



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP

Premier of Victoria

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Judge Ian Gray
State Coroner
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

D16/103570



27 JUL 2016

Dear Judge Gray

I refer to the letter from your office received on 27 April 2016 regarding the inquest into the death of Kelly Anne Thompson (Coroners Court of Victoria reference COR 2014 000824).

I acknowledge the tragic death of Kelly Ann Thompson and express my sincere thanks for your thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding Ms Thompson's death. I note your finding that Ms Thompson's death was caused by her former partner and that her death was preceded by a number of family violence incidents and interim intervention order breaches. I also note your finding regarding a number of system gaps and flaws in our State's response to family violence. In particular the flaws were in relation to risk assessment and management and the sharing of information necessary to protect victims of family violence.

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing family violence to ensure the safety of all victims and their children, including implementing all 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. As Premier of Victoria, I am committed to improving Victoria's response to family violence. My Government will consider the recommendation you have made as part of our response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and implementation of its 227 recommendations. In accordance with sections 72(3) and (4) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)*, I enclose a detailed response to your recommendation.

Should you require any further information regarding the Victorian Government's response to your recommendations, please contact Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet at rebecca.falkingham@dpc.vic.gov.au or (03) 9651 6230.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier

Victorian Government Response to the Coroner's Findings into the Death of Kelly Ann Thompson (Coroners Court of Victoria reference COR 2014 000824).

The Victorian Government Response to the recommendation directed to it in the Inquest into the Death of Kelly Ann Thompson has been prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR). The Coroner will receive a separate response from Victoria Police and the Magistrates' Court of Victoria regarding the recommendations directed to them.

The Victorian Government considers that sharing information about family violence risk (including risk assessments) is critical to improving the safety of victims. To this end, the Government is progressing a range of initiatives that will better enable information about risk to be shared across front-line services, courts and police.

Looking forward, this will be achieved by capturing risk relevant information (including assessments) at a central point, which can be accessed by relevant professionals. This will be supported by effective IT systems, legislation, a well trained workforce and organisational policies and processes. In turn it will create a more streamlined and rigorous approach to the current system which places a heavy burden on individuals to share.

The Victorian Government will consider the Coroner's recommendation directed to it (Recommendation 1) as part of the Government's broader implementation approach of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence (the Royal Commission).

The Royal Commission Report was tabled on 29 March 2016, making 227 recommendations directed at improving the current system to better support, and ensure the safety of, victims of family violence. The Report provides a platform for the Victorian Government to transform the way that we respond to family violence and build structures that will guide and oversee long-term reform.

The Victorian Government has already committed to implementing all of the Royal Commission's 227 recommendations and work is currently under way to create broad-ranging changes across the delivery of services to support victims of family violence. As a starting point, the 2016-17 State Budget included a record \$572 million to begin implementing the recommendations and to build a system that prevents family violence before it occurs, supports those who experience family violence to recover and thrive and holds perpetrators to account.

The Victorian Government's response to his Honour's recommendation outlines how the Victorian Government will consider Recommendation 1, in particular through enhancing family violence risk assessment processes and enabling more efficient information sharing to ultimately improve the safety of victims of family violence.

The recommendation addressed to the Victorian Government:

Recommendation 1.

I recommend that the Victorian Government, in implementing the recommendations of the Royal

Commission across the family violence sector adopt the practice proposed by the Thompson family i.e. that front line workers provide each and every risk assessment to the applicant, the applicants legal representative, the local community family violence services, the magistrate during an IVO hearing, and to Victoria Police.

This Response outlines the commencement of work on various activities that directly relate to this recommendation, including:

- Risk assessment and management;
- Information sharing;
- The establishment of Support and Safety Hubs;
- State Budget initiatives; and
- The Statewide Family Violence Action Plan.

Risk assessment and management

The Victorian Government is committed to building a system that prevents family violence and protects victims. Consistent assessment and management of risk is vital for protecting victims' safety. To this end, the Victorian Government is currently reviewing the current approach to family violence risk identification, assessment and management to ensure that we are using best practice, evidence based approaches.

Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (CRAF)

The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (also known as the common risk assessment framework or 'CRAF') was launched in 2007 as a critical tool in delivering an integrated response to family violence by establishing a common approach to family violence risk assessment and risk management.

The Royal Commission considered the CRAF, and recommended improvements to enable a shared and coordinated approach to risk assessment and risk management, including a review and re-development of the CRAF as well as a corresponding sustained workforce development and training strategy (Royal Commission recommendations 1-3).

Vitaly, the Royal Commission recommendations propose that the revised CRAF deliver a comprehensive framework that sets minimum standards and roles and responsibilities for screening, risk assessment, risk management, information sharing and referral throughout Victorian agencies.

An in-depth review of CRAF is currently underway. Commissioned by the Victorian Government, the review began in April 2016 and is being undertaken by Monash University. This review is exploring the approach, use and suitability of CRAF, and will inform a revitalised CRAF which reflects best practice and ensures consistency and effectiveness of risk assessment and management. The review and revision of the CRAF is expected to be completed by 31 December 2017.

The redevelopment phase will produce a best practice framework and suite of resources for family violence risk identification, assessment and management, and a corresponding implementation

strategy. The redeveloped CRAF will be subsequently tested and complemented by necessary professional development and workforce training.

To support this, the Government will consider strategies, including legislative amendments, to ensure all agencies align their risk assessment policies and practices, to provide greater guidance and training to assist the workforce in identifying and managing risk.

Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs)

An improved response to victims of family violence will also be facilitated by the wider rollout of Victoria's Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs).

