Coroners Prevention Unit
Response to Data Request

Coroners Court of Victoria

To:	Personal Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence
From:	Jeremy Dwyer, Coroners Prevention Unit
Date:	6 May 2021
Subject:	Deaths relating directly or indirectly to the Crown Casino Complex

Dear Personal

Thank you for your email dated 29 April 2021, describing the Victorian coronial data that might assist the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence (RCCOL). State Coroner, Judge John Cain considered your request and directed me to prepare this response.

Attachment A to this memorandum describes the steps I took to identify deaths reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria (CCOV) which occurred between 2006 and 2020, and which met one or more of your three criteria:

- The death occurred on the premises of Crown Casino;
- The death occurred in the context of gambling at Crown Casino; and
- The deceased attended Crown Casino prior to death in circumstances where the attendance may have been relevant to the cause of death.

Information about the deaths themselves is included in the Excel spreadsheet that accompanies this memorandum.

Attachment B describes a research project that the CCOV is undertaking in collaboration with Dr Angela Rintoul of Federation University. The purpose of the project is to understand better the intersection between problem gambling and suicide in Victoria. Some preliminary study results pertaining to gambling and Crown Casino are included, in case they might be of interest to the RCCOL.

For further information regarding the contents of this memorandum please contact me on 8688 0798 or via email: <jeremy.dwyer@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au>.

Best regards

Jeremy Dwyer

Attachment A

A1. Background

Norah Wright of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence (RCCOL) requested that the Coroners Court of Victoria (CCOV) provide information regarding deaths reported to the Coroner during "the past 15 years" which relate directly or indirectly to the Crown Casino Complex. Norah specified the following categories of deaths:

> *"(a) deaths, or incident resulting in the deaths, that have occurred on the premises of Crown Casino;*
>
> *"(b) deaths where the available material suggested that the death occurred in the context of gambling at Crown Casino; and*
>
> *"(c) deaths where the deceased had attended Crown Casino prior to their death and the attendance may have been relevant to the cause of death."*

State Coroner Judge John Cain directed that I prepare this requested information to assist the RCCOL.

A.2 Definitions and inclusion criteria

For purposes of this request I defined "the past 15 years" as the period 2006 to 2020 inclusive. I defined "Crown Casino" to include the casino itself, the surrounding Crown Casino complex of shops and restaurants and cinemas, the three hotels (Crown Metropol, Crown Towers and Crown Promenade), and immediately adjacent footpaths and the Yarra Promenade.

I deemed a death to be relevant to the RCCOL request if it was reported to the CCOV between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2020, and met any of these three inclusion criteria:

(a) The death, or fatal incident leading to death, occurred at Crown Casino. I included all deaths from all causes.

(b) The death occurred in the context of gambling at Crown Casino. I understood "the context of gambling" to mean gambling bore some relation to the death. An example of this might be a suicide in circumstances where the deceased had gambled and lost money at Crown Casino, and evidence suggested the loss was a relevant stressor informing the decision to suicide. I excluded deaths where the evidence did not support a link to gambling at Crown Casino; for example, where the deceased had recently attended Crown Casino to gamble but the death resulted from natural causes.

(c) The death occurred in circumstances where a prior attendance at Crown Casino may have been relevant to the cause of death. I understood a "relevant" attendance at Crown Casino to be an attendance that may have caused or contributed to the death. An example of this might be where a person attended Crown Casino, consumed alcohol for several hours, then subsequently was struck by a car outside Crown Casino while intoxicated.

A.3 Data sources

I used two data sources to identify relevant deaths. The first source was the CCOV's death surveillance system, which contains the address of every death reported to the CCOV between 1 January 2000 and the present, as well as the text of every Victorian Police Initial Report of Death to the Coroner. The second source was the National Coronial Information System (NCIS), an online

database that includes searchable text for every Victorian coronial finding delivered in a death reported from 1 July 2000 onwards.

A.4 Search strategy

I undertook three overlapping searches:

(1) CCOV death surveillance system search to identify any death for which the term "Crown" appeared in the address of fatal incident.

(2) CCOV death surveillance system search to identify any death for which the term "Crown Casino" appeared in the Victorian Police Initial Report of Death to the Coroner text.

(3) NCIS search to identify any Victorian death for which the term "Crown" appeared in the coroner's finding.

I combined the results of the three searches and eliminated duplicates, then reviewed the available coronial material to determine whether each death met the inclusion criteria.

A.5 Relevant deaths

I identified 42 deaths that were probably relevant based on the available material. Additionally, I identified 11 deaths that were possibly relevant but where there was insufficient evidence to confirm their relevance; I included these in case they are of interest to the RCCOL.

Information regarding these 53 deaths is found in the spreadsheet accompanying this memorandum. The spreadsheet columns are:

- **Column A**: CCOV local case number.
- **Column B**: Date of death report to the coroner.
- **Column C**: Deceased sex ("M" is male, "F" is female)
- **Column D**: Deceased age in years.
- **Column E**: The death's relevance to the RCCOL request ("Yes" or "Possible").
- **Column F**: Brief description of the death and its Crown Casino context.
- **Column G**: Forensic medical cause of death.
- **Column H**: Indication of whether the fatal incident occurred on Crown Casino premises.
- **Column I**: Indication of whether the death occurred in a context of gambling at Crown Casino.
- **Column J**: Indication of whether a prior attendance at Crown Casino may have been relevant to the cause of death

Attachment B

B1. Background

The CCOV is currently collaborating with Dr Angela Rintoul on a research project to understand better the intersection between problem gambling and suicide. Norah Wright requested any information that can be provided regarding the project, in case it is of assistance to the work of the RCCOL.

B2. The project

The research project is led by Dr Rintoul and is titled "Improving understanding of gambling-related suicides in Victoria 2009-2016".

The project draws upon the data held in the CCOV's Victorian Suicide Register. Its aim is to identify all Victorian gambling-related suicides between 2009 and 2016 and provide an overall description of the circumstances in which they occurred, encompassing:

- Socio-demographic profile of the deceased;
- Nature of gambling;
- Evidence of gambling-related harms;
- Health service engagement in the lead-up to death; and
- Knowledge of gambling among acquaintances of the deceased.

B3. Project results and Crown Casino

Case identification and death coding for the project are complete. We are currently undertaking data cleaning before analysis commences.

Based on our preliminary data, we identified 197 Victorian suicides between 2009 and 2016 where the deceased was engaged in gambling proximal to death. There were a further 193 suicides where the available evidence suggested the deceased may have been engaged in gambling but there was insufficient information to confirm the gambling context.

Our project coding focused on the types of gambling the deceased were engaged in, rather than gambling locations. Based on the preliminary data we were able to ascertain type of gambling in 92 of the 197 deaths. The most prevalent types of gambling were:

- Pokies in 60 deaths.
- Horse racing in 17 deaths.
- Table games in nine deaths.
- Unspecified online gaming in seven deaths.

While we did not directly code whether Crown Casino was relevant to a death, the dataset included free text fields to record information relevant to the gambling context in the suicide. Filtering these fields, I identified 24 deaths where the free text included mention of Crown Casino specifically or a casino more generally.