

Media Release
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COMMENTS BY POLICE TOP BRASS HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO POLICE SHOOTING

Last night's fatal police shooting in St Kilda exposes the need for the independent investigation of police shootings and highlights the pitfalls of a media-unit lead response, say legal and human rights groups.

"This is an extremely serious case," said Mr de Kretser, Executive Officer of the Victorian Federation of Community Legal Centres. "A life has been lost. Three bullets have been discharged in a busy public area. There are issues concerning police officer safety, public safety and incident planning which need to be explored."

Mr de Kretser said the police officers may have acted entirely appropriately in this tragic case, but the facts must be properly established through an independent investigation.

"There must be a genuinely independent investigation for the public to have confidence in the process. There may be important lessons that can be learned to help avoid future police shootings and that's why Victoria needs a system in which we have an independent and unbiased assessment of all police shootings," Mr de Kretser said.

The Human Rights Law Centre's Director of Advocacy and Strategic Litigation, Emily Howie, agrees that to be effective all investigations into serious police violence must be independent.

"It is no use having the police investigate themselves. Initial comments by senior Victoria Police backing the officers' conduct are inappropriate and call into question the ability of Victoria Police to conduct the investigation impartially and independently," Ms Howie said.

Under our current system, the police homicide squad conducts the shooting investigation. Police officers prepare the brief of evidence for the Coroner and the police's Ethical Standards Department examines the officers' conduct.

"By failing to provide for an objective examination from outside of the police force, our system falls short of the standard required by international human rights law and the Victorian Human Rights Charter. Investigation should be conducted by a independent body such as the Office of Police Integrity or the new Independent Broad Based Anti Corruption Commission which the Baillieu Government is establishing," Ms Howie said.

This independent model is already being used in Queensland, parts of Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

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