



VICTORIA POLICE

Our Ref: FF-132744

Mr Iain West
Acting State Coroner
Coroners Court Victoria
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Graham Ashton AM
Chief Commissioner of Police

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Dear Mr West

Subject: Joy Maree Rowley
Case No: COR 2011 3947
Date of Rec: 31 July 2018

Victoria Police response to recommendations arising from the Investigation into the death of Joy Maree Rowley

This document provides the Victoria Police response to Judge Sara Hinchey's recommendation directed at the Chief Commissioner of Police, arising from the Inquest into the death of Joy Maree Rowley at Rye in October 2011.

The Inquest raised a number of issues relating to policy, practice, systems and compliance that may have impacted police service delivery at the time of Ms Rowley's death. Many of these challenges are the subject of significant reforms arising from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, seeking to improve system-wide responses to family violence and ensure victim safety.

Through the establishment, and work of, the dedicated Family Violence Command and commencement of the reform agenda arising from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria Police has furthered efforts to affect significant cultural change and developed a strategy which sets out the next phase of reform: *Policing Harm, Upholding the Right: Victoria Police Strategy for Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse 2018-2023*.

In addition, the Assistant Commissioner, Family Violence Command, Dean McWhirter, proposed a stand-alone indictable offence for choking, suffocation or strangulation. In the Coroner's findings, Her Honour Judge Hinchey commended work on this important issue, acknowledged the potential gap in legislation and extended her support to Victoria Police to pursue legislative change to better protect victims of family violence.

The recommendation by Her Honour Judge Hinchey will complement the existing work being undertaken by Victoria Police to reduce and prevent family violence. Victoria Police remains committed to standing together with other government and sector partners to deliver lasting and wide-reaching change.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that Victoria Police conduct systemic reviews of family violence-related deaths where there was a known history of family violence between the deceased person and the perpetrator of family violence.

Victoria Police will implement the Coroner's recommendation.

Victoria Police has committed to ensuring that a review process is established which will identify whether there are systemic compliance, process or legislative issues relevant to the police response to family violence incidents (FVIs) that occurred prior to a family violence homicide. Victoria Police has made substantial progress on the project that was established to design and implement the process to review these deaths. The review process will be referred to as a Family Violence-related Death Assessment (FDA).

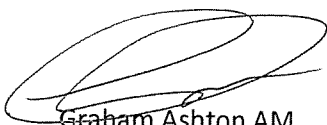
The FDA provides a mechanism for identifying family violence related deaths and determining where either the deceased person, or the offender, has a known history of family violence involving police. The police involvement in these previous FVIs, including assessment and management of victim risk and the response to the perpetrator, is then reviewed. This includes, but is not limited to, any intervention orders and safety notices that have been taken out involving the parties.

The key objective of the FDA is to identify any systemic deficiencies in the police response to FVIs. Specifically, each review will:

- examine whether appropriate policies, guidelines and legislation are in place to support Victoria Police members in responding to FVIs;
- determine whether Victoria Police members acted in accordance with the policies and guidelines in place at the time of the FVI; and
- incorporate a process by which any actions identified in the FDAs will be managed, such as enhancements to education, policy, practice and inter-agency responses.

Victoria Police will engage in ongoing consultation with key stakeholders in the development of the FDA review process before implementing a formalised process.

Yours sincerely



Graham Ashton AM
Chief Commissioner

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