

8 July 2025

Amber Wylie
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006

Dear Ms Wylie,

Investigation into the death of Remy Da Silva (COR 2023 001630)

We firstly wish to acknowledge the continued grief of all affected by this tragic incident, particularly Remy's family and loved ones, and offer our sincere condolences to them.

Please find below Life Saving Victoria's (LSV) response to the recommendations directed to us in Deputy State Coroner Spanos' Finding without inquest into the death of Remy Da Silva (Court Reference: COR 2023 001630)

Recommendation:

Under section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)* (**Act**), Deputy State Coroner Spanos made the following recommendations, that:

1. LSV conduct a site-specific risk assessment at Gunnamatta Beach to explore the most effective drowning mitigation strategies for that particular location.
2. LSV, Parks Victoria (**PV**), and Surf Life Saving Australia (**SLSA**) continue to promote the Beachsafe app and website, including by installing infrastructure to support QR code access to information on site at Victorian beaches.
3. PV explore the feasibility of interactive signage with up-to-date safety information at Gunnamatta and other high risk Victorian beaches.

Response:

We have provided our response to each of the recommendations separately.

1. LSV conduct a site-specific risk assessment at Gunnamatta Beach to explore the most effective drowning mitigation strategies for that particular location.

LSV conducted a site-specific risk assessment at Gunnamatta Beach in 2018/19, which considered the geographical risks of the region. Unless there has been an extensive change in the geographic and environmental risks in this location, LSV would not consider it necessary to undertake another risk assessment. A signage assessment of Gunnamatta Beach was undertaken in 2024 by LSV. This determined the water safety signage in-situ to be adequate and compliant with the relevant standards. In saying that, it was specifically noted during this assessment that changing the locations for beach entry at Gunnamatta Beach would be beneficial to enhance beachgoer safety and to direct people away from known fixed rip current locations, which are adjacent to current car park beach entry points.

Aquatic risk and signage assessments are typically undertaken as a fee-for-service provision by LSV upon instigation by the land manager/owner in recognition of the need for such assessments. Accordingly, should another site-specific risk assessment be sought at Gunnamatta Beach, associated funding would be required to action this.

In attempts to address the drowning risk on the Mornington Peninsula, LSV was recently involved in the development of the Water Safety Framework for the Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast Cross Council working group¹. This Framework outlines drowning risk factors for these blackspot locations, and recommends a multifaceted, tailored mitigation approach for the region. Proposed mitigation strategies include a review of all water safety signage throughout the region to ensure compliance, the installation of public rescue equipment at locations of heightened drowning risk, and the development of local waterway safety plans as part of the emergency management planning arrangements for the region.

The Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM) Review into Victoria's water safety arrangements² made the following observation (5.13) *"Available research on water safety signage*

¹ [BC-and-MP-Cross-Council-Water-Safety-Framework.pdf](#)

² [Review of Victoria's water safety arrangements](#)

suggests that they provide limited effectiveness due to low levels of visitor engagement and recall of symbols and information.” (p.106). LSV recognises the importance of clear and accessible water safety signage, especially at high-risk beaches such as Gunnamatta Beach, and is committed to continuous improvement. Therefore, LSV is currently undertaking a project investigating the effectiveness of different aquatic warning sign styles at Victorian beaches. The project is funded through the Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) Beach Drowning Blackspot Reduction Program supported by the Australian Government. The project will utilise virtual reality technology and trial various warning signs that have been used elsewhere, in other contexts and through community consultation to determine the efficacy of targeted warning signage being used to identify particularly high-risk locations and complement current water safety signage. This project is to conclude in June 2026 and the findings will be shared broadly.

2. LSV, PV, and SLSA continue to promote the Beachsafe app and website, including by installing infrastructure to support QR code access to information on site at Victorian beaches.

LSV agrees with this recommendation and is working towards its implementation. Currently LSV is in the process of updating water safety signage at beaches when engaged to do so by the land manager/owner, to include a QR code which links to the Beachsafe website. LSV does have concerns however, about the use of QR codes on signage for other risks or information for visitors at beach entrances. The use of QR codes for non-safety-based messages should be reconsidered to ensure beachgoers do not become oversaturated with QR codes and become less inclined to scan them to seek further information.

