



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

**The Rt. Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan
MP**
Minister of State (Indo-Pacific)

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Alison Mutch
Coroner Area of Greater Manchester South

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27 March 2023

Dear Coroner,

I am writing in response to your report dated 4 February, following the inquest into the death of Kirsty Margaret McKie on 22 July 2022 in Bali. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Indo-Pacific. We welcome the opportunity to inform you of actions we have taken, or propose to take, in response to your report. In doing so we again reiterate our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Ms McKie.

In your report, you note three areas of concern. These are stated and addressed below.

The Inquest heard evidence there is a growing problem of methanol being passed off as alcohol for human consumption particularly in places such as Bali. Methanol is used rather than ethanol in spirits aimed at the Western market and sold even through apparently reputable suppliers.

The evidence before the Inquest was that:

- 1) Knowledge of the problem amongst the expatriate/tourist community was very low despite the increase in the problem and the catastrophic consequences of methanol consumption;*
- 2) There was little publicity by the UK Government of the risk in contrast to the approach taken by the Australian Government who had undertaken a campaign to increase awareness to protect their citizens travelling in areas of Asia such as Bali;*
- 3) The UK Government publicising information about the risk of methanol being used in local spirits, steps that could be taken by UK nationals travelling to reduce the risk and warning signs of methanol toxicity would help reduce the change of others dying in the way in which Kirsty McKie died.*

The FCDO is aware that there is a risk of methanol poisoning in Indonesia and we have had long-standing information in our Indonesia travel advice about the risks of methanol poisoning. We encourage British nationals to read our travel advice and sign up for alerts to see when the advice changes. The British Consulate in Bali has in the past raised awareness about methanol poisoning in collaboration with Australian based charity, Red Frogs. The Consulate prioritises its public campaigns across a range of issues that affect British nationals visiting Bali. In light of your report, we have considered what further actions we could take on methanol poisoning:

Travel Advice

FCDO Travel Advice aims to provide objective information and advice. Its purpose is to help British nationals make better-informed decisions about international travel. We keep our travel advice under regular review to ensure it reflects our current assessment of the risks in each country and that it contains information relevant to British nationals.

FCDO Indonesia travel advice has flagged the risk of methanol poisoning for at least the last 10 years. In July 2022, travel advice said:

“Methanol poisoning

There have been a number of deaths and cases of serious illness of locals and foreigners in Indonesia caused by drinking alcoholic drinks contaminated with methanol. These cases have occurred in bars, shops and hotels in popular tourist areas like Bali, Lombok, the Gili Islands and Sumatra. Criminal gangs have been reported to manufacture counterfeit replicas of well-known brands of alcohol containing high amounts of methanol. Take extreme care when buying spirit-based drinks, as bottles may appear to be genuine when they're not. There have also been cases of methanol poisoning from drinking adulterated arak/arrack, a local rice or palm liquor. If you or someone you're travelling with show signs of alcohol induced methanol poisoning or drink-spiking, seek immediate medical attention.”

We have considered how we might further strengthen this language and, in consultation with relevant UK health agencies, have updated travel advice to better illustrate the risk of methanol poisoning in Indonesia, the likely symptoms, and actions British nationals might take to try to avoid this happening.

We are also considering if there is a need to reflect the risks associated with methanol poisoning in any other country travel advice to help British nationals to make better-informed decisions when they travel. We will consider how to represent this alongside other risks to British nationals so that we set out all relevant risks proportionally.

Awareness-raising

In response to the report, the British Consulate in Bali has reached agreement with the local airport authorities to place an information banner (hardcopy and digital on all airport TVs) about the risks of methanol poisoning in the international arrival area live from June to December this year. Permission to display the banner will be reviewed annually. The Consulate will also post the digital banner on their Facebook and Twitter pages, and will encourage people to re-post it to reach a wider audience. Once the banner design is ready, they will also share it with local social media groups.

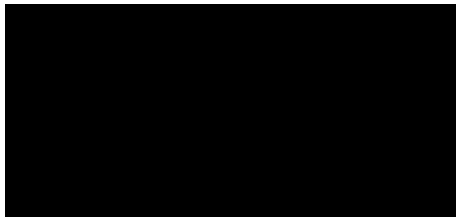
We will engage our contacts in the UK Travel Industry to make them aware of the risks of methanol poisoning and highlight our messaging in Travel Advice allowing travel firms to bring the issue to the attention of their customers.

We will also ask our Student Brand Ambassadors, a network of young people made up from UK universities and Further Education colleges to warn people of the dangers of methanol poisoning, not limited to travel to Bali, and ask them to amplify our key messaging, via social media and blogs.

More broadly, the FCDO's established Travel Aware campaign will continue to prompt British nationals who are planning to travel abroad to read the latest FCDO travel advice for their destination and to sign up for e-mail alerts.

The FCDO will continue to review our consular services to improve the help we give British nationals, including drawing on user research and all forms of feedback from those who have used our services. We will continue to strive to do more for those who need more help.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt. Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Minister of State for the Indo-Pacific