



26th September 2018

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

Dear Commissioner

Operation Tone: Ambulance Victoria (AV) Final Report

In its Special Report, IBAC recommended, pursuant to section 159(1) of the IBAC Act, that AV 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.

Further to the interim report provided in March 2018, I attach the final report in response to the recommendations for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc Prof TONY WALKER ASM
Chief Executive Officer



AMBULANCE VICTORIA - FINAL 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 provided IBAC with a progress report as of 30 March 2018, and now provides this final report detailing the implementations 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.

In response to this recommendation, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) A new Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Policy was introduced effective from 1 January 2017. The policy clearly articulates the expectations placed on AV employees, volunteers and contracts with regards to AOD and the consequences of alcohol and other drug use.
- (b) A post policy implementation review was completed after the first 12 months of implementation.
- (c) A supporting new AOD procedure was introduced effective 1 December 2017. This procedural document provides guidance to all employees in the interpretation and implementation of Ambulance Victoria's (AV) Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Policy and outlines roles and responsibilities as part of enforcing the AOD policy, testing



methods, and support services available. The procedure also outlines the consequences of undesired AOD testing outcomes.

- (d) An industry comparison was undertaken to determine best practice for testing of our staff.
- (e) The random testing component of the AOD policy was activated.
- (f) 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
- (g) A CEO letter was provided to every employee and volunteer state wide, detailing expectations of employment, AV Code of Conduct and the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct
- (h) Communication to staff about the AOD policy, procedures, support services and consequences has been published on AV's intranet site (including via a CEO video), and has been made available through a new AOD online training module and via face to face training for managers.

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).

In response to this recommendation, AV has undertaken the following reforms and initiatives:

- (a) An 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) Between 3rd January 2018 and 13th Sept 2018, 1281 staff were tested for alcohol and other drugs with seven employees testing positive for illicit substances and one employees testing positive for an AV medication.
- (f) Random tests will continue on an ongoing basis.
- (g) AV has committed to the publication of the AOD testing results in the Annual Report, commencing in the 2017/18 report.

3. IBAC recommended that AV review:

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

In response to this recommendation, 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 across all regions state wide.
- (c) An Electronic Medication Inventory system has been developed by an external expert provider to improve medication management, compliance audits and assist with intelligence-led investigation of restricted medication irregularities. This system



will be introduced at all AV paramedic locations, with final completion targeted for the end of October 2018.

- (d) Policy and procedure documents regarding disposal of residual restricted medication have 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.

In response to this recommendation, 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 was introduced into the 2018 Continued Paramedic Education training package that commenced in July 2018.
- (c) New policy and procedure 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.
- (d) Information has been published on the AV intranet via a dedicated AOD page, including a CEO video message to all staff.

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.

In response to this recommendation, 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 enables staff to report suspected misconduct to managers 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.



In response to this recommendation, 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.

In response to this recommendation, 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.
- (c) An AOD Supportive Framework was introduced in August 2017 that provides an evidenced-based person centred approach to managing AOD related cases.

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.