Previous research has shown that less than 50 per cent of beachgoers take notice of static water safety signs at Victorian beaches³. Additionally, LSV has recently completed research to determine the effectiveness of QR code water safety signs at high-risk beaches in the Bass Coast region, acknowledging that while the QR codes were separate to the current static signage, results suggested beachgoers did not engage with this information nor scan the QR codes. Further research is needed; however, to determine the effectiveness of including QR codes on the in-situ water safety signs at beaches before definitive conclusions can be made on their effectiveness and impact on water safety behaviours.

³ [Warning signs at beaches: Do they work? - ScienceDirect](#)

Should a QR code water safety signage model be recommended at beaches, LSV advocates for the same model to genuinely be considered for integration into inland waterways simultaneously, and for this model to be considered nationally for consistency.

3. PV explore the feasibility of interactive signage with up-to-date safety information at Gunnamatta and other high risk Victorian beaches.

While LSV recognises Deputy State Coroner Spanos' recommendation 3 is directed towards PV, LSV would like to comment here.

In 2021, LSV received Federal Government funding through the SLISA Beach Drowning Blackspot Reduction Program to install and trial the effectiveness of an interactive, electronic water safety sign at the high-risk beach at Woolamai Surf Beach, on Phillip Island, Bass Coast. Whilst there was community support for the sign and in-principal support from the land manager – Phillip Island Nature Parks, LSV faced significant challenges with the strict planning laws and the project was ultimately hampered as the intended location for the sign fell within a Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ), which employs strict conditions for electronic signage installation under 'Category 4 – sensitive areas'⁴. This restriction is not unique to the Bass Coast and is replicated in multiple planning schemes for sensitive areas across Victoria – crucially these locations often abut known drowning blackspot waterways.

Subsequently due to these planning restrictions, in 2024 LSV installed the electronic sign indoors⁵ at the Lorne Visitor Information Centre as an interim solution⁶. The sign displays water safety information tailored to the location, including the presence of lifeguard patrols, weather and tide information, alongside activity-based water safety messages. The content is available in English and simplified Chinese to align with the visitor demographics to the region. Evaluation of the sign inside the Centre has demonstrated the staff find it useful for educating visitors about water safety and weather information, and they have observed visitors interacting with it. Despite this, many visitors interviewed as part of the evaluation had not seen the sign on entering the Centre, and when informed of the sign's purpose felt they did not need to use it as they felt they already knew the aquatic risks in the region.

⁴ [52.05 SIGNS Bass Coast Planning Scheme - Ordinance](#)

⁵ While the indoor location was not the preferred option and was acknowledged as a sub-optimal response to the drowning risk, it represented the only feasible installation site within a blackspot beach region due to strict planning zone restrictions along the Surf Coast Shire—consistent with those observed in other regions.

⁶ [Interactive water safety sign installed at Lorne visitor centre - Surf Coast Times](#)

As a result of the challenges posed by the strict planning laws, LSV, in collaboration with Surf Coast Shire Council and with support from the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, wrote to the Minister for Planning. The letter highlighted the aforementioned planning issue and requested an exemption for this project to allow the electronic sign to be installed at an alternative high-risk beachfront location along the Surf Coast coastline to trial the effectiveness of the sign for drowning prevention purposes. In addition, the letter requested the Minister give consideration to a specific Victorian planning scheme amendment to facilitate the inclusion of safety signage within permitted Category 4 signs in sensitive areas to enhance public safety across the State. LSV received acknowledgement of the letter by the Minister in September 2024; however, at time of writing (July 2025) no further correspondence has been received regarding this matter. Accordingly, at this stage it is the view of LSV that further practical application, research and evaluation activities are required to determine if electronic signage is effective for communicating water safety information when installed outdoors at a beachfront location, as currently there is insufficient evidence to suggest the impact.

If you or any of your team have any questions in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact:

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Greaves", written in a cursive style.

Catherine Greaves
Chief Executive Officer
Life Saving Victoria