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Coroner recommends medical evidence to prove fitness to own firearms

Victorian Coroner Simon McGregor has today recommended that the Victorian Government consider requiring those wishing to own firearms provide medical evidence to confirm their suitability to apply for or renew their firearms license.

The recommendation comes after the suicide of AT, 42, in Lang Lang, Victoria in December 2024. At approximately 10pm on 19 December, an argument began between AT and his wife about a potential separation. AT, who had been drinking heavily at a family event that day, eventually agreed to sleep in the shed but then re-entered the home after 15 minutes. Upon re-entering the house, he put a handgun to his head and yelled at his wife, “look at me”, before firing the gun. Ambulance paramedics arrived first on the scene and were unable to revive AT who was pronounced deceased before police arrived at 1:17 am.

At the time of his death AT had a firearms license for long arms and handguns and owned five registered firearms including two handguns, two rifles and one air rifle. Records show that he had renewed his long arms licence in November 2022 and his handgun licence in May 2023.

Between 2016 and 2025 there were 342 suicides involving firearms in Victoria. Firearms licenses are granted for 5-year periods and when applying for or renewing a licence, the owner must declare that they meet certain suitability requirements including whether they have been treated in the last five years for mental health or alcohol or drug related issues. Currently the renewal process does not require the applicant to provide proof that they meet these criteria, rather it is a checkbox on the application form.

AT had an extensive history of mental health and substance use issues with multiple diagnoses in 2017 and 2019 including for depression and adjustment disorder. He had also sought treatment for ketamine misuse – though his use escalated in the months prior to his death – and in August 2021 he was admitted to hospital for inpatient mental health treatment.

In October 2024 – two months before his death – AT was also involved in an incident of alleged family violence against his wife and children which resulted in a Child Protection investigation and drug and alcohol testing.

AT failed to disclose his history of mental health and substance use when submitting his firearm renewal applications – despite the fact that his treatments had occurred within the five-year declaratory window – and the applications were subsequently approved.

In the finding, published for the first time today, Coroner McGregor said AT’s case demonstrated how current self-reporting rules left decision makers unable to adequately assess renewal applications. “Given the manifest omissions in AT’s License renewal application under the current system, I make no adverse comment about the individual decision making which led to the license being renewed” His Honour said. “The system itself, however, unfortunately has the hallmarks of a ‘rubber stamping’ process, rather than a genuine vetting process around the use and control of dangerous equipment.”

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This issue was canvassed in the Victorian Government's 2026 *Rapid Review of firearm laws in Victoria*, which made a recommendation to strengthen oversight across the full licence lifecycle, including renewal requirements, fit and proper person assessments, genuine need assessments, training and ongoing monitoring – to support early identification and management of risk. The Victorian Government has accepted this recommendation.

The Rapid Review further suggested that to achieve this objective, consultation should be undertaken to establish a clear and secure reporting pathway for medical practitioners, including GPs and psychologists, to notify Victoria Police where a licence holder's health condition may impact their ongoing fitness to hold a licence.

Coroner McGregor noted however that this fails to consider that medical practitioners have no access to information confirming which individuals have a firearms license beyond an individual volunteering this information. "It would be more appropriate and less resource intensive to consider placing the onus on firearm license/renewal applicants to provide medical evidence supporting their eligibility as a 'fit and proper person'" said His Honour.

In his investigation, Coroner McGregor also noted that it was important that Child Protection practitioners had information on firearms licences during their assessments, as access to or use of firearms and weapons poses an increased risk factor for family violence. During their investigation into AT, Child Protection were not notified by any of the witnesses of the presence of the five guns in the home. Furthermore, current Child Protection practice and training requires practitioners to take steps to check with Victoria Police when they suspect an individual has access to firearms rather than proactively seeking this information for every investigation commenced.

To prevent future deaths and improve public health and safety, Coroner McGregor recommends:

- i. That the Victorian Government in considering the implementation of Recommendation 7 of the Rapid Review, consider legislative amendments that address the issue of self-reporting health conditions for firearm license applications and renewals. The onus should be placed on applicants to provide appropriate medical evidence confirming their suitability to apply for or renew their firearms license.
- ii. That the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Victoria Police work together to explore opportunities for updating information sharing protocols so that relevant firearm licensing data can be made available to improve risk assessments for Child Protection and family violence investigations.

A copy of the finding can be accessed [here](#).

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