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Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Ms

I write in response to the findings made by Coroner McGregor on 28 October 2025 regarding the death of HCG.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) acknowledges the tragic death of HCG. As Secretary, I extend my sincere condolences to the [REDACTED] family for their loss.

Coroner McGregor made five recommendations. Three recommendations fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the department. The department's response to those recommendations is set out below.

That the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provide Safe Steps with the funding requested for the Sanctuary accommodation model in their 2025-26 budget bid, noting that this aligns with the March 2021 Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.

The recommendation is under consideration:

The Safe Steps' pilot of the Sanctuary model (Nic's Place) provides supported crisis accommodation to victim survivors who need immediate protection, where a refuge place is unavailable. The evaluation of the 7-unit pilot has demonstrated promising findings, and victim survivors report positive experiences. However, the department is carefully balancing the risks associated with accommodating significantly more victim survivors at a single, expanded site, as proposed by Safe Steps.

In line with recommendations from the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria has been moving towards models that provide for more privacy and flexibility for family violence victim survivors in supported crisis accommodation. This has involved replacing communal style refuges with best practice core and cluster models, with designs that are trauma-informed.

The nature of the Sanctuary design means that while families have their own small unit with a kitchenette, these units are not completely standalone as they have shared hallways and rely heavily on communal spaces for kitchen space and indoor and outdoor recreational activities. There remain significant risks with reliance on communal spaces, such as the design of Sanctuary, including children being exposed to trauma-driven behaviours that may compound their own trauma or risk their safety. Additionally, higher density facilities cannot respond to victim survivors with more complex mental health concerns and substance dependency issues, due to the configuration of the units, and represent an increased risk should the security of the site be breached.

Further, Victoria's Family Violence Crisis Response Model, introduced in August 2023, prioritises responses that support victim survivors to stay in their local area whenever it is safe to do so, to maintain community connections and to minimise disruption to their lives and to the lives of children. On this basis, it is essential that the department continues to consider a range of geographical areas for investment, particularly areas where there are high levels of unmet demand for supported crisis accommodation

It is the department's understanding that Safe Steps has not commenced construction of the additional 28 units it has proposed for the pilot site. Operational funding to continue the existing seven units beyond 2025-26, or to support further expansion of the pilot site at any scale, remains subject to Victorian Government budget processes.

Recommendation 4:

That the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing consult with Safe Steps on further expansion of the Sanctuary model to provide a range of Sanctuary facilities across metropolitan and regional communities, including provision of specialist Sanctuary facilities to accommodate people with complex needs.

Department's response:

The recommendation is under consideration:

The department's strategic plan 2025-29 commits to developing a family violence crisis and emergency accommodation strategy with the specialist family violence sector under *Objective 2: Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported*. This work has commenced and will help guide Victorian Government considerations for further investment in crisis accommodation for victim survivors of family violence across Victoria. This work will closely align with and support the department to deliver services that give effect to Victoria's Family Violence Crisis Response Model. The department will consult closely with family violence agencies and accommodation providers across the state, including Safe Steps, as the insights and experiences of the specialist family violence sector will be critical to informing the development of the strategy.

Recommendation 5:

That the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing scale up long-term investment in supported accommodation projects like the Sanctuary to replace the hotel model.

Department's response:

The recommendation is under consideration:

The department's strategic plan 2025-29 commits to developing a family violence crisis and emergency accommodation strategy with the specialist family violence sector under *Objective 2: Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported*. This work has commenced and will help guide Victorian Government considerations for further investment in crisis accommodation for victim survivors of family violence across Victoria.

The department also continues to work closely with Commonwealth officials to secure additional funding for crisis accommodation for victim survivors, including through input into various capital funding rounds such as the Safe Places Inclusion Round and the Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program (CTAP), as well as through the National Housing Infrastructure Facility – Crisis and Transitional (NHIF CT) opportunity supported by Victoria's Statement of Priorities.

Operational funding under the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) schedule of the Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) has also been prioritised for new accommodation initiatives that reduce reliance on motels, provide better information about motels when other crisis accommodation options are unavailable (improving coordination and safety), and offer supported transition pathways out of refuge to create vacancies for other clients. Bridget House is an example of a FDSV initiative that seeks to reduce reliance on motels for victim survivors in crisis. Located in the Bayside Peninsula area, this five-unit facility operated by Good Shepherd accommodates culturally and linguistically diverse victim survivors and their children, enabling them to be redirected away from short-term, emergency accommodation (motels) to safe, secure, and supported apartment style accommodation. On site specialist family violence support and wrap-around services are provided to each household, and Good Shepherd regularly accepts referrals from Safe Steps into this facility.

If you require further information, please contact Melanie Heenan, Deputy Secretary, Family Safety Victoria at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Peta McCammon
Secretary

28 / 01 / 2026