The Coroners Court in Victoria

FACT SHEET 10

The role of the Victoria Police force in the coronial process

THIRRILI

This fact sheet explains the role of the police force in a coronial inquest when a family member dies suddenly. The fact sheet explains what to expect when talking to the police throughout the coronial process.

What is the role of the police?

- Victoria Police are required to report sudden or unexplained deaths to the coroner.
- The police will start gathering information immediately after a death to provide an initial report to the coroner.
- If the coroner decides the death was not due to natural circumstances, the police are directed to carry out a full investigation.
- The police may ask for reports from experts and statements from witnesses, including family and friends as a part of their investigation.
- The police provide a report to the coroner about their investigation (a brief of evidence) which the coroner will use to help find out the cause and circumstances of the death of a loved one.
- If there is a death in custody of an Indigenous person, the Court will contact the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to facilitate legal advice for senior next of kin on their rights in relation to the coronial process.

Communicating with the Police

- The police are expected to provide updates on the status of the investigation and the coronial process to the family of the deceased including when and why there are delays. The police will update families after the coroner has made their findings.
- Families of the deceased can raise any issues and concerns surrounding the conduct of the police investigation including concerns in relation to the circumstances of the death.
- The police may request a statement from family members about the deceased and the circumstances of the death. You only need to provide a statement to police if you want to.
- Traditions and customs around Sorry Business are an important time for family and community. You can ask the police to respect your traditions and that there are no unnecessary phone calls, visits, and questions at this important time.
- A coroner might ask someone to give evidence to the Court if they can provide relevant information to the coronial proceedings. The police will send a formal request (subpoena) to the people the coroner wants to give evidence. If someone refuses to attend the Coroners Court, the coroner may ask the police to arrest them.

More help

The Victoria Police Force Aboriginal Liaison Unit (ALU) are responsible for enhancing relationships between police and the local Aboriginal Community, as well as establishing effective communication and networks between the police, Aboriginal community, government, and non-government agencies

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service can be contacted by phone: 1800 064 865

Aboriginal Engagement Unit of the Coroners Court can be contacted by phone or email: (03) 8685 1157 or at Kooriccov@courts.vic.gov.au

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