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Judge Ian Gray
State Coroner
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11/222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000



Dear Judge Gray

Re: COR 2007/2110 – Twenty-six Rail Crossing Deaths in Victoria, Australia

I refer to the recent inquest into Twenty-six Rail Crossing Deaths in Victoria, Australia.

As a result of the inquest, there was one recommendation made by Coroner Hendtlass relating to Ambulance Victoria. The recommendation, together with our response, is as follows:

Recommendation:

- 18** *That Ambulance Victoria and Air Ambulance Victoria carefully consider the risks of tension pneumothorax when triaging trauma patients for transfer by fixed wing aircraft without Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance support.*

Ambulance Victoria's response:

While the frequency of such events is very rare and these patients are usually transported accompanied by a MICA Flight paramedic or Retrieval Physician, we do acknowledge the consequences of an untreated tension pneumothorax can be catastrophic.

As flight paramedics work in a pressurised aircraft environment, the risk of a tension pneumothorax is greater than in normal atmospheric situations. Compounding this is the difficulty in auscultating the patient's chest in flight due to the ambient noise of the aircraft.

Ambulance Victoria is considering the evidence, risks and benefits as recommended through its Clinical Practice Development Committee.

Ambulance Victoria's Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) is the peak clinical committee that considers and approves paramedic clinical practice. The MAC will consider this addition to the scope of practice of ALS Flight Paramedics in February 2014.



If approved, the change to the scope and practice would then flow into the current Aero Medical Advanced Diploma course, where the complexities of transporting a patient with chest injuries in pressurised aircraft and inability to auscultate the chest in flight will be considered in proper context by the Flight Paramedics.

I trust the response satisfactorily addresses Her Honour's recommendation. I appreciate the recommendation was made to assist Ambulance Victoria perform at the highest level in its service to the community.

Yours sincerely



GREG SASSELLA
Chief Executive Officer

cc Tony Walker, General Manager Regional Services
Mark Rogers, General Manager Specialist Services
Angelia Dixon, General Manager Quality Education Services