

5 March 2025

Coroner Leveasque Peterson  
Coroner's Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
Southbank VIC 3006

Dear Coroner Peterson,

**Finding into the Death of Michael Gary Suckling  
St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited response to recommendations**

I refer to the findings delivered by you on 13 December 202 in relation to the death of Michael Gary Suckling on 7 March 2021.

Pursuant to section 72(3) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic), St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited (**St Vincent's**) has set out its response to the recommendations below.

St Vincent's accepts each of the recommendations however it should be noted that the service's ability to implement the recommendations is impacted by the impending closure of Port Phillip Prison (**PPP**) in late 2025, at which time St Vincent's will no longer be a provider of health care services within this prison. Prisoners will commence transitioning out of PPP from mid-2025 with no further intakes occurring from that time.

**Recommendations to Providers of Health Services in Victorian Prisons.**

**Recommendation 11) That Health Service Providers proactively consult with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to explore further opportunities for ACCHOs to provide in-reach services for Aboriginal prisoners.**

**Recommendation 12) That Health Service Providers, in circumstances where an Aboriginal Health Worker position remains vacant for more than 3 months, ensure an ACCHO is contacted to determine if it is possible for the ACCHO to provide in-reach services until the vacancy is filled.**

The St Vincent's Correctional Health Service (**SVCHS**) in collaboration with the St Vincent's Aboriginal Health Manager has reached out to key contacts within ACCHOs.

An initial meeting has occurred to commence discussions regarding the feasibility of establishing in reach services at PPP.

**Recommendation 13) That Justice Health, SCVHS, CCA and GEO work with the Yilam and the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to increase the pool of potential Aboriginal Health Workers, with the view of having a minimum of one full-time equivalent AHW at every prison in Victoria.**

**Recommendation 14) That Health Service Providers, with support from DJCS as required, explore opportunities to provide the services of traditional healers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners.**

St Vincent's supports Justice Health/DJCS developing a strategy/ies for collective resourcing of Aboriginal Health Workers, and the provision of traditional healing to be used as an adjunct to health delivery for Aboriginal people in custody.

**Recommendation 15) That Health Service Providers ensure there is a policy or operating instruction addressing multidisciplinary case management for prisoners with complex health needs, including referral criteria.**

**Recommendation 16) That Health Service Providers develop a policy or operating instruction that identifies that a Senior Clinician in the relevant prison health service is appointed responsible for organising a multidisciplinary meeting at regular intervals to ensure that complex cases are reviewed and discussed holistically, including specifically mental health and medication reviews, and a process for obtaining patient consent.**

St Vincent's is supportive of the development of a framework providing for multidisciplinary case management for prisoners with complex needs, with oversight from senior clinicians.

At the present time, SVCHS in collaboration with G4S facilitate a weekly Complex Care Team meeting to discuss individuals with complex needs. The focus of these meetings are individuals with acute mental health, acute physical health or behavioural issues. Expanding this model to include patients with a broader range of chronic complex issues, such as weight management, would require increased resources and funding. SVCHS sees the value in such expansion but is not in a position to facilitate this ahead of the closure of PPP in 2025.

At the present time, SVCHS staff can escalate patient concerns with the Nurse Unit Manager or Medical Officer for further discussion with the multidisciplinary team.

**Recommendation 17) That Health Service Providers consider developing additional KPI measurements that are outcome focussed rather than quantitative measurements.**

**Recommendation 18) That Health Service Providers review current KPI measurements and assess them for unintended consequences that impact on quality of delivery as has previously been covered in recommendations in the CRACCS.**

St Vincent's is supportive of the review of existing KPI measurements and the development of new outcome focused measurements across the Correctional Health Services. SVCHS however is not positioned to complete this work prior to the closure of PPP.

In addition to the above, St Vincent's supports the recommendations made to Justice Health (Recommendations 4 to 10) and will work with Justice Health in addressing the recommendations, to the extent possible, prior to the closure of PPP.

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Tweddle  
Chief Executive Officer  
St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited