



VICTORIA POLICE

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Chief Commissioner of Police

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Our Ref: FF-196385
Your Ref: 2017/270415

Deputy State Coroner Kennedy

By Email: lidcombe.coroners@justice.nsw.gov.au

Subject: Darren Higgins – Findings into the death of Darren Higgins
Court Reference: 2017/270415
Date of Recommendations: 3 March 2023

Dear Deputy State Coroner Kennedy,

Victoria Police response to recommendations arising from the Findings into the death of Darren HIGGINS

I refer to your recommendations to Victoria Police arising from the Findings into the death of Darren Higgins, delivered on 3 March 2023, and as outlined below:

Recommendations directed to Victoria Police

- a) *Give consideration to developing a memorandum of understanding between the two Police forces, applying to circumstances where a person goes missing in a border region adjacent to the Murray River in either New South Wales or Victoria AND that person is considered by either a New South Wales or Victorian missing person risk assessment to be high risk of misadventure or death if not located as soon as possible, addressing:*
- b) *The exchange of information obtained by each Police force in relation to that person; and*
- c) *Co-ordination between the two Police forces of search and investigative resources, where feasible;*
- d) *In addressing point (a) above, to consider including as part of that information exchange process, a requirement that an officer of Inspector level or higher in each relevantly adjoining New South Wales and Victorian local regional Command having direct oversight of the information exchange; and that the officer in charge of the New South Wales missing person investigation and their Victorian counterpart immediately liaise and continue to directly liaise as part of that information exchange;*

- e) *To consequently update the relevant New South Wales and Victorian Missing Persons Standard Operating Procedures and Policies should any of proposed recommendation 1(a) and/or (b) be implemented;*
- f) *To give consideration to identifying in such Standard Operating Procedures and Policies (as referred to in (c) above) how an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer may be used to help provide a culturally safe context when dealing with families and relevant extended kin of a missing First Nations person, including when obtaining information to assist in a missing person investigation and when conducting a land or water search.*

Victoria Police supports your recommendations, and they are being implemented.

Recommendations (a-e)

These recommendations will be implemented.

The recommendations will be addressed by an MOU for command, control and coordination of missing persons incident response. This MOU is being developed in conjunction with the ANZPAA Missing Person Investigation Guidelines. There is an ongoing working group involving VIC, SA and NSW police for the creation of the MOU.

On May 2023 a cross-border conference took place at which it was ratified that High Risk Missing Persons at a border required an Inspector to assume control as the incident controller and primacy will further be determined through consultation with the corresponding jurisdiction Inspector.

Recommendations (f)

This recommendation falls within the Family Liaison Officer Practice Guide. This document is referenced in the VPMG – Missing Persons investigations policy document and the Missing persons Investigative Guidelines.

The formalisation of the MOU will be able to be incorporated into future Missing Person VPMG amendments.

Yours sincerely



Shane Patton APM
Chief Commissioner

15/9/23