

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Put training back on the agenda for police: Mental Illness Fellowship**

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria has called on Victoria Police to put psychiatric crisis training for all officers back on their priority list, following the fatal shooting of a mentally-ill man in Sunshine yesterday.

Last year, Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria successfully piloted a training project called "Understanding Mental Illness Workshop" with Victoria Police across Region 3 in regional Victoria – based on the Memphis model of international expert Major Sam Cochran. However, to date, the model has not been introduced to other areas of the state – including Sunshine.

"The fact that capsicum spray was available, but not used, suggests that the real missing element in this situation is adequate training," says Elizabeth Crowther, CEO of Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, "I think the only good thing that could come from yesterday's incident would be if Victoria Police strengthen its resolve to equip their officers with the resources they need."

"If the public can't have confidence in the way police intervene in crises, then we're going to see a lot more deaths that could have been avoided. Already family members of people with a mental illness are telling us that they are reluctant to call police in a crisis for fear of a fatal outcome."

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria reaffirmed its belief that Victoria Police can make a positive impact in moments of crisis but admitted concerns that officers were being sent into tense situations without adequate information of skills to bring resolve them safely.

"Training police to work with people with mental illness is a win-win situation. It's that simple," affirms Crowther, "As well as making the community feel safer around police officers, it enables officers to feel more confident in stressful situations – which has got to be good for their peace of mind."

"Let's not forget that there are two young officers out there who are going through hell right now because of what happened yesterday."

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