

Royal Commission

into the Management of Police Informants

STATEMENT OF GEORGE TAPAI

1. My full name is George Tapai.
2. I make this statement in response to a request from the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. This statement is produced to the Royal Commission in response to a Notice to Produce.

Educational background and employment history (Q1)

3. I joined Victoria Police in 1976 and graduated from the Police Academy in May 1977. A summary of the roles I have undertaken and my progression through the ranks is as follows:
 - a) Upon graduating in 1977, I was a Constable stationed at Oakleigh Police Station for a period of three months.
 - b) Later in 1977, I transferred to Russell Street on general duties.
 - c) In 1982, I was promoted to Senior Constable and was transferred to the Caulfield Police Station.
 - d) Between 1982 and 1984, I was a Detective Senior Constable stationed at Russell Street CIB.
 - e) Between 1984 and 1988, I was stationed at Glen Waverley as a CIB Detective.
 - f) In around 1990, I was promoted to Sergeant and transferred to Burwood Police Station.
 - g) Between 1990 and 1992, I was seconded to the District Support Group at Glen Waverley.
 - h) Between 1992 and 1996, I was posted as a Sergeant at Glen Waverley.

- i) Between 1996 and 1999, I was seconded to an Internal Investigation Taskforce "Operation Bart", which conducted an investigation into allegations of police members receiving financial rewards for reporting broken windows.
 - j) In 1999, I transferred to the Ethical Standards Department (ESD), which was then called the Internal Investigations Department. I remained with the ESD until I retired in 2014.
 - k) In approximately 2002, I was promoted to the rank of Detective Senior Sergeant within the ESD.
 - l) In approximately 2004, I successfully completed the Inspectors' Course and qualified for promotion to the rank of Inspector.
4. I was 19 years old and had just completed secondary school when I joined Victoria Police. I completed many Victoria Police training courses in the period that I was employed by Victoria Police.

Involvement or association with any investigation which had dealings in any way with Ms Gobbo (Q2)

5.

6.

7.

Use of Ms Gobbo as a human source

Question 3

8. After I retired, I learned that Ms Gobbo had provided information or assistance to Victoria Police through media reports. I had no knowledge of Ms Gobbo providing information or assistance to Victoria Police while I was employed by Victoria Police.

Question 4

9. I have no knowledge of any other member of Victoria Police or any other organisation who was aware that Ms Gobbo was providing information or assistance to Victoria Police.

Question 5

10. I have no knowledge of the authorisation of Ms Gobbo as a human source.

Question 6

11. My first interaction with Ms Gobbo was at the Committal Hearing of **Person 12** on 15 September 2003. Prior to the Committal commencing, I may have been introduced to Ms Gobbo and also the other barristers representing the charged police officers.
12. After our first meeting, I had personal contact with Ms Gobbo on around five occasions. Most of these interactions took place at Court. For example, I specifically recall having a conversation with Ms Gobbo at the Sunshine Magistrates' Court. We said hello to each other, but nothing else. The conversation lasted less than 30 seconds.
13. In around 2005 or 2006, I ran into Ms Gobbo in the car park of the World Trade Centre building. Ms Gobbo said to me that she had been unwell and that she had a stroke. I have no recollection of any further discussion.
14. I have been made aware that my name appears in documents in the Loricated Database in relation to purported discussions between me and Ms Gobbo in relation to John Balakas and Stavros Balakas in around October 2006.
15. John or Stavros Balakas may have been a peripheral target in Operation Blackbird which was an investigation relating to allegations of a Police Member selling drugs to a number of people. On 6 October 2006 a number of search warrants were executed by various teams within ESD. My focus was on the main target, Police Officer Paul Hatzakortian. A number of people were arrested in this operation and it would appear that Balakas may have been one of those. I do not recall and cannot find any reference to my interviewing or having any involvement in the arrest of Balakas.
16. I do not recall any conversations with Ms Gobbo about John or Stavros Balakas or Operation Blackbird in or around October 2006.
17. As I am retired, I do not have ready access to my police diaries or any other computer database. However, my diaries have been made available to me for the purpose of preparing this statement. I have been able to locate a number of diary entries in relation

to my attending several court hearings which included Balakas and a number of the other persons charged during Operation Blackbird, however, I cannot recall having any direct conversations with Balakas. In the time available, I have not been able to identify any entry in my diary that would suggest that I had a discussion with Ms Gobbo about John or Stavros Balakas in around October 2006.

Questions 7 and 8

18. I have no knowledge, nor information to provide in response to these questions.

Concerns in relation to the use of Ms Gobbo as a human source

Questions 9 to 11

19. I have no knowledge, nor information to provide in response to these questions.

Other relevant matters

Question 12

20. I am not aware of any other human sources that have provided information or assistance to Victoria Police who were subject to legal obligations of confidentiality or privilege.

Question 13

21. I completed many training courses in my period of employment with Victoria Police. I have not undertaken a detailed review of the Victoria Police courses I have completed or the content of those courses. I would have received training on each of the topics identified in question 13 at the Academy and then subsequently at various stages throughout my career. Every time I was promoted, I was required to attend a course relevant to that promotion. These courses would last anywhere between a month to three months. From time to time, other courses would become available, some of which you could apply for and some of which were mandatory.

22. My recollection of the relevant training or retraining I have received is as follows:

- a) I would have received training on the obligation of disclosure to accused persons at the Academy. These concepts would have also been revisited during subsequent training courses and upon promotion.
- b) I would have received training on the rights of an accused person, including the right to silence at the Academy. I also received further training relating to this

topic with greater detail at the Detective Training School. Such rights are a fundamental part of police work.

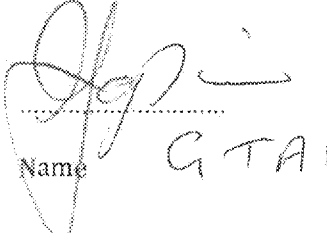
- c) I would have received training on the right of an accused person to a legal practitioner at the Academy and also at the Detective Training School.
- d) I would have received training on legal professional privilege not only at the Academy as a Police Recruit, but also at number of subsequent courses throughout my career.
- e) I would have received training on public interest immunity most likely at the Sergeant Promotional Course and Inspectors Course. However, this is also something that I have learnt about on the job.
- f) Professional and ethical decision making is a fundamental part of police work and is something that I would have received training on at the Academy. Ethical Health is a compulsory module in all Police training courses including promotional courses.

23. For a period of around four years from 2010 to 2014, I used to present lectures about ethical decision making to new recruits at the Police Academy around once a month.

Other information (Q14)

24. I have nothing further to add in response to question 14.

Dated: 14 May 2019


Name G TAPAI