



Secretary

Department of Health

50 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Telephone: 1300 650 172  
GPO Box 4057  
Melbourne Victoria 3001  
[www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)  
DX 210081

BAC-CO-42911

Simon McGregor  
Coroner  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
[cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

Dear Coroner Simon McGregor

**COR 2020 001132, 001263, 001525, 003788 and 003894 – Investigation into the deaths of (de-identified) FSB, HBI, AHT, XRG and KCM**

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2023 regarding findings made without inquest into the deaths of five international students. I am saddened to learn further of the circumstances surrounding the tragic loss of these lives to suicide in Victoria. It is concerning that these five members of our community appeared not to have sought support prior to their deaths; their distress must have been a large burden to carry alone.

My condolences go out to the families and loved ones of the deceased, and to the staff and students who are impacted by their deaths.

**Update on reforms**

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (Royal Commission) recommended the Victorian Government facilitate a coordinated, evidence-informed, community-wide and whole-of-government approach to suicide prevention and response and mental health and wellbeing promotion efforts.

The Department of Health recognises that among their diverse experiences, international students experience unique stressors that can impact on their mental health and wellbeing. A multi-faceted approach across systems, services, and agencies is required.

As noted in your findings, my department's Suicide Prevention and Response Office established the International Students' Wellbeing Taskforce (the taskforce) in August 2022 in response to Coroner Jamieson's 2021 recommendation (COR 2018 6222). The taskforce aims to strengthen connections and alignment between government, sector, and community to respond to the challenges international students face.

Over the past year, taskforce members have worked together to build a shared understanding of drivers for wellbeing and to map practical settings and opportunities for action, driven by lived and living experiences of international students.

The taskforce's actions build upon and are informed by suicide prevention and response and mental health and wellbeing promotion efforts underway in response to the Royal Commission. Relevant initiatives include the forthcoming *Victorian suicide prevention and*

*response strategy 2024–2034, Wellbeing in Victoria: A strategy to promote good mental health, and the Diverse communities mental health and wellbeing framework and Blueprint for action. Together, these initiatives, and actions to implement them, will set the foundation for an integrated and accessible approach to mental health and wellbeing in Victoria.*

## **Response to recommendations**

I note the two recommendations made following your investigation of the five deaths:

*Recommendation 1: I recommend that the Suicide Prevention and Response Office review the Orygen Quality Evaluation Framework in the context of this finding and its other work relating to international students, and consider whether a resource such as the Quality Evaluation Framework would assist universities to assess and review how they support international student health and wellbeing.*

*Recommendation 2: I recommend that the Victorian Department of Health consider developing and maintaining a resource of this type to assist Victorian universities in implementing and reviewing their programs targeted at international student wellbeing. The resource could be regularly revised in collaboration with the universities to share new research, program design and ideas for monitoring international student wellbeing and encouraging help-seeking among those who may be experiencing mental health crises or suicidality.*

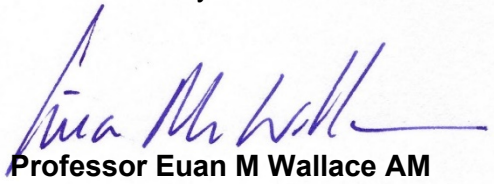
Recommendation 1 will be implemented. The Suicide Prevention and Response Office will review the framework in the context of the five findings and its other work related to international students and consider the framework's utility to assist universities to assess and review how they support international student health and wellbeing. The Office will conduct the review in collaboration with the taskforce through its 2024 program, currently in development. As the framework was developed several years ago to assist this coronial investigation, consideration will be given to its applicability to current research and practice and its utility in addressing issues identified in the findings.

Recommendation 2 will be implemented. In collaboration with the taskforce, my department will consider developing and maintaining a resource to assist universities in implementing and reviewing their programs targeted at international student wellbeing. This will include consideration of how a resource may be reviewed and revised over time. This would allow new research, program design and ideas for monitoring international student wellbeing to be shared and to encourage help-seeking among those who may be experiencing mental health crises or suicidality.

Thank you once again for providing these findings. I look forward to working closely with the Coroners Court of Victoria to continue to reduce the incidence and impact of suicide in Victoria.

If you require any further information, please contact Bailey Nation-Ingle, State Suicide Prevention and Response Adviser, on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Euan M Wallace', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

**Professor Euan M Wallace AM**

Secretary

06/02/2024