



Department of Education & Training

Office of the Secretary

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

Dear Ms Sanderson

Thank you for your letter dated 15 June 2017 regarding the State Coroner, Her Honour Judge Hinchey's Finding into death with inquest of Noah Zunde (Court Reference COR 2015 0846). I write in response to the two recommendations which were directed to the Department of Education and Training (the Department).

I was very sorry to be made aware of the tragic death of Noah Zunde and on behalf of the Department, express my deepest sympathies to Noah's family, educators and local community. The death of any child is a tragedy and I welcome your recommendations so that the Department can assist in reducing the risk of other tragedies occurring in like circumstances.

On behalf of the Department I accept your recommendations and thank you for your advice. The first of these recommendations was that the Department *expand its current public facing awareness campaign related to children being left in motor vehicles, to include circumstances that involve a child being inadvertently left in a motor vehicle.*

As you would be aware, the *Never Leave Kids in Cars* campaign raises awareness among parents and carers of the significant risks of leaving a child unattended, and reminds them to take their child with them whenever they get out of the car.

For the upcoming *Never Leave Kids in Cars* 2017-18 campaign, the Department will increase the focus on 'inadvertent leaving' within campaign activities to promote awareness of this issue. This will occur alongside a continued focus on the overarching message that children should never be left unattended in cars.

The Department is currently developing a communication plan which sets out the campaign activities that will most effectively communicate this specific message to relevant professionals and families. These activities may include an increased presence on social media, and greater engagement with key stakeholders in the health and early childhood sectors.

The second recommendation was that the Department *develop a fact sheet and/or risk assessment tool for relevant professionals that addresses the physiology and cognitive neuroscience of the human memory specific to the circumstances similar to those involved in Noah's death.*

The Department will adapt update and improve its current fact sheet to more comprehensively address the circumstances under which inadvertent leaving of children in cars can occur. Development of the revised fact sheet will be informed by a review of the advice provided by Professor Mundy as part of the Coroner's findings.

Professionals who routinely work with parents and support them in caring for their children are able to provide health promotion information around child safety, and offer interventions and referrals in cases where parents are experiencing periods of considerable stress and anxiety. The Department proposes to distribute the fact sheet to a wide range of professionals to further raise awareness and understanding of the issue of 'inadvertent leaving'. This will aim to increase their capacity to recognise when families may need additional support, and to provide families with information on the risk factors as a preventative strategy.

The revised fact sheet will also be distributed to a wider range of other professionals that work with children and families, this will include Maternal Child Health (MCH) nurses, Early Childhood Educators, Supported Playgroup Facilitators, Best Start facilitators, and other local government child and family services.

The Department will also take the opportunity to share information on this topic with MCH professionals through an upcoming Statewide MCH Nurse Conference, a biannual one-day conference that provides professional development for all MCH nurses in Victoria. This offers an opportunity to delve deeper into the physiology and cognitive neuroscience of the human memory with professionals that often have established relationships with families.

The Department will explore opportunities to include a reference to the risk of 'inadvertent leaving' in the tools currently used by relevant professionals in assessing a family's experience of stress, anxiety and exhaustion, or if there are any existing tools to share with these professionals. The Department will also look for other opportunities to support risk identification and assessment as part of MCH workforce professional learning.

If you would like further information, you may contact Dr Stacey Gabriel, Director, Prevention and Health Promotion Branch, Department of Education and Training, on (03) 9097 1197 or by email at gabriel.stacey.s@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Thank you again for drawing the Department's attention to this matter. I am hopeful our response will assist in preventing further tragedies.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Atta
Acting Secretary

14/ 9 / 2017

CC: Minister for Families and Children
Minister for Education