



# ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

## Dear Victoria...

I thought I would write a couple of lines following your untimely death - but where do I begin?

**W**ell, maybe I should start with the fact that you are now six feet under, I suppose. Just thinking about it makes me feel rotten, knowing that you are now covered in dirt and cold and all alone.

This is, to say the least, an absurd and disturbing state of affairs, Victoria. I humbly ask you to absolve us all because we have overlooked you - which is the most dreadful of sins.

Your family came to Malta because they were probably running away from some despot who was only interested in crushing you rather than allowing you to live, grow and prosper, as you had a right to.

I am sure they told your family that Malta is a good place to be. And you know what, Victoria? They are right. Because on this little island of ours we have a decent quality of life. Our fine weather is second to none. There is serenity in most families and neighbourhoods. Our communities are generally safe. Not only that, our voluntary, health, education and welfare services are, by and large, virtuous. So I really cannot understand what happened.

Was it a fluke?

Was it bad practice, incompetence or ineptitude?

Could it be lack of coordination?

I just need to understand, Victoria.

Will we ever know? I'm hoping we will, Victoria; that you and your memory may rest in peace.

Dear Victoria, what angers me, as I think about all that you must have gone through, is that some are claiming you starved to death! How come we failed to feed you, to share the abundance? If there is an iota of truth in this claim, Victoria, and you have suffered malnutrition and deprivation, I am so intolerably sorry, so mortified and humiliated.

Lovely Victoria, I am sorry that this has happened to you.

There is so much goodwill and yet you have managed to slip through our net of bounty and goodness, which our country is renowned for.

We failed you, dear Victoria. We failed to allow you to grow in happiness, to become the young lady and woman you must have promised yourself to turn out to be.

Please ignore our lewd prattle.

I'm sure that we do not mean to put the focus of what happened on whether 'I am culpable or not' because in this country, at times what matters is defending our turf. We are ALL



at fault, not ineludible because of negligence or disregard. I agree with the opinions and journalistic reports appealing for caution and thoughtfulness until we see the outcomes of the inquiries. In more ways than one, I can understand this commendation but on the other hand, Victoria, we need to keep asking questions, we need to try and fathom what went wrong; we cannot stand passively in front of such calamity; we need to tackle what needs to be sorted out ASAP.

Because this story is not about pointing fingers, but about looking in the mirror and assessing and weighing what we are doing in the midst of these terrible ordeals that children are passing through; whether it's practitioners or policymakers, academics or politicians, volunteers or service providers, we all need to throw our weight behind this matter.

We are all answerable.

Victoria, your name claims 'victory, triumph and success'. It was all written in the stars', dear Victoria, and yet here we are 'discussing' your death.

Victoria, please do not judge us for how we have let you down because we usually do take care of our seven-year-olds. We love to see our children focused on playing with their mates, possibly having the occasional sleep-over, ask-

“

**Dear Victoria, what angers me, as I think about all that you must have gone through, is that some are claiming you starved to death! How come we failed to feed you, to share of the abundance?**

”

only a seven-year-old child is entitled to.

Victoria, it's that we seem to have made a terrible mistake with you.

We thought our systems and good intentions were all in place but we were wide of the mark. You came to Malta because back in your country of origin something went tremendously wrong. Your family was uprooted for God knows what reason. Then you came to Malta and tried to settle down. I'm sure your family found a great deal of kindness and support along the way. I'm convinced people were ready to help and listen to you and your family - because that is what our country and its people are known for. But unfortunately along your life journey we seem to have overlooked your frightful narrative.

Dear Victoria, I did not have the privilege to know you but would have loved to. You remind me of the many beautiful children that ornate our society. What is life without the exquisiteness of children, their shrilling voices as they play, the colours that they carry on their clothes and their gleaming eyes?

We should be cradling our seven-year-olds, not burying them. When we lose one of our little ones, our society would have miscarried.

Forgive us, Victoria.

ing mummy for sweets every time they step into a grocery store, dreaming of the time when they will get their first bicycle for their birthday and so many other aspirations that

“Ghandi Nghid”  
xi

Dr Andrew Azzopardi  
Dean Faculty for  
Social Wellbeing,  
University of Malta &  
Broadcaster - Ghandi xi Nghid  
www.andrewazzopardi.org