

Victoria Police Status – Suitable for publication

IBAC report '*Special report concerning illicit drug use by Victoria Police officers: Operations Apsley, Hotham and Yarrowitch*'

Recommendation 1.a - the development of clear policy on the use of illicit drugs and the consequences of such use by officers, with reference to contemporary best practice

Victoria Police submits that this recommendation is now acquitted by the publication, in May 2021, of the Victoria Police policy titled *Alcohol and other drugs* which is supported by an Alcohol and Other Drugs Practice Guide. Both these documents were provided to IBAC on 30 June 2021.

Recommendation 1.b - strengthening recruitment processes and policies to more effectively identify and manage risks

Victoria Police offers the following employment streams:

- Sworn police officer
- Sworn Protective Service Officers (PSO)
- Police Custody Officers
- Victoria Public Service (VPS) employees.

There are numerous routes to securing a sworn policing role within Victoria Police, apart from individual applications by members of the public via Recruiting Services Branch. Specialised routes include:

- Former Victoria Police members via registration with the Police Registration and Services Board
- Prior policing experience, nationally or internationally
- Constables Qualification Program internal recruitment process for PSO's transitioning to becoming sworn police officers
- Targeted recruitment for high-specialised roles.

Future strengthening of the recruitment process is proposed to include the following:

- Following a successful pilot of designated work unit (DWU) testing of 20 recruits per month, an increase in the frequency of testing will shortly be introduced to fortnightly which will increase testing to 40 recruits per month.
- Reviewing the recruitment and applicant processes across all streams of employment to identify and manage applicants who declare alcohol and drug use. The research and progression towards implementation of this remains underway.



A standardised communication to reinforce Victoria Police's position on the consequences of alcohol and drug use inclusive of on-duty and off-duty behaviour, as well as the welfare support arrangements available for employees who use, abuse, misuse and/or are detected using alcohol and drugs resulting from workplace drug and alcohol testing.

Recommendation 1.c - the adequacy of the current drug testing regime and how it can be improved

- Internal funding has been approved to increase random testing of sworn staff from 5% to 30% per annum
- To achieve the 30% target, the Drug and Alcohol Testing Unit (DATU) will become a stand-alone unit with dedicated collectors. The development of the practice has reference to contemporary best practice. i.e., Interstate policies and models
- Funding for recruitment of additional DATU staff has been approved, and recruitment is expected to be finalised during 2021
- An organisational review to identify more work units and work functions to become designated under drug and alcohol testing is in progress. The identification of these units and functions will aid in improvements to identification of 'at risk' employees and workplaces
- Legislative changes to the *Victoria Police Act 2013* and *Victoria Police Regulations 2014* to improve the scope and coverage of drug and alcohol testing are being considered.

Recommendation 1.d - improving training and communication to clearly and regularly reinforce Victoria Police's position and response to illicit drug use by its officers

To following activities to improve employee's awareness have been undertaken:

- Victoria Police Manual *Alcohol and Other Drugs* and the associated Practice Guide developed and published (per advice in 1a)
- Drug and Alcohol Testing Unit Intranet page has been developed and will continue to mature with themes including:
 - ❖ A holistic overview of all regimes of drug and alcohol testing, authorisation and the giving of a testing direction
 - ❖ Guidelines on how to arrange testing both during business-hours and after-hours
 - ❖ Designated work unit and designated work function application checklist has been developed and socialised
 - ❖ Links to drug and alcohol testing reference material – The policy and practice guide, relevant testing forms, *Victoria Police Act 2013*, *Victoria Police Regulations 2014*, Chief Commissioner's Instrument of Delegation, Wellbeing Services, Medical Advisory Unit and Professional Standards Command (PSC)
- Professional Standards Command immediate notification criteria checklist/flow chart and patrol prompt cards inclusive of Critical Incident testing is being developed to ensure responses are timely and accurate



- PSC 'Unlock the Vault' – details a range of de-identified case studies where Victoria Police employees have engaged in unacceptable behaviour. These Intranet based resources ask readers to consider their actions as a responding police officer or supervisor. Drug and alcohol examples have been included as well as a test scenario with links to the policy and practice guide, Drug and Alcohol Testing Unit Intranet page and Wellbeing Services.
- PSC Organisational Behavioural Trends document details statistics of illicit substance use by employees also published with links to the policy and practice guide, Drug and Alcohol Testing Unit Intranet page and Wellbeing Services. This document is also published organisation wide
- Random/Targeted testing and Designated Work Unit and Designated Work Function application process included as part of the Sergeant's Qualification Program to educate Supervisors on the relevance of drug and alcohol testing and intrusive leadership
- Sworn position descriptions include a requirement that, *"the position may require you by direction to undergo drug and alcohol testing in accordance with the provisions of the Victoria Police Act 2013, Victoria Police Regulations 2014 and associated guidelines"*.

The following activities are in progress:

- Exploring the development of a drug and alcohol testing education and awareness E-Learning package
- Authorised Officer and management drug and alcohol testing guidelines and Information Sheets are under development
- Critical Incident testing flowchart under development (as mentioned in 1d)
- Drug and Alcohol Testing FAQ's are under development
- Review of testing forms to include links to the policy and practice guide, Drug and Alcohol Testing Unit Intranet page and Wellbeing Services
- PSC 'Unlock the Vault' – targeted testing will be included in a future publication(s)
- Review of Leadership and Development programs to improve drug and alcohol testing content inclusive of the corruption and misconduct risks associated with alcohol and drug use.

Recommendation 1.e - appropriate welfare and support arrangements for officers detected using illicit drugs, including those who voluntarily disclose their use of illicit drugs

- A range of appropriate internal and external wellbeing support services are already in place for employees and their immediate families and veterans, who are experiencing issues with alcohol and drug use. These support services are available irrespective of the manner in which use is detected.