



VICTORIA POLICE

**Graham Ashton AM**  
**Chief Commissioner of Police**

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Our Ref: LEXD 21751



Coroner Simon McGregor  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

**Subject:** Caitlin-Lei Alaya - Finding into death without inquest  
**Court Reference:** COR 2018 5553  
**Date of Recommendation:** 6 February 2020

Dear Coroner McGregor

***Victoria Police response to recommendation arising from Finding without inquest into the death of Caitlin-Lei Alaya***

This document provides the response to your recommendation to Victoria Police, arising from the Finding into the death of Caitlin-Lei Alaya without inquest, delivered on 29 January 2020.

The Finding raised issues relating to the adequacy of the welfare checks conducted at Ms Alaya's property.

Victoria Police's response to your Finding is set out below.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Victoria Police review and update their policies and procedures pertaining to welfare checks to ensure the inadequacies detailed in this finding are prevented in the future.*

The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration by Victoria Police.

Following receipt of your recommendation, Victoria Police Corporate Policy commenced a review of Victoria Police Manual (**VPM**) instruments which address general policing procedures that support members in responding to welfare checks (**Review**). In conducting the Review, Corporate Policy consulted the following key stakeholders: Crime Command, State Emergencies and Support Command and the Centre for Law and Operational Development within People Development Command.

Corporate Policy concluded that the task of responding to a welfare check cannot be addressed through policy alone, due to the range of outcomes and courses of action that may be encountered by police members when conducting a welfare check, and the need to ensure police responses reflect contemporary organisational and community expectations. In addition to the direction provided by

the VPM, members receive 'on the job' training and guidance to inform their responses to welfare checks. Responses to welfare checks are dictated by risk assessments, with training provided to members and recruits regarding information gathering and the processes used to conduct an appropriate risk assessment.

In the circumstances, Corporate Policy is satisfied that the VPM provides adequate instruction for members to undertake their general duties, including the processes and responsibilities involved in responding to a request for a welfare check, when coupled with training, particularly 'on the job' training. For example, the VPM Policy Rules titled 'Operational duties and responsibilities' includes instructions that members are responsible for prioritisation of attendances on patrol tasks once an event is allocated, and includes guidance that while all employees are responsible for their own actions and conduct, the senior employee on patrol is responsible for ensuring that all messages or tasks are responded to promptly. The VPM Procedures and Guidelines titled 'Patrol responsibilities and communications' describe the situations in which an 'urgent' response, an 'as soon as possible' response or 'an attend when able' response is required. Further, the VPM Policy Rules titled 'Professional and ethical standards' state that where a particular circumstance is not provided for in the VPM, given the varied and complex situations members face, professional and ethical decision-making is to be undertaken. Members are encouraged to use the organisational values and the 'SELF' test to make decisions in such situations. The 'SELF' test involves a four-stage test to assist members to consider if their decision will stand up to public scrutiny, is ethical and in compliance with Victoria Police policies, practices or procedures, is lawful and considers human rights, and is fair on the community and individuals.

In the course of the Review, Corporate Policy, in consultation with other key stakeholders within Victoria Police, identified minor amendments that could be made to the VPM that may further clarify processes for members when responding to welfare checks. These include the addition of a new section in VPMP "Searches of properties" to ensure, when a search of property is undertaken, that the house or building together with land and outbuildings are adequately searched. The proposed amendments have been drafted and may be progressed in the future if supported during the next stage of consultations and as part of the ongoing holistic review of all operational policies. The purpose of the holistic review is to consolidate and simplify operational level policies and procedures contained in the VPM as the sole reference guide for members.

Yours sincerely



Graham Ashton AM  
Chief Commissioner

16/6/2020