

**Royal Commission  
into the Management of Police Informants**

**STATEMENT OF JOHN JOSEPH BLAYNEY**

1. My full name is John (Jack) Joseph Blayney. I am an Assistant Commissioner at Victoria Police. I am currently on long service leave and will be retiring in September 2019.
2. Prior to commencing my long service leave, I held the role of Chief Information Officer which involved responsibility for policy and management of information coming into the possession of Victoria Police, including what we collect, use, store, share and secure, as well as the information technology required to facilitate those functions.
3. I make this statement in response to a request from the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants dated 19 March 2019. This statement is produced to the Royal Commission in response to a Notice to Produce.
4. I have previously provided a statement to the Royal Commission dated 27 March 2019, which was limited to my involvement in, and awareness of, Ms Gobbo's dealings with Victoria Police in 1996.
5. This statement addresses my involvement in, and awareness of, Ms Gobbo's later dealings with Victoria Police.
6. In preparing this statement, I have not had access to my emails or all documents that might have been shown to me when I was briefed regarding operations. The answers provided below are based on my best recollection of events that occurred a long time ago and based on a review of my diaries. I will provide a supplementary statement if relevant documents or emails are located and require further explanation, or which reveal my answers below to be incomplete or inaccurate in any way.

**Educational background and employment history (Q1)**

7. My response to this question is set out in my earlier statement.

**Involvement or association with any investigation which dealt with Ms Gobbo (Q2)**

8. From late 2005 until early September 2008, I held the role of Major Crime Tasking and Coordination Manager within the Crime Department. At that time, I was a Detective Superintendent. In that role, I oversaw resourcing priorities for all major crime



investigations in Victoria and determined which investigations would get what resources and the type of resources they would get, such as surveillance and technology intercepts. I believe I was the first person to hold this role as it was established as part of a major review of the Victoria Police management of serious and organised crime.

9. My role did not involve day-to-day management of taskforces or investigations, which were overseen by other senior operational members for each investigation or taskforce. For this reason, I was familiar with the general progress and direction of numerous investigations but not the day-to-day detail and tasking involved in them.
10. In this role, I had some contact with investigations that dealt with Ms Gobbo, namely through the Purana Taskforce, the Petra Taskforce and investigations into threats against Ms Gobbo. I did not have any contact with Ms Gobbo directly.
11. I have reviewed my official diaries in preparing this statement. Due to the nature of my role of overseeing resourcing for numerous investigations at one time, my diary records a lot of information about different investigations. In the time available, my lawyers and I have identified below relevant aspects of investigations that were associated with Ms Gobbo or events that concerned Ms Gobbo personally.
12. On 16 January 2006, I was briefed about the operations of the Purana Taskforce. My diary does not record who was present, but I believe it would have been either DDI Jim O'Brien or DDI Gavan Ryan or both of them. As my diary records, there was discussion about [REDACTED] potentially being a "weak link", which I believe meant that they viewed [REDACTED] as a person who might provide evidence [REDACTED] and his associates. My diary refers to [REDACTED] again on 23 January 2006 and 13 February 2006, but I do not recall anything beyond what is recorded in my diary.
13. On 18 April 2006, I was briefed by DDI O'Brien and DDI Ryan about Purana operations. As my diary records, the briefing related to a staffing matter because resources were needed to monitor listening devices at a clandestine laboratory. I do not recall anything further about this meeting beyond what is recorded in my diary.
14. On 22 November 2006, I was again briefed by DDI O'Brien. As my diary records, I was told that 3838 had provided information that a member of [REDACTED] family had been threatened because [REDACTED] was providing information to Victoria Police and that there was a suspect for these threats. I do not recall what the notation "didn't advise re [REDACTED]" refers to, and I do not recall anything further about this meeting beyond what is recorded in my diary.



