

23 January 2025

Coroner Paul Lawrie
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Coroner Lawrie,

INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF FRANK MELLIA - COR 2023 000310

Parks Victoria is writing in response to the Coronial report regarding the death of Frank Mellia dated 20 September 2024, Court Reference: COR 2023 000310.

Parks Victoria acknowledges your findings in the above matter.

Pursuant to section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act), you made the following recommendation: *“That Parks Victoria review the signage warning the public of river hazards in the Warrandyte River Reserve and particularly, the Tarooona Reserve. Among the hazards identified, the signage should warn of the danger of alcohol or drugs in combination with use of the river”*.

Parks Victoria acknowledges the above recommendation and provides the following response:

- Pursuant to section 72(4) of the Act, Parks Victoria states that it will implement an alternative to the above recommendation. The recommendation refers to “Warrandyte River Reserve, particularly Tarooona”. To clarify, Tarooona Reserve is managed by Parks Victoria but is not part of the Warrandyte River Reserve. Warrandyte River Reserve is managed by Manningham Council and therefore Parks Victoria will not be reviewing or updating signage in Warrandyte River Reserve. Further, Melbourne Water is responsible for managing matters which relate to this part of the Yarra River itself.
- Parks Victoria has reviewed the signage at Tarooona Reserve and nearby Pound Bend, Warrandyte. There is risk totem signage at our main visitor site at Pound Bend, and currently no river risk signage at Tarooona Reserve.
- Parks Victoria has not yet installed any new signage in the Tarooona Reserve since the above incident but proposes to install new signage at Tarooona Reserve in the future. The proposed signage is intended to be placed adjacent to the Yarra River, and will contain warnings for submerged objects, slippery rocks, drop offs and strong currents. The proposed signage design and placement would be installed in accordance with the International Organization for Standardization (2020) ISO 20712-3 Water safety signs and beach safety flags (Standards) and will be informed by a risk assessment of the area including consideration of

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site-specific characteristics and operational circumstances. The signage will be in accordance with Parks Victoria's Signage Manual which has been developed with a key focus on Standards and was most recently updated in 2023.

- Warnings regarding alcohol consumption and its interaction with water-based activities may be utilised where a risk assessment identifies this as a priority hazard. However, there is a risk that automatic inclusion of such a warning may dilute the impact of messaging about other site-relevant hazards. Parks Victoria's risk assessment process will ensure that signage content is informed by site-specific risk findings in order to maintain clarity and focus on the most pertinent site-specific and contextually relevant dangers in the area.
- Parks Victoria is part of a collaborative project, led by Manningham Council and includes involvement from Life Saving Victoria, Melbourne Water, SES and Victoria Police, relating to water safety along the Yarra River in Manningham. Parks Victoria has been informed that Life Saving Victoria, acting in accordance with its broader role in the provision of information and education to prevent aquatic-related death and injury in Victorian communities, is currently in the process of conducting an Inland Waterway Safety Assessment in the Warrandyte area as part of this collaborative project. This includes reviewing warning and safety signage along the Yarra River to inform a treatment plan, and includes the consideration of contributory risk behaviours such as consumption of alcohol. Parks Victoria will continue to participate in this collaborative project and looks forward to considering the future treatment solutions which will be informed by the outcomes of the project.
- Parks Victoria will continue to monitor, review, and assesses the visitor safety needs at Tarroona Reserve, consistent with our risk management framework and local operations.

I would like to express my sincere condolences to Frank Mellia's family.

Should you require further advice on this matter please contact Sofia De Lesantis, Regional Director Melbourne Region on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



Graeme Dear
Interim Chief Executive Officer

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Page 2 of 2