



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd.

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MEDIA RELEASE

The Death In Custody Of The Late Mr Paul Carter

Friday the 18th of April 2008

On Monday the 21st of April 2008, at the Coroners Court sitting in Mildura, a Coronial Inquest will begin before Her Honour Judge Coate into the death of Mr Paul Carter.

Late in the evening of 6 August 2006, Mr Carter was placed in a divisional van by members of Victoria Police with a view to returning him to his parents address some three kilometers away. Early in the morning of Monday the 7th of August 2006 the two officers in attendance then made the inexplicable decision to drive Mr Carter past the Mildura Airport, 15 kilometers from the town centre to a location on the Sturt Highway. Mr Carter was left at this location and shortly thereafter struck by a heavy utility vehicle. Mr Carter died instantly.

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service [VALS] strongly contends that the death of Mr Carter is an Aboriginal Death in Custody.

In relation to the deficiency of the Police response that night, VALS contends that this matter exposes both an inadequate assessment of risk and negligence in relation to the duty of care that should have been afforded to Mr Carter.

VALS maintains that in such an instance, where intoxication is evident, Mildura Police failed to perform appropriate risk assessment procedures, and were in disregard of the custodial role required by their attendance that night, particularly with reference to Standard Operating Procedures and well-established practices for dealing with Aboriginal peoples in custody. In addition, VALS contends that the lack of a continuum of care witnessed in this case reflects a broader, systemic problem with in Victoria Police in relation to responses to intoxicated persons.

VALS contends that the circumstances of Mr Carters death has cause great anxiety within the local Indigenous community specifically, and the Indigenous Community across Victoria more generally. As such, VALS is calling upon members of the community to come forward if they have received or heard of similar practices of the Victoria Police, particularly in relation to the transportation of individuals out of town.

Those individuals are invited to contact Ms Jillian Prior as soon as possible.

Further Media Enquiries should be directed to:

Ms Jillian Prior (Executive Officer – Legal Practice) 9419 3888