15. On 11 December 2006, I attended a Purana briefing conducted by DDI Ryan. As my diary records, I was informed that 3838 had been approached by a gangland figure with information and that 3838 had herself received threats by SMS message. While it is clear from my diary record that the gangland figure had approached 3838, I do not remember anything else about this briefing. In the same diary entry, there are other references to human sources. I believe that these references may have been to other human sources, and not 3838 because I did not attribute the information to 3838 in my note. In other words, I wrote that the first point related to 3838, but the other information was not attributed to 3838. I do not recall anything further about this meeting beyond what is recorded in my diary.
16. On 22 March 2007, I met with DC Overland, DSU Hollowood, DDI Cecchin and DDI Ryan regarding ongoing investigations into the murder of Terence and Christine Hodson. As my diary records, there was discussion about allocating additional resources to that investigation because of sensitive information that had been provided. I do not recall the meeting beyond what is recorded in my diary, but I believe that these were the first discussions about what became the Petra Taskforce.
17. My diary records that on 17 July 2007, I attended a Purana Taskforce briefing with DC Overland, at which changing the registration number of Ms Gobbo from 3838 was discussed. My diary does not record if anyone else was present and I do not recall if anyone else was there. However, the usual practice was that the briefing would be provided by the officer in charge of the Purana Taskforce.
18. I do not recall exactly when I learned that 3838 was Ms Gobbo, but I believe I learned this around the time of this meeting. Prior to this time, I knew that 3838 was one of the human sources that was being utilised by the Purana Taskforce, and I recall that 3838 was referred to by that number as a source in a number of investigations. I believe I knew based on the nature of the information referred to that 3838 was a well-connected source who had provided information about high-value criminal targets.
19. I did not ask questions about the identity of 3838 because I knew from my experience with human sources and my involvement in reviewing human source policies in the past that it was crucial to keep knowledge of their identities limited to those who needed to know that information. Before July 2007, 3838's identity was not information I needed for my role.



20. I do not recall how the issue of changing Ms Gobbo's registration number arose, but I recall that the concern was that her identity could be pieced together because of the extent and nature of information 3838 had given. I recall that DC Overland asked a team including me and the SDU to consider Ms Gobbo's ongoing use as a human source because of concerns about protecting her safety. I also recall at some point, likely during this meeting, I raised the issue that there needed to be measures in place to ensure that the information she supplied could be used, given that Ms Gobbo was a practising lawyer. I recall the note "hypothetical legal opinion" in my diary refers to discussions about providing a set of scenarios that could occur in managing Ms Gobbo, such as information provided in a personal versus professional capacity, and obtaining legal advice on how Ms Gobbo and the information might be managed in those scenarios.
21. My diary records that on 24 July 2007, I then met with DSU Biggin, DDI Ryan and DDI O'Brien to discuss the matters raised in the meeting on 17 July 2007 with DC Overland. As my diary records, we discussed the risks, alternatives, and options for Ms Gobbo's ongoing management as a human source. Part of these meetings involved me being briefed by the SDU about how they managed the issues and complexities around the risks to Ms Gobbo's safety and the fact that Ms Gobbo was a legal practitioner.
22. Later that afternoon, at 4:30 pm, I again met with DSU Biggin, DDI Jim O'Brien and DDI Gavan Ryan, as well as DSS Shane O'Connell from the Petra Taskforce and DSU Graham Brown. I believed based on my discussions with the SDU members at these meetings that there was legal advice to the effect that they could receive and act upon information that was coming from Ms Gobbo's personal relationships with criminals, but not from her lawyer relationship with them.
23. I believed that legal advice had been obtained based on what I was told by the SDU members, but they did not refer to a written legal opinion or identify who had given that advice. I refer to the transcript of a hearing that I attended in 2014 which has been provided to the Royal Commission. I cannot recall exactly how I formed this belief, but I came away from the meeting with the belief that they had obtained legal advice.
24. From my discussions with the SDU members at this meeting, I was comfortable that the SDU was well attuned to the issues surrounding the use of a practising lawyer as a human source. It also appeared they were careful to identify how the source had obtained certain information. I also recall that it was decided that going forward the head of the SDU, DSU Biggin, would assess all information obtained from Ms Gobbo



before it was disseminated. This additional step was proposed to introduce a level of senior management oversight of disseminations that would give further comfort that checks and balances were in place.

25. There was also discussion at this meeting about balancing the safety risk to Ms Gobbo against the public benefit of utilising her information to disrupt organised crime. The process of weighing the risk to a source against the value of the information they can provide was not an unusual part of assessing whether a source should be used or should continue to be used. However, I do not recall the specifics of this discussion. I knew that the information she was providing related to the most serious organised crime in Victoria, but the safety risk she faced was also high, and at its highest, involved serious harