

STATEMENT

NAME: Officer Paige

STATES: In response to the Notice to Produce NP-269 served upon me I produce the following statement. In making this statement I set out my recollections of my response to the questions asked of me. It is my best recollection without having any access to contemporaneous documents that would help to refresh my memory.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

In May 1985 I joined Victoria Police until my retirement in May 2018.

1. During my period of service I performed General Uniform Duties at various Metropolitan locations, investigative duties at Metropolitan & Rural locations, several squads within Crime Command and also duties within the Covert and Intelligence Department.
2. Whilst a member of VICPOL I attended numerous external and internal courses. Most relevant to this matter I attended and completed:
 - Detective Training School
 - Advanced Investigation Management
 - Undercover Course (SIG)
 - [REDACTED] Human Source Handler course
3. From October 2004 to March 2006 I was attached to the Source Development Unit (SDU) or formerly known as the Dedicated Source Unit. At the time of its formation the SDU consisted of 1 x [REDACTED] (controller), 4 x [REDACTED] (handlers) and 1 x [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Tactical Intelligence Officer). Oversight of the unit was performed by a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from Crime Command.
4. My role whilst at the unit was to manage full time high risk human sources and to assist other handlers with this function. Whilst performing duties at the unit I was provided with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
5. I have not being provided with any documents, diaries, day books etc from VICPOL to review in relation to providing further accurate information other than what I can remember in relation to the request to provide this statement.

6. Primarily the main method of recording contact with sources was via the official police diary, informer contact reports, information reports, risk assessments, acknowledgement of responsibilities and WAF recordings. This included all personal, phone, electronic or third party contact with sources. WAF recordings were primarily used whilst having personal contact with sources.

USE OF MS GOBBO AS A HUMAN SOURCE

7. In September 2005 after returning from annual leave I was asked by my controller if I would be interested in handling/co-handling Nicola Gobbo as a human source. I was aware that the Major Drug Investigation Division (MDID) were wanting to set up a meeting with Ms Gobbo and introduce her to handlers from the SDU.
8. I declined the offer to do so for the following reasons:
- I had previous professional dealings with Ms Gobbo who represented accused persons I was the informant for in child prostitution matters.
 - I had previously seen and spoken to her briefly at social police functions. One of those functions I recall was an Armed Robbery Squad event at the Palace in St. Kilda around 2001-2003. I recall this occasion only because a former colleague and friend (deceased) introduced me to her and joked about the failings of the AFL team I supported.
 - I was dismayed to a degree that VICPOL were willing to utilize an underworld solicitor to catch drug offenders amid huge significant risks in preference to concentrating on crimes of violence against the person because of perceived issues of integrity. The risks taken I believe if Ms Gobbo was utilized as a source was the potential she could be acting as a double agent, she was too familiar beyond her professional capacity with known criminals and members of VICPOL. I also believed that her life and well being would be in danger if she was identified as human source. This belief was based on my own assessment of the situation, previous incidents, gossip and rumours.
9. I cannot recall the exact date, it may have being late September 2005 or Early October 2005, myself and another handler were required to perform [REDACTED] duties whilst other members of the SDU met up with Ms Gobbo at an cafe in Middle Park. I believe this may have being the first initial meeting by the SDU with Ms Gobbo. I am aware of the SDU members that attended that meeting, but not who from MDID was present to perform the introduction. I cannot recall how long the meeting went for.

10. At the conclusion of that meeting I returned to my office and a short time later had a discussion with the members involved. I do not recall the exact details of that discussion other than investigators were proposing to utilize MS Gobbo to prosecute a number of high profile figures with the Melbourne Criminal Underworld.
11. I took no further part in any way, shape or form with the subsequent registration and handling of Ms Gobbo. This role was performed by other handlers within the SDU. I left the SDU in March 2006 and had no further knowledge of Ms Gobbo acting as a source until details emerged during the proceedings involving Paul Dale.

CONCERNS IN RELATION TO USE OF MS GOBBO AS A HUMAN SOURCE

12. My concerns about using Ms Gobbo are set out in paragraph 8 above.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS

13. I am not aware of any other persons providing information to VICPOL that were subject to legal obligations of confidentiality or privilege.
14. I have set out in paragraph 2 above my training regarding the matters referred to in paragraph 13 of the Commission's letter to me dated 14 June 2019.
15. I have no criticism of my fellow handlers whilst at the SDU or able to offer comment on the practices of other handlers managing Ms Gobbo after I left the unit. It was my belief that the whole concept of the SDU were extremely innovative and advantageous to assist investigators. At the coal face of the day to day operations of the SDU I saw significant success with investigations that would most likely not have occurred if not for the existence of the SDU. I am only critical of several management practices and decisions relating to operational safety and well being of members of the SDU during my period of service at SDU.

Officer Paige

21/06/19

