



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
DX 210081

SBR-260600070

Janet Lee
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Lee

Thank you for providing the findings of Coroner Ingrid Giles dated 17 April 2026 (COR 2022 002051) into the death of Simon Gaskill. I offer my condolences to Mr Gaskill's family and loved ones.

Coroner Giles made the following recommendations to the Department of Health (the Department):

Recommendation 9

That the Victorian Government, led by the Victorian Department of Health, consider as a matter of priority, funding an expansion of the Better Health and Housing Program to areas of need in Victoria, including in the Barwon region, to provide integrated health and housing support on discharge from hospital for people experiencing chronic homelessness and complex health needs including substance use issues (in particular severe alcohol use disorder) and mental illness.

Recommendation 10

That the Victorian Government, led by the Victorian Department of Health, as a matter of priority, develop and publish the monitoring and accountability mechanisms that will be used to track progress against the Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-35 (AOD Strategy). This document should set out the measurable milestones and outcomes to be achieved in each phase of the AOD Strategy, by reference to empirical data, and incorporate regular public reporting on the implementation and evaluation of actions taken to address and reduce alcohol and other drug-related harms.

Response to Recommendation 9

Coroner Giles' recommendation regarding the expansion of the Better Health and Housing Program (BHHP) to areas of need in Victoria is under consideration. The BHHP is currently funded and largely operated and managed by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). Any consideration of BHHP expansion would involve both departments given the program provides a joint health and homelessness response. I understand that Coroner McGregor made a recent recommendation to the Victorian Government regarding the further rollout of the BHHP in the matter of Sacha Timothee Louis Lefebvre (COR 2024

7013), for which DFFH provided a response. Given the interlinked nature of the BHHP, the department has drawn on DFFH's response with respect to matters relating to the program's expansion.

Future of the BHHP

The department notes that any expansion of the BHHP should be linked with broader service system reform and improvement work and is subject to future funding decisions by government.

The BHHP was independently evaluated in 2024, with the report stating the combination of health, wellbeing and housing outcomes empowered individuals to break the cycle of chronic homelessness and poor health. The report highlighted that maximising outcomes for the BHHP may require improved cross-sector coordination and a more strategic system-wide approach.

On 20 April 2026, representatives from DFFH met with program representatives from Launch Housing and St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne to discuss the issues of health risks and homelessness and the potential expansion of the BHHP. Discussions acknowledged the challenges of any program expansion to maintain fidelity of the current model and financial sustainability to ensure positive outcomes for participants. DFFH will continue discussions on program expansion with the BHHP partners and other stakeholders in the coming months.

Supported Housing

Through reforms arising from implementing recommendation 25 of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (Royal Commission), the Victorian Government is delivering supported housing that integrates accommodation with mental health and wellbeing supports. The department's Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services provide clinical care, alongside psychosocial supports through the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) or the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Homes Victoria at DFFH and the department are working in partnership to deliver 505 purpose-built dwellings scheduled across Victoria by the end of 2027, including 38 co-designed homes in the Barwon region, with tenants nominated by Barwon Health.

Mental Health Support

The department funds Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, which offer outreach programs that are run by clinicians for vulnerable members of the community, including those requiring acute mental health services and housing needs.

Additionally, the Royal Commission recommended that government invest in a wide range of time-limited and flexible residential respite services (recommendation 11.2), and the co-design of a new bed-based rehabilitation service (recommendation 12.2) led by consumers, carers, clinicians and relevant non-government organisations. The Victorian Government remains committed to implementing all Royal Commission recommendations and will continue to consider the links with relevant existing programs, such as the BHHP, especially in rural and regional areas.

Response to Recommendation 10

The department acknowledges the Coroner's recommendation to develop and publish the monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the [Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-35](#) (AOD Strategy). The department supports the intent of the recommendation and is currently establishing foundational governance, performance and

reporting arrangements for implementation of the AOD Strategy. Given these arrangements are still being developed and future implementation priorities remain subject to government decisions and available funding, the department is not yet able to publish a comprehensive monitoring and accountability framework.

Current AOD Strategy Implementation Phases

The AOD Strategy is split over three horizons (which represent the stages of implementation) as follows:

Horizon 1 from 2025-2028;

Horizon 2 from 2028 to 2031; and

Horizon 3 from 2031 onwards.

Additionally, there are five system enablers to support the AOD Strategy's objectives, namely:

Enabler 1: Governance;

Enabler 2: Partnerships with sector and community;

Enabler 3: Workforce;

Enabler 4: Policy and funding; and

Enabler 5: Data, ICT and infrastructure.

The department is currently progressing Horizon 1 activities, which focus on establishing internal governance and accountability, with Enabler 1 of the AOD Strategy prioritising governance. The department has already undertaken a variety of priority actions in relation to internal governance and will continue to work to strengthen governance capabilities in line with the AOD Strategy, including consideration of appropriate milestones, outcomes, and performance measures.

While public accountability measures may become appropriate over the longer term, the department's immediate focus on Horizon 1 is to establish the governance, accountability and reporting arrangements needed to support implementation of the AOD Strategy. As these arrangements are still being developed, the department cannot yet determine the form of future monitoring and accountability mechanisms, or whether they will be made public.

This staged approach will help ensure any future framework on the implementation of the AOD Strategy is practical, meaningful and aligned with government decision-making, available resources and future investment. The department will consider public accountability measures once governance arrangements are established and implementation priorities have matured.

Current work contributing to the implementation of the AOD strategy

A range of initiatives funded in 2026–27 contribute to the objectives of the AOD Strategy, including:

- community-based treatment and integrated support services;
- harm reduction initiatives such as naloxone distribution and outreach services;
- health-led responses to substance use, including public intoxication reforms;
- continuation of pharmacotherapy treatment access, including the delivery of a low-dose methadone trial;
- continued implementation of the [Statewide Action Plan](#);

- and continuation of the AOD Ministerial Advisory Committee and the role of Chief Addiction Medicine Advisor to ensure the system is supported with the right governance and expert clinical advice.

I trust this response is of assistance to the Court.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Whetton

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Acting Secretary

17/07/2026