



Secretary

Department of Health

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COR 2023 5162

Ms Janet Lee
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Via e-mail: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Lee

COR 2023 5162 - Finding into death without inquest

Thank you for providing the finding of Coroner Ingrid Giles dated 11 February 2025 in relation to the death of Kathleen Dawn Arnold, who died on 15 or 16 September 2023. I offer my deepest condolences to her family and loved ones.

Coroner Giles made three recommendations, one of which was directed to the Victorian Department of Health (the department) as follows:

That the Victorian Government, led by the Victorian Department of Health, develop: (i) a new Alcohol Action Plan; or (ii) a program of work (including specific actions, timeframes, accountabilities, and public reporting on implementation and evaluation) to address alcohol related harms in Victoria.

Alcohol use is a significant cause of preventable disease and death in Victoria. It is associated with a wide range of health and wellbeing impacts. The Victorian Government is committed to preventing and reducing alcohol related harm in the community, investing \$376.3 million in alcohol and drug treatment and harm reduction services in 2024-25 and continuing to focus on alcohol as a public health and wellbeing priority.

Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) Strategy 2025-2035

The Victorian Government is developing a Victorian Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) Strategy 2025-2035. The department has been working in partnership with stakeholders and the community to develop this strategy, which is scheduled to be launched in 2025.

To implement the strategy, the department will plan, and design specific initiatives aligned to the strategy. Implementation will include monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure clear and measurable outcomes are delivered. To ensure that the strategy is implemented in a sustainable way including consideration of workforce availability, it is proposed that delivery of actions and initiatives occur over three timeframes: short-term (2025-2028), medium-term (2028-2031) and long-term (2031-onwards). An AOD Ministerial Advisory Committee is being established to strengthen oversight and deliver expert advice on AOD system priorities including the delivery of this strategy.

In implementing the AOD Strategy, the department will consider relevant findings of the Court, including recent findings in relation to alcohol¹.

Initiatives and strategies since conclusion of the Alcohol Action Plan 2008-2013

The department has maintained its commitment to reducing alcohol-related harms since the conclusion of the Alcohol Action Plan 2008-2013. This is demonstrated through the following:

- The 'Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth (PARTY)' program, an interactive injury prevention program for young people. PARTY has been running at the Alfred hospital since 2009, and the program has been delivered to over 6,500 participants across a variety of cohorts.²
- In response to previous coronial recommendations to decriminalise public drunkenness, the government has developed new response services to support people who are intoxicated. These include outreach services, facilities at which to become sober and places of safety, as well as follow-ups and referrals and the provision of centralised services.³
- Dr Paul MacCartney was appointed to the new position of Chief Addiction Medicine Adviser in October 2024. Dr MacCartney has been a vocal advocate for increased access to medical treatments and pharmacotherapy for alcohol dependence. He is working with the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA), medical practitioners, pharmacists and clinicians to this end.
- The Victorian Government has more than doubled investment in Victoria's alcohol and drug services since 2014-15, including further investment of \$96.7 million in 2024-25 State Budget to support these essential services. In 2022-23, AOD treatment agencies supported over 37,000 Victorians. Alcohol is the most common principal drug of concern, accounting for 39% of treatment episodes.⁴

Public health and wellbeing plans

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 (the plan) is developed every four years as required by the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. The plan is a key whole of Victorian government policy framework guiding Victorian Government departments, funded agencies and other partners to implement activity that aims to prevent illness and promote and protect health and wellbeing. The plan outlines ten public health and wellbeing priorities that significantly contribute to the modifiable burden of disease, including reducing harm from alcohol and drug use. A range of specific plans, frameworks and strategies across government support the priorities and outcomes of the plan and direct targeted action. Actions that address one priority area often have shared benefits across other priority areas.

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework is the whole-of-Victorian government monitoring framework for public health and wellbeing plans. The framework

¹ Findings into the deaths of GS, HS, RJ and RT (COR 2023 4984, COR 2023 2689, COR 2023 5203, COR 2023 3988).

² [Programs — P.A.R.T.Y. Program](#)

³ [New public intoxication response services | health.vic.gov.au](#)

⁴ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services-australia/contents/state-and-territory-summaries/victoria>

includes a comprehensive suite of measures across priority areas of the public health and wellbeing plan, including harmful alcohol consumption. Monitoring these measures provides an indication of whether combined whole of government efforts are contributing to improvements in public health for Victorians.

Local government four-year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans are also required to give regard to the 10 priorities of the state plan. An analysis undertaken by the Municipal Association of Victoria in 2022 indicated 65% (50 plans) mentioned actions associated with reducing alcohol related harm.

VicHealth alcohol reduction campaigns and programs

We also draw her Honour's attention to the work of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). VicHealth is an independent statutory authority that is primarily funded by the department and responsible to the Minister for Health. Its functions include providing advice to the Minister on matters such as promotion of good health and making grants from the Victorian Health Promotion Fund for activities, facilities, projects or research programs. VicHealth plays a significant role in the delivery framework. More information on the role of VicHealth and its programs to minimise alcohol-related harm is available on their webpage <<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/our-focus/commercial-economic-systems/alcohol-harm-prevention>>.

I trust this response is of assistance to the Court.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Atta PSM

Secretary

08/05/2025