

Media Release

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Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

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RESPECTING DIVERSITY IN THE CORONIAL PROCESS

The Andrews Labor Government has welcomed recommendations from the Coronial Council of Victoria to improve the experiences of multicultural and multifaith communities during the challenging coronial process.

The Council today released its report on the appropriate handling of deaths in multicultural and multifaith communities by the Coroners Court. Its consultations identified ways to better respond to cultural and religious considerations throughout the coronial process, as well as how to improve communication with families.

This includes abiding by cultural and religious practices during investigations, ensuring timelines for release of the body better meet religious and cultural needs and favouring non-invasive post-mortem examinations where possible.

The rollout of on-site multifaith and multicultural engagement officers at the Coroners Court, dedicated learning and development programs for staff and community members, greater participation of grieving family members in the coronial process, and increased therapeutic supports are also key council recommendations.

With support from the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the council worked with religious and cultural community members to shape the report with a focus on the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox Christian and Sikh faiths.

The council also engaged with representatives from the Coroners Court, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and Victoria Police.

The court is also working separately with Aboriginal communities to provide a culturally appropriate approach to handling the deaths of Aboriginal people.

The Council today also released the report of its review into reportable deaths, recommending the definition of a 'reportable death' in the *Coroners Act 2008* be clarified to reduce ambiguity and ensure investigations focus on cases that are of greatest public benefit – providing better insights to prevent future deaths.

The Government will consider the council's recommendations that apply to it and work closely with stakeholders on the issues raised in both reports.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"We know that coronial procedures can sometimes be at odds with cultural and religious beliefs and practices, which is why families must form a key part of the process."

"These reviews will help to find the right balance for proper oversight of preventable deaths while minimising intrusion for grieving families."

Quote attributable to Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence

"End-of-life cultural and religious rites are vital to many Victorians and we welcome the contribution of our multifaith and multicultural communities in developing initiatives that will directly benefit them and their families."

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