



## Department of Justice

Secretary

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Ms Laura Steward  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street  
MELBOURNE 3000

Dear Ms Steward

### **Response to recommendations from the coronial inquest into the death of Mr Jeremy Chandler at Melbourne Assessment Prison on or about 8 March 2009**

On 25 October 2011, the Department of Justice received the Coroners Court's findings into the inquest of the death of Mr Jeremy Chandler, who died on 8 March 2009 at the Melbourne Assessment Prison. The findings included one recommendation, pursuant to Section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act* 2008:

*To improve the safety of first time prisoners with additional known self-harm risk factors who are initially assessed with either an unknown or low risk self-harm rating, a follow up formal and recorded session with either a Forensicare or Corrections Victoria staff member must take place after the first 24 hours of imprisonment to further assess risk and adjustment issues.*

The Department of Justice's response to the coronial recommendation arising from the death of Mr Chandler is as follows:

- In instances where the mental health professional, at the time of reception, has identified the prisoner's risk as 'unknown', irrespective of the risk rating assigned, a follow up review shall occur after the first 24 hours of imprisonment by the mental health provider to further assess risk and adjustment issues. This follow up will be documented in the prisoner's medical record.
- In instances where the first time prisoner's risk of suicide or self harm is assessed at a S4 level, Corrections Victoria staff will, in accordance with the Deputy Commissioner's Instruction (DCI) 1.02 At Risk Procedures, conduct a follow up review after the first 24 hours of imprisonment to further assess risk and adjustment issues.
- Prisoners assessed at an S3 level will be managed in accordance with the DCI 1.02 and the Risk Management Plan developed for the individual prisoner.

- Schedule 1.2 (2) of the DCI 1.02 identifies custodial officer interaction, referring to a meaningful discussion in an appropriate environment with the prisoner regarding their current concerns and situation, with a brief file note made (in the IMP file) regarding the discussion.
- MAP has advised that it is routine practice for custodial staff to meet with all prisoners 24 hours after reception to check on their welfare and adjustment to prison. MAP will, however, review its current process to ensure staff are very clear about the objective of such meetings with first time prisoners assessed as S4, so to ensure a thorough check and documentation process.
- Should custodial staff have concerns about the prisoner's mental state or they are considered to present at a higher level of risk, the prisoner will be referred to the mental health professional for an 'at risk' assessment as per the Local Operating Procedure for 'at risk' prisoners.
- The MAP also invites all new reception prisoners to attend a one-off session in the first week, titled 'Coping with Change' as another way to assist prisoners to adjust to prison.
- In January 2012, representatives from Justice Health, Forensicare, Pacific Shores Healthcare and Corrections Victoria will meet to ensure appropriate processes are in place to ensure implementation of the above approach.
- A review of the processes and compliance with these amended procedures will occur in July 2012.

Please contact Liana Buchanan, Director, Office of Correctional Services Review on 9947 1664 if you would like any further information regarding these matters.

Yours sincerely



**PENNY ARMYTAGE**  
Secretary