

Media Release



PSO firearm death highlights risk of armed officers

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Last night's incident involving a Protective Services Officer outside State Parliament has highlighted fundamental safety issues around the presence of armed guards in public places, according to Victorian peak body, the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

'A Protective Services Officer (PSO) has been seriously injured, his gun taken from him and later discharged in a public place with fatal consequences by a man who may have been experiencing mental health issues,' said policy officer, Michelle McDonnell, today.

'The immediate focus should be on the welfare of the injured PSO, and the family of the deceased. However, this tragic incident raises issues concerning the safety both of PSOs and the public that need to be explored by the Coroner, who will now investigate what happened and whether the death could have been prevented.

'Among the questions that must be addressed is whether the PSO was attacked in order to access the weapon, and whether having single patrols creates unjustifiable safety risks.

'The investigation should also include an examination of the adequacy of mental health services should mental illness prove a factor in this tragic incident.

'While it is too early to draw conclusions on what happened, last night's incident highlights concerns around the fact that all PSOs routinely carry semi-automatic weapons,' McDonnell said.

In February this year, the Government began its roll out of 940 armed PSOs at every Melbourne train station and some regional stations.

'We want a safe train system but having nearly 1000 guards armed with semi-automatic firearms is not the right way to go about protecting commuters. These extra guns only increase the risk that someone could be injured or even killed. It will be safer for everyone, including the PSOs themselves, if their guns are removed,' she concluded.

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Further information

www.fclc.org.au/cb_pages/your_rights_on_track_with_psos.php