpline, 8am to 11pm, every day of the year
- access to support services to help you with the effects of violent crime
- support throughout the court process
- information about applying to be on the Victim's Register, if this is relevant for you.

When accessing services for victims of crime, you can expect to:

- be treated with dignity and respect, including respect for cultural background, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and ability status
- have your information protected in line with Privacy Principles
- be provided with information about relevant services that may be available to you
- be given choices in the support and referrals you are provided with.

We also expect that you will:

- treat Victim Services staff with respect
- provide relevant information about yourself and your situation.

Child safety

The Department of Justice and Community Safety is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We seek to prevent harm of any kind impacting

children and young people and have zero tolerance for racism, child abuse and inequality. Children and young people's rights, relationships, identity, and culture must be recognised and respected, their voices heard, and their concerns acted upon. We aim to foster a culturally safe, child safe and child friendly environment for all children and young people we have contact with, deliver services to, or are impacted by our work.

Providing feedback, complaints and compliments

We are committed to providing services in line with the Victims' Charter principles and welcome any feedback about our services and staff.

If you would like to provide feedback (a complaint, compliment or suggestion) about a Department of Justice and Community Safety victim support related service, you can contact the Victims of Crime Helpline on [1800 819 817 <tel:1800819817>](tel:1800819817) from 8 am to 11 pm, any day of the year or email vsfeedback@justice.vic.gov.au [.<mailto:vsfeedback@justice.vic.gov.au>](mailto:vsfeedback@justice.vic.gov.au).

Victoria's Victims of Crime Commissioner

The Victims of Crime Commissioner aims to improve services and systems in government departments, victim service providers and the justice system to meet the needs of victims of crime.

If you want to report an issue with the justice system or a victim service provider that is likely to be ongoing and affect many victims of crime, you can visit the [Victims of Crime Commissioner website <https://www.victimsofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au/>](https://www.victimsofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au/), or call the Victims of Crime Commissioner on [1800 010 017 <tel:1800010017>](tel:1800010017).

What you should think about when engaging with victim support services

When accessing support services, you should feel confident that you are in safe hands and that your privacy, safety and well-being are paramount.

Knowing that services, and the people you speak with, have standards, knowledge and responsibilities to support you can help in your recovery. Services like the Victims of Crime Helpline (Helpline) and Victim Assistance Program (VAP) ensure that you are well-supported, that you have accurate information, and that you can guide and choose how you participate in your pathway to recovery.

In Victoria, services like ours are regulated by the Victims' Charter. It has been developed in response to the experiences and concerns of victims. You can read the Victims' Charter to help get an understanding of what safe and trauma informed support looks like.

Here's what you should know about the principles for safe and effective support:

Prioritising your safety and well-being

Your safety and well-being should be the primary focus of any victim support or service you engage with. You should have access to trained professionals who understand trauma and how to offer effective support.

Victim services can help you create a safety plan to address any immediate and future safety concerns. This includes strategies for managing risk and finding help if needed.

Victim services can collaborate with other services to ensure you get all the support you need. They can refer you to additional services and resources if necessary.

You should not feel pressured or compromised, or feel that the primary purpose of the support is not about your well-being and safety.

Keeping your personal information private

Your privacy is crucial. Victim services keep your information confidential and only share it when necessary with your permission wherever possible. This helps you feel secure and respected. You should be well-informed about why your information is collected and how it is used.

You should not feel pressured into sharing information or engaging in activities that may make you feel compromised.

Getting accurate and timely information about services, entitlements and assistance

Victim services can provide the most accurate or up-to-date information to assist you. You can rely on them to explain things in a clear and understandable way, and to have access to information that is accurate and can assist you. They know what support is available and how to help you access it.

Some services not operating within regulated victim services could mean that there's a risk that the advice you get might be wrong, biased, or harmful.

You should feel confident that the information you are getting is from an official source.

Treating you with courtesy, respect and dignity

Victim services empower you to make your own decisions about the support you want and the steps you wish to take. Your choices should be respected and decisions should not be made for you without your input and consent.

You should feel listened to and understood. Services should be sensitive to your needs.

You should not feel like you don't have a choice or control over what you want to do or the support you want.

Offering support that is easy to access and safe

You should feel that your unique background and culture are understood and supported. Supports should be inclusive and ensure that everyone feels valued. Supports should understand that some people might be reluctant to seek support for a range of reasons and work with you in a way that recognises your preferences and needs.

It should be easy for you to reach out and get help in ways that work best for you, and that are accessible to you, regardless of your needs.

You should not feel like your needs are secondary or that you can't ask for help.

Being accountable and responding to feedback

Services that work within legal and ethical frameworks must be honest and fair in the support they provide, treating you with respect and following ethical practices.

You should feel confident to give feedback or make a complaint if you feel like you are not getting the support or information you need. You should be informed of your entitlements under the Victims' Charter, including the right to make a complaint to the [Victims of Crime Commissioner](https://victimssofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au/making-a-complaint). <<https://victimssofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au/making-a-complaint>>

You should not feel powerless or that you have no recourse if you aren't treated well.

If you are accessing services that are not regulated by the Victims' Charter, you should contact the service or organisation and ask about their complaints process to raise any concerns.

Your safety and well-being are our top priorities. If you have any concerns or need help finding the right support for you, please reach out to us. The Victims of Crime Helpline is available from 8am to 11pm daily, 7 days per week. Please call [1800 819 817](tel:1800819817). <<tel:1800819817>>.

More information about the Helpline and Victims Assistance Program (VAP) can be found on our ['Get help' page.](#) All staff on the Helpline and in our VAPs are qualified and trained to provide trauma-informed support, onward referrals, and accurate and timely information to victims of crime.

Updated 25 September 2024