RAMPs are designed to support victims at serious and imminent threat of injury or death as a result of family violence by enabling a coordinated multi-agency approach, bringing a range of agencies together to discuss extremely high risk family violence cases, and plan for safety, while also having a focus on strategies to hold perpetrators accountable for their use of violence.

The Royal Commission recommended that the Victorian Government roll out RAMPs across the State, and this occurred in June 2016 with 18 RAMPs now in operation state-wide.

To prepare for the statewide rollout, considerable work was undertaken to establish a strong foundation to enable the sharing of information relevant to the safety of RAMP clients. All RAMP members have also received comprehensive training in recent months to ensure that they are well-placed to fully contribute to the RAMP process and a good understanding of their own roles and responsibilities.

Information Sharing

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission, which includes the creation of a specific family violence information sharing model (Royal Commission recommendations 5 to 7).

Furthermore, a review has been commissioned of policy and legislative barriers to sharing information that will shape the preferred approach. Extensive stakeholder consultation is also planned.

In line with the Royal Commission's guiding principles, the Victorian Government intends to set up a permissive framework that provides clear authority for organisations responding to family violence to share information in relation to risk assessment and safety management. This means that front-line organisations such as the ones identified by the Coroner will be able to exchange information where this is necessary to assess risk and protect safety.

To enable greater information sharing, the Royal Commission also recommended that the Victorian Government establish a Central Information Point (Royal Commission recommendation 7) with the aim of improving effective assessment and management of risk in individual cases. The recommended Central Information Point would consist of a co-located multi-disciplinary team from

relevant Departments and Victoria Police to facilitate effective assessment and management of risk in individual cases.

The Victorian Government is currently developing an approach to enable the establishment of the Central Information Point, including reviewing the extent to which existing IT systems support information sharing, and identifying upgrades or new options to support operational information sharing. This will be done alongside the design and development of the Support and Safety Hubs.

Support and Safety Hubs

The design of the Support and Safety Hubs will also define the business requirements for a single case management system.

The forthcoming establishment of Support and Safety Hubs (Hubs) in local communities throughout Victoria, as recommended by the Royal Commission, will make it easier for victims to find help and gain access to a greater range of services to support recovery and maintain their safety (Royal Commission recommendations 37-40). The Royal Commission recommended that Hubs be established in each of the 17 Department of Health and Human Services local areas.

The Hubs will be designed to make it easier for victims of family violence to access services when and where they need them. They will be visible and trusted points in the community offering safe, simple and early access to services and connect people to the support they need. In particular, it was recommended by the Royal Commission that the Hubs:

- provide a single, area-based entry point into local specialist family violence services, perpetrator programs and Integrated Family Services and link people to other support services;
- receive police referrals (L17 forms) for victims and perpetrators, referrals from non-family violence services and self-referrals;
- perform risk and needs assessments and safety planning using information provided by the recommended Central Information Point;
- provide prompt access to the local Risk Assessment and Management Panel;
- provide direct assistance until the victim, perpetrator and any children are linked with services for longer term support;
- book victims into emergency accommodation and facilitate their placement in crisis accommodation;
- provide secondary consultation services to universal or non-family violence services; and
- offer a basis for co-location of other services likely to be required by victims and children.

Fundamental to the establishment, operation and functions of the proposed Hubs will be the enhanced risk assessment and management processes as well as the reformed information sharing regime.

To scope, design and establish these Hubs, the Government will work closely with key sectors and people who use services, in particular through the Family Violence Steering Committee and Victim Survivor Advisory Council as part of the planned consultation and co-design process.

2016-17 State Budget

To facilitate the significant work outlined above and the Government's overall reform agenda, the 2016-17 Budget includes a record \$572 million family violence package, the largest ever single investment in addressing and preventing family violence.

The 2016-17 Budget includes specific investments in relation to improving risk assessment and management practices, and information sharing, to ensure the safety of victims of family violence and to better monitor perpetrators through the system. The Budget includes:

- \$32.5 million for the establishment of a multi-agency safeguarding function (including the central information point) to ensure government departments are actively and effectively sharing risk information and victims are kept safe from family violence; and
- \$10.4 million to start building the capacity of the family violence workforce, and support other workers to best identify and respond to family violence.

A \$5 million investment will begin work on the design of the Support and Safety Hubs. This initial investment will be supported by significant future funding in order to implement the Hubs in the 17 locations.

Other significant investments in the 2016-17 Budget include:

- \$152 million to begin a housing blitz to address the housing needs of people impacted by family violence;
- \$103.9 million for specialist family violence services such as crisis support and counselling;
- \$61.6 million in family violence prevention initiatives;
- \$23.9 million to begin reforming the justice system so it protects victims and holds perpetrators to account;
- \$19 million for a new type of family violence navigator to guide victims through every stage of crisis and recovery, as recommended by the Luke Batty Coronial Inquest; and
- \$168 million for Roadmap for Reform to transform the children's and families service system.

The Statewide Family Violence Action Plan

The Royal Commission has given the Victorian Government a clear platform from which to deliver lasting generational reform and bring about positive and enduring change.

The Victorian Government will produce a Statewide Family Violence Action Plan (10 Year Plan) laying out the Government's plan to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations and the vision for a strengthened, integrated family violence system by improving victim safety and support services. The 10 Year Plan will capture the Government's vision for the next ten years, while clearly outlining short-term actions and outcomes to implement this vision.

A key focus will be joining up and improving the way services at the local level work together across all portfolios. This will be underpinned by new approaches to information sharing, data management, workforce development, funding models, the use of technology, and investments in early intervention.