



5 August 2022

Kate Sanderson
State Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006

Dear Kate Sanderson,

Investigation into the death of Hunter Patrick Boyle (COR 2020 004420).

We firstly wish to acknowledge the continued grief of all affected by this tragic incident, particularly Hunter's family and loved ones, and offer our sincere condolences to them.

Please find below Life Saving Victoria (LSV), Kidsafe Victoria and Farmsafe Australia's response to the recommendation directed to our organisations outlined in State Coroner, Judge John Cain's Finding without inquest into the death of Hunter Patrick Boyle (Court Reference: COR 2020 004420).

Recommendation:

"Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act, I make the following recommendations:

In accordance with the response of LSV, I recommend that water safety campaigns run by relevant organisations such as Farmsafe Australia, KidSafe, LSV and local government in Victoria, continue to promote public awareness of:

- i. how quickly children can get into danger around water, with a particular focus on waterbodies around the home and the differences between rural and urban water hazards;
- ii. the importance of fencing and/or safety barriers where appropriate to restrict access to water hazards and serve as a visual and physical barrier for children;
- iii. the wearing of high visibility clothing for children on rural properties to aid the visibility of children when on the property and to potentially decrease the search time for victims;
- iv. the removal of any items floating in dams that may attract children into the water and;
- v. having an emergency action plan in place where inland water bodies are present."

Response:

The Coroner's recommendation is being implemented in line with the scope and areas of responsibility of LSV, Kidsafe and Farmsafe Australia.



We are pleased to advise that the three named organisations within this Finding have already taken a collaborative approach towards actioning the above- mentioned recommendation, and we have also committed to aligning our prevention messaging into the future.

All five of the points captured within the Coroner's Recommendation are to be integrated into water safety campaigns conducted by our organisations, and promoted alongside our other relevant messaging such as advocating for children to be actively supervised and to learn swimming and water safety skills. Points i and ii will be integrated into our campaign messaging with no amendments to the wording.

Following discussion between our three organisations, it was agreed that some slight changes were necessary to Points iii, iv and v captured within the Coroner's Recommendation, as follows:

Point iii: the wearing of high visibility clothing for children on rural properties to aid the visibility of children when on the property and to potentially decrease the search time for victims.

We agree high visibility clothing is necessary for children to wear on rural properties and see huge value in promoting this within our messaging. Our proposed alteration to this is to amend 'high visibility clothing' to 'bright coloured clothing' for the following reasons:

- this alteration simplifies the messaging and ensures the accessibility of the call to action, as it does not indicate certain items that might need to be purchased specifically;
- the slight wording change still captures the intent of the high visibility type of clothing outlined, however also allows for the recommendation to be actioned immediately by parents and caregivers as it is more likely children will have bright clothing rather than specific high visibility items; and
- it aligns to wording used in other child injury prevention areas, such as road safety.

Point iv: the removal of any items floating in dams that may attract children into the water.

Removing items from dams is a necessary precaution against children interacting with the water, and we propose a minor alteration to the wording of this to meet the practicalities of dam ownership: 'the removal of any items floating in dams, *where practical*, that may attract children into the water'. The reason for this proposed change is that many dams require floating items to assist with pumping water for various purposes, such as irrigation and firefighting, therefore removing these would impact on other aspects of running the property. By demonstrating consideration of the ways in which dams are used on properties, it is felt that the messaging is more practical and therefore more likely to be actioned.

Point v: having an emergency action plan in place where inland water bodies are present.

As in point iii, we agree there is value in integrating this information into our campaigns, and feel additional clarification is required regarding what an emergency action plan would entail. As such, when promoting emergency action plans within our campaign messaging, we propose to focus on the importance of obtaining CPR and first aid skills, alongside other components of



what these plans would involve, to ensure appropriate preparedness should a drowning incident occur.

To ensure the messaging is integrated into our communications, we have developed a joint communication plan which outlines key communication tactics from LSV, Kidsafe Victoria and Farmsafe Australia in response to this Coronial Recommendation. The goals of this plan are to ensure that the elements of the recommendation are communicated to target audiences by Kidsafe Victoria, Farmsafe Australia and LSV. The communication plan outlines the timing of the messaging (considering specific months, seasons or ongoing), the agency responsible and whether it will be an individual or a combined communication effort. It also identifies the specific messaging to be included and the aligned components of the Coronial Recommendation, as well as the audience of focus and the channels for message distribution.

In line with our collaborative efforts to address the Coroner's Recommendation, as part of National Farm Safety Week we incorporated the updated messages into a joint Media Release on Wednesday 20 July 2022. This Media Release incorporated all points captured within the Coroner's Recommendation and quoted each organisation in support of these messages.

The safety of Victorians is our key focus and driver, and we thank the State Coroner for their expertise and care in ensuring we identify, define and improve on the lessons learnt from this tragic incident.

We would also like to acknowledge the work that Hunter's parents, Ash and Matt, have undertaken since losing him, in raising awareness through the '[Hunter Boyle Children's Swimming Program](#)' which they have developed with Kidsafe Victoria. The program demonstrates the resilience and determination of Ash and Matt, and all three of our organisations applaud them for their continued advocacy and work after such a devastating loss.

If you or any of your team have any questions in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Dr Bernadette Matthews, Principal Research Associate – General Manager; Phone: 03 9676 6976 | Email: bernadette.matthews@lsv.com.au
- Melanie Courtney, CEO Kidsafe Victoria; Phone: 9036 2306 | Email: melanie@kidsafevic.com.au
- Felicity Richards, Chair Farmsafe Australia; Email: felicityrichards@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mevan Jayawardena".

Mevan Jayawardena
Acting CEO Life Saving
Victoria

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melanie Courtney".

Melanie Courtney
CEO Kidsafe Victoria

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Felicity Richards".

Felicity Richards
Chair Farmsafe Australia