



Tuesday 8 September 2020

Coroner calls for culturally safe supports to prevent suicides

Victorian Coroner Audrey Jamieson has today released recommendations calling for more accessible, culturally appropriate support services for South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea, following an investigation into the suicides of four women in the community.

Coroner Jamieson commenced the investigation following community concerns about elevated suicide rates amongst the demographic of women. A review of suicides in the area revealed a number of relevant deaths including four women between the ages of 29–40 in the period 2018–2019.

To understand the stressors these women may have experienced and potential prevention strategies, Coroner Jamieson consulted community leaders and relevant agencies including Victoria Police, Whittlesea Council and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Submissions from community groups said that South Asian women in Australia may experience several potential stressors; social isolation, family violence and financial dependence. These stressors were not all present in each case, though they were seen across the group collectively.

Furthermore, submissions showed that South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea face cultural and geographical barriers to mental health and family violence services.

In the finding, Her Honour commended the work of the Crossroads to Community Wellbeing Group, a City of Whittlesea-based collective of community leaders and agencies that is developing locally focused solutions to reduce social isolation and increase access to services for South Asian women.

However, Coroner Jamieson determined that more needs to be done to help vulnerable South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea and improve their engagement with support systems.

Her Honour has recommended:

- DHHS review current services that support the health and wellbeing of South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea, and consult with relevant service providers and other stakeholders, to identify opportunities to improve South Asian women's access to and engagement with such services.
- Victoria Police allocate Family Violence Investigation Units to investigations into suspected intentional deaths of women in the City of Whittlesea who are from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in circumstances where there is any indication that previous family violence incidents or social isolation may have contributed to the death.

Copies of the findings can be found at:

Finding into the death of Ms WX — <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/18%202583%20Redacted%20finding%20-%20Ms%20WX.pdf>

Finding into the death of Ms TP — <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/18%204780%20Redacted%20finding%20Ms%20TP.pdf>

Finding into the death of Ms YN — <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/18%205104%20Redacted%20finding%20-%20Ms%20YN.pdf>

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Finding into the death of Ms MH — <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/19%203839%20Redacted%20finding%20-%20Ms%20MH.pdf>

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