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MEDIA RELEASE

Cassidy inquest prompts Coroner's call for youth-specific police training

The State Coroner's findings into the fatal police shooting of 15 year old Tyler Cassidy signals an urgent need for Victoria police to ensure its training equips members with the skills necessary to recognise and safely manage vulnerable young people such as Tyler.

Smart Justice for Young People welcomes the introduction of youth specific training.

"Tyler presented on the night of his death in a highly emotional, distressed and agitated state. His mental state and age were highly relevant factors that should have informed how members of Victoria Police engaged with him. Sadly, police training did not equip these members with the skills to identify and respond to Tyler," Tiffany Overall, the group's spokesperson, said.

At the time of the shooting, police training did not contain any program addressing the unique protection needs and issues confronting young people. The Victoria Police Manual did not contain any specifics relating to the use of force against children or young people in mental crisis. Despite some improvements, neither the Victoria Police Manual nor police training have addressed these gaps since Tyler Cassidy's death.

"Police training must prepare officers for dealing with young people who may be in crisis if we are to avoid a similar tragedy. We hope the Coroner's recommendations mean positive changes can come out of this incident," Ms. Overall said.

The group supports the Coroner's recommendation to develop and incorporate a youth specific component to police training. The group would like to see content on adolescent brain development, how to identify a young person and the importance of age in making a risk assessment within the training program.

The group urges Victoria Police to partner with experts in the development and delivery of such training. The group's members – from the community, youth and legal sectors – are willing to assist the police in any way with improvements to their training program.

Smart Justice for Young People calls for the implementation of the Coroner's recommendations as a matter of urgency and urges Victoria Police to pursue a transparent process of implementing these recommendations.

"The Coroner noted that Victoria Police have failed to act on the findings of numerous reviews into training and operational procedures. The time has come for Victoria Police to act without delay on these latest findings, if we are to avoid fatal police shootings in the future," Ms. Overall said.

For further details, please contact:

Tiffany Overall, Co-Director, Youthlaw
tiffany@youthlaw.asn.au
9611 2422
0400 903 034

Kerry O'Shea, Public Affairs Manager, Law Institute
of Victoria
koshea@liv.asn.au
0401 107 103