

29 March 2021

Mr Darren Bracken
Coroner
Coroner's Court of Victoria
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SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

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Dear Coroner Bracken

Re: Mitchell Dowling, Court Reference: COR 2018 3490

The APS thanks the Coroner for the opportunity to respond to its recommendations from the hearing into the death of Mr Mitchell Dowling contained in your letter to the APS on 25 January 2021

The APS notes that the inquest found no evidence that the psychologist's treatment of Mr Dowling was below the expected standard.

The APS Ethics committee is responsible for the professional guidance of members and have provided advice on this matter after reviewing the findings of the case. The APS will implement several of the recommendations listed.

APS members will also be reminded, in line with current best practice guidelines in this area and guidance from the principles and standards of the APS Code of Ethics and APS Ethical Guidelines, that:

1. The APS supports the principle that young adults presenting with suicidal thoughts or plans should discuss with their treating psychologist whether they would like their family, friends and supports to be involved in their care.
2. The APS recognises that involving families, friends and supports in the young adult's care is complex and needs to be managed carefully. Both the discussion with the client, and any ensuing management plan for that individual, takes into account:
 - a. the person's right to confidentiality subject to risk of harm;
 - b. the level of risk of harm;
 - c. the role of family, friends and supports which may contribute to the young person's distress; and
 - d. any negative consequences that may arise from such involvement.
3. Even where a person wishes particular information not to be shared, this does not prevent psychologists from listening to the views of family members or prevent them from providing general information such as how to access services in a crisis.

The APS wishes to acknowledge the expert advice of Mr Simon Milton MAPS, Chair, APS Ethics Committee in leading the consideration of the matters raised.

Kind regards,



Dr Zena Burgess FAPS FAICD
Chief Executive Officer