



VICTORIA POLICE

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Chief Commissioner of Police

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State Coroner Judge Liberty Sanger OAM
Coroners Court of Victoria
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Subject: Jessica Geddes - Finding into death without Inquest
Court Reference: COR 2020 006055
Date of Findings: 24 June 2025

Dear Judge Sanger,

This document provides the response to recommendations directed to the Chief Commissioner of Police arising from former State Coroner Judge Cain's Finding into the death of Jessica Geddes, delivered on 24 June 2025.

Recommendation (i)

That Victoria Police develop welfare-oriented approaches to people who beg. In doing so, I recommend that the Victorian Government consider investing in a co-responder model which would see police members partner with community welfare practitioners when responding to reports of begging. I also recommend that Victoria Police develop a protocol/practice guideline to dissuade members from using a criminal response to people who beg and that encourages members to inquire as to the persons' needs and safety and offer referrals to welfare services.

Victoria Police addresses this recommendation in three parts. This recommendation is supported in principle in relation to Part 1 and has been implemented by Victoria Police. The recommendation in relation to Parts 2 and 3 are also supported in principle, however, Victoria Police consider that there should be a cooperative approach with the Victorian Government should they agree to invest in a strengthened partnership approach to begging with welfare agencies and support organisations.

Part 1: *Welfare orientated approach to begging*

Victoria Police has adopted a welfare-focussed approach in responding to begging and homelessness, particularly within the Melbourne CBD. Victoria Police members routinely assess individuals' needs and safety and, where appropriate, offer referrals to welfare services. Generally, Victoria Police members only pursue a criminal response to begging in situations that involve aggressive and/or anti-social behaviour that poses (or may pose) a risk to public safety. A review of Victoria Police data indicates that the number of charges laid for begging offences has declined over 90% during the past five years, from 104 in 2020-21 to 10 in 2024-25. While it is common for

individuals who beg to decline welfare-oriented referrals, Victoria Police continues to prioritise welfare engagement over criminal enforcement.

Part 2: The Victorian Government consider investment in a co-responder model

This recommendation is a matter for the Victorian Government, however the practical implementation of the co-responder model is constrained by current resourcing, funding limitations and the difficulties of practical application.

Additionally, for the co-responder model to effectively work, active participation from community welfare practitioners/groups is required and is dependent upon their own individual funding, resourcing and organisational priorities. Victoria Police have previously invited welfare agencies to accompany members on patrol in the past, however, some stakeholders preferred to provide support remotely.

Victoria Police considers that the preferred approach (which is also likely subject to funding) is to partner with organisations such as the Salvation Army, Launch Housing, Front Door, and Co Health to facilitate referrals to support services and accommodation options for vulnerable individuals in a targeted manner.

Part 3: Development of a protocol/practice guideline

Victoria Police's current practices and internal briefings provide guidance for Victoria Police members to adopt a welfare-orientated approach to begging. The Victoria Police Values has recently been updated and includes respect and compassion as cornerstones for building community trust and confidence. Victoria Police members are always encouraged to act with genuine kindness, empathy and understanding of the diverse needs of the community. The *Victoria Police Manual – Human Rights Standards* promotes the treatment of all people with courtesy, respect, and dignity. This chapter of the Victoria Police Manual and the guidance offered to members provides that a welfare-oriented approach to begging should be consistently adopted.

Recommendation (ii)

That Victoria Police and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provide funding to implement Recommendation 5 in my Finding into the passing of Noeline Dalzell, as follows:

Victoria Police and The Orange Door in two regions as a pilot collaborate to embed advanced family violence practitioners within each FVIU to assess, jointly respond to and manage repeat and/or high-risk family violence matters and improve proactive victim/AFM engagement. I note the complexity of placing a Family Violence Practitioner within the structure of a statutory organisation such as Victoria Police and acknowledge that this will need to be a senior worker with extensive experience and provided with supervision by a specialist family violence service. An independent evaluation of the pilot program should be completed within two years of commencing operation in each of the regions selected.

As per the Victoria Police response to recommendations arising from the Inquest into the passing of Noeline Dalzell, this recommendation is accepted in principle, subject to Victorian Government funding.

Victoria Police is unable to fund this recommendation within existing resourcing. Victoria Police continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to identify potential funding options external to Victoria Police.

Victoria Police notes that the Victorian Government has recently announced funding for expanding the Alexis Family Violence Response Model which places specialist family violence workers alongside

police. Victoria Police will engage with DFFH on this initiative, including considering the extent to which it addresses this recommendation.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Bush CNZM
Chief Commissioner

7/11/25