



## Department of Transport and Planning

GPO Box 2392  
Melbourne, Victoria 3001 Australia

Ref: BSEC-1-25-1859

Mr Niels Gabriels  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006  
Via email only: [cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

Dear Mr Gabriels

### **FINDING WITHOUT INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF STEVEN JOHN PARLBY – COR 2023 005449**

I refer to your letter of 6 March 2025 to the Department of Transport and Planning (**DTP**) regarding Coroner Audrey Jamieson's Finding without Inquest (**Finding**) concerning the death of Steven John Parlby.

First and foremost, DTP extends its sympathy to the family and friends of Mr Parlby.

#### **The Coroner's recommendation**

Pursuant to section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic), Coroner Jamieson made the following recommendation (**Recommendation**):

1. *In the interests of promoting public health and safety and with the aim of preventing like deaths, I recommend that the **Secretary of the Department of Transport and Planning** consider adopting a framework which required medical practitioners to submit a report to VicRoads when they form the belief that a person is not medically fit to drive.*

#### **Response to Recommendation**

##### **The Coroner's Recommendation is under review.**

In responding to the Recommendation, DTP acknowledges the Finding's reference to earlier responses provided by DTP relating to mandatory medical reporting. Previous DTP responses and reports in relation to these recommendations can be found on the Coroner's website in relation to the investigations of the deaths of Pamela Elsdon (COR 2016 005554); Jackson Eales (COR 2016 006147); and the amended Finding for Cameron Andrew Maclellan (COR 2017 005171).

Her Honour may also be interested in reviewing a current and related response that has been prepared by DTP in response to recommendations made by Deputy State Coroner Spanos in relation to the investigation into the death of Robin Banks (COR 2020 000256).

Further information about earlier relevant DTP activities can also be found in a report submitted to the Coroner's Court in December 2018 by the then Head for Transport for Victoria, titled "*Report to the Coroners Court Medical Fitness to Drive*". The report, which can be found on the [Coroners Court Victoria website](#), outlines progress towards related commitments in response to recommendations made by Coroner Jamieson following Her Honour's investigation into the death of Pamela Elsdon (COR 2016 005554).

DTP has reviewed the current Recommendation from the Coroner and provides the following information and updates to build upon DTP's responses outlined in the previously named documents.

- a) DTP has continued to make substantial, ongoing improvements to community and medical professional awareness of medical reporting and review requirements, including:
  - i. Presenting about medical fitness to drive, including complex case studies at Victorian rehabilitation medical registrars' education sessions;
  - ii. Improving web search access to existing public fact sheets about specific medical conditions and reporting to DTP's Medical Review team – that information is now located on the new Transport Victoria website;
  - iii. Creating new public-facing videos on the Transport Victoria website encouraging self-awareness of fitness to drive obligations, including self-regulation of driving and planning to retire from driving by switching to alternative transport options;
  - iv. Ongoing membership of a multi-jurisdictional Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive Implementation Project Control Group which supports public and health practitioner awareness and understanding of fitness to drive reporting obligations and medical standards. Via this group, DTP has:
    - Supported a strategic national approach towards improving the quality and consistency of the implementation of the national Assessing Fitness to Drive Standards among the medical community and others, and provided advice to support the development of an Austroads Fitness to Drive educational module for General Practitioners (GPs) which is soon to be launched;
    - Contributed to the development of new Austroads public information fact sheets that clarify reportable medical conditions;
    - Provided advice on future planned communication projects including a national social media campaign regarding fitness to drive; and
    - Shared and exchanged valuable licensing authority information about jurisdictional application of Fitness to Drive Standards and decisions as part of a broad community of practice.
  - v. Continuing to chair regular meetings with Victoria-specific public and health professional stakeholder groups to identify issues and initiatives specific to fitness to drive as they are raised.

An example of a recent initiative undertaken by DTP to support health professionals to determine fitness to drive for their patients is the new 'Medicinal cannabis and driving decision support resource', with its accompanying 'Driving needs checklist' and 'patient information fact sheet'.

These resources, that aim to place potential for driving impairment central to a health professional's considerations when prescribing, were delivered in March 2025 after extensive consultation with a technical advisory group comprising of health professionals who prescribe medicinal cannabis. The resources can be found on the [Transport Victoria website](#), and there are links to it on the [Victorian Department of Health's 'Medicinal cannabis information for health professionals'](#) web page and the [Better Health Channel](#). The resources were also immediately communicated to RACGP members via their eNews in an article: ['New guidance on driving and medicinal cannabis'](#).

