



28 March 2018

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Robert Redlich QC
Commissioner
Independent Broad-based
Anti-Corruption Commission
GPO Box 24234
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Commissioner

Operation Tone: AV Progress Report

In its Special Report, IBAC recommended, pursuant to section 159(1) of the IBAC Act, that Ambulance Victoria conduct a comprehensive review of the use and misuse of drugs of dependence by its employees and develop a framework to prevent / detect such misuse.

IBAC required AV to provide it with a progress report by 30 March 2018 with respect to the implementation of that recommendation. I attach that progress report for your consideration.

AV will provide its final report by 28 September 2018.

Yours sincerely

Assoc Prof TONY WALKER ASM
Chief Executive Officer



AMBULANCE VICTORIA - PROGRESS REPORT

The first recommendation in IBAC's Special Report is expressed in the following terms:

That AV conduct a comprehensive review of the use of illicit drugs and misuse of drugs of dependence by AV employees, as well as the development and implementation of a more robust framework to prevent and detect such drug use. The review should consider, among other things:

- *the development and communication of a clear policy on the use of illicit drugs and misuse of drugs of dependence, and the consequences of such use by AV employees, with reference to contemporary best practice*
- *the adequacy of the current drug testing regime and how it can be improved (eg by conducting random testing of a minimum percentage Of the workforce)*
- *the adequacy of current drug controls, including drug disposal processes*
- *improving training and communication to operational employees on relevant policies, including drug handling policies and procedures, and use of AV equipment for personal use*
- *ensuring mechanisms are in place to encourage employees to report suspected misconduct or corrupt conduct including illicit drug use, misuse of drugs of dependence and misappropriation of equipment*
- *strengthening recruitment processes and policies to more effectively identify and manage risks*
- *providing appropriate welfare and support arrangements to employees who appear to be using illicit drugs and/or drugs of dependence.*

AV is to provide IBAC with a progress report by 30 March 2018 and a final report by 28 September 2018 on the implementation of this recommendation.

AV's review has considered each of the matters particularised in Recommendation 1.

Taking each in turn:

1. IBAC recommended that AV review:

the development and communication of a clear policy on the use of illicit drugs and misuse of drugs of dependence, and the consequences of such use by AV employees, with reference to contemporary best practice.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) A new Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Policy was introduced effective from 1 January 2017.
- (b) A post policy implementation review was completed after the first 12 months of implementation.
- (c) An industry comparison undertaken to determine best practice for testing of our staff.
- (d) The random testing component of the AOD policy was activated.



2. IBAC recommended that AV review:

the adequacy of the current drug testing regime and how it can be improved (eg by conducting random testing of a minimum percentage of the workforce).

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) AOD Industry comparison was undertaken to establish best practice and inform AV's approach to random testing. A first year screening rate target was set at 20% of the workforce.
- (b) Random Testing includes breath, oral and urine samples.
- (c) Communication to staff regarding random testing occurred on 3 January 2018.
- (d) Random testing commenced on 9 January 2018.
- (e) By 13 March 2018, 198 employees had been drug and alcohol tested state wide.
- (f) Random tests will continue on a weekly basis.

3. IBAC recommended that AV review:

the adequacy of current drug controls, including drug disposal processes.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) Four pharmacists have been recruited to reduce the involvement of paramedics in ordering, receipting and auditing restricted medication movements.
- (b) Pharmacists are now delivering and auditing restricted medication movements in high risk rural locations, with phased introduction underway into metropolitan branches.
- (c) An Electronic Medication Inventory system is being developed by an external expert provider to improve medication management, compliance audits and assist with intelligence-led investigation of restricted medication irregularities. This will be introduced at all AV paramedic locations. Implementation will commence in August 2018.
- (d) Policy and procedure regarding disposal of residual restricted medication has been strengthened and compliance audits adapted accordingly.

4. IBAC recommended that AV take steps to:

[improve] training and communication to operational employees on relevant policies, including drug handling policies and procedures, and use of AV equipment for personal use.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) CEO letter provided to every employee and volunteer state wide, detailing expectations of employment, AV Code of Conduct and the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct.
- (b) Training package for all operational staff on restricted medication has been developed and is scheduled into the 2018 Continued Paramedic Education training package, commencing July 2018.
- (c) New policy position has been developed, communicated and implemented regarding the use of AV supplied equipment outside of operational shift requirements to remove any ambiguity around what is reasonable paramedic practice outside of the workplace.



5. IBAC recommended that AV take steps to:

[ensure] mechanisms are in place to encourage employees to report suspected misconduct or corrupt conduct including illicit drug use, misuse of drugs of dependence and misappropriation of equipment.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) A Professional Conduct Unit (PCU) that provides a standardised, transparent and consistent approach to the management of all complaints has been established. The PCU removes the need for staff to report suspected misconduct to managers and can be done so anonymously via a confidential phone line.
- (b) A communications package informing staff of Professional Conduct expectations has been developed and delivered.
- (c) An Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) specialist for the welfare of employees and / or volunteers seeking support for AOD related concerns has been appointed. The AOD specialist provides confidential advice to employees seeking help for themselves or others.

6. IBAC recommended that AV take steps to:

[Strengthen] recruitment processes and policies to more effectively identify and manage risks.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) A Paramedic Recruitment Strategy, inclusive of AOD pre-screening and psychometric screening, commenced on 1 January 2017.
- (b) Paramedic Recruitment Psychological Inherent Requirements have been added to the paramedic recruitment strategy to facilitate the selection of fit-for-purpose recruits.

7. IBAC recommended that AV take steps to:

[provide] appropriate welfare and support arrangements to employees who appear to be using illicit drugs and/or drugs of dependence.

By way of progress report, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) Policies have been redeveloped with expert external assistance to ensure a welfare-based approach to drug and alcohol misuse.
- (b) An AOD specialist has been appointed to support staff and volunteers with a welfare based approach to identified drug and alcohol misuse.

The final report will be provided to IBAC by 28 September 2018. If IBAC has any queries or concerns in relation to any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the Chief Executive Officer, Assoc. Prof. Tony Walker ASM on 9840 3500.