- b) The above strategies have been successful, with strong growth in driver and health professional awareness of fitness to drive reporting requirements evidenced via consistent growth in referrals to DTP Medical Review from these sources.
  - i. Almost half of the referrals in the 2023/24 financial year were derived from health professionals. This was closely followed by the drivers themselves, with two fifths of all referrals in that year being self-referrals from the driver to DTP's Medical Review team.
- c) Since its last response provided to the Coroner detailed above, DTP is not aware of any new evidence to support the introduction of mandatory medical reporting. In recognition of the fact that the research included in the *"Report to the Coroners Court Medical Fitness to Drive"* was obtained in 2018, over the next 15 months DTP will:
  - i. Update the evidence base and confirm whether the findings remain accurate;
  - ii. Further engage with the Victorian Medical Fitness to Drive working group to understand current perspectives of healthcare professionals. This group is convened by DTP and comprises of health professionals who are representative members from peak bodies of professionals that play a key role in the medical fitness to drive reporting process in Victoria. Members represent the AMA (Victoria), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, Occupational Therapy Australia, and Optometry Victoria / South Australia; and
  - iii. Seek perspectives from other jurisdictions to understand impacts of differing policies on road safety outcomes.
- d) DTP recognises that some people do not report themselves or others to DTP's Medical Review team until they are in an advanced or acute state of their medical condition and are unable to continue to drive safely.

This means that it is important that DTP has the opportunity to work with health professionals and their patients so that they understand that if a medical condition is reported to DTP early, and especially before reaching a point of crisis:

- i. DTP can support a driver to continue to drive with regular reviews and, where necessary, conditions can be placed on the driver's licence to limit where and when a driver can drive so that they remain safe and mobile.
- ii. Regular reviews allow the opportunity to monitor the driver's medical condition, in terms of its effect on the individual's fitness to drive, and to determine whether symptoms are changing and impairing the driver's performance and safety.

- e) DTP recognises the need to support health professionals, family and friends to report people whose driving performance concerns them. Currently, reports or notifications can be submitted in writing via post or email. To facilitate this further:
  - i. DTP is actively exploring the introduction of an accessible web form that will enable healthcare professionals, and families and friends, to quickly and easily report drivers when they have concerns regarding a person's fitness to drive, when they are not following treatment or medical advice and when there is a potential need for a medical review.
  - ii. DTP intends to highlight on the above form, and in future communications, that: notifications to DTP's Medical Review team can be made anonymously; DTP then typically writes to the driver to require them to provide a medical report; DTP will not disclose the source of the notification without their consent unless it is compelled by law, and people who make a notification in good faith are protected from legal action.
- f) Updated communications to health professionals will be delivered where required. A key focus of future communications will aim to:
  - i. Further encourage health professionals to notify DTP when a family raises concerns about a patient's driving.
  - ii. Further raise awareness for health professionals that they have a shared priority with DTP to ensure that those who are fit to drive can keep driving. This includes informing health professionals and families that instruments such as licence conditions which limit and/or monitor driving can, if appropriate for the relevant driver, be used to promote ongoing road safety.
  - iii. Promote earlier notification of a person's changing medical status to allow the medical condition related to their fitness to drive to be monitored effectively by the health professional. This establishes a partnership with DTP's Medical Review team who review periodic medical reports to consider driving status.
  - iv. Further promote the protections that are in place, including anonymity, for someone notifying DTP's Medical Review team of their concerns about a driver.
- g) DTP is also reviewing opportunities for system changes in licence application and renewal forms and documents to remind drivers of their legal obligation to self-report any medical condition/s impacting their ability to drive safely.
  - i. Currently, work is underway to revise the fitness to drive prompting questions that are being asked at the time of licence application or renewal.
  - ii. Drivers will also be reminded of the risk of failing to report medical conditions as it relates to any private vehicle insurance coverage.
  - iii. It is important that DTP seeks opportunities to prompt accurate responses to a person's fitness to drive, to ensure those who should notify DTP's Medical Review team, do so.
- h) DTP will undertake communication activities to promote and remind drivers directly of their legal obligation to self-report any medical condition/s impacting their ability to drive safely, and the risks (including both safety and sanctions) of driving with an unreported medical condition.

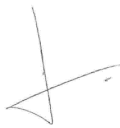
The Coroner may also be interested to note additional work underway that supports the fitness to drive process for drivers who are already known to DTP's Medical Review team:

- a) DTP is working with Victoria Police to develop a process which ensures compliance with licence suspension or cancellation for those who have been advised by DTP's Medical Review team that they should not drive.
- b) Austroads, via the multi-jurisdictional Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive Implementation Project Control Group, is investigating the feasibility of establishing a national Assessing Fitness to Drive Medical Panel which will draw heavily on the success of the existing Victorian Medical Panel model. A new national medical panel model, based on Victoria's current model, would aim to provide consistent and expert medical advice on complex fitness to drive assessment cases across all Australian states and territories.
- c) Austroads is commencing a project to revise and develop the existing 2018 Victorian Occupational Therapy Driver Assessor Guidelines into national guidelines that will be the foundation for consistent, practical on-road fitness to drive assessments that are undertaken by qualified occupational therapy driving assessors.

We thank the Coroner for Her Honour's ongoing interest in road safety in the context of medical review of fitness to drive.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Marcelo Vidales, Head of Road Safety Victoria, [REDACTED] if you have any questions about the contents of this letter or if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



**Jeroen Weimar**  
Secretary

Date: 27 June 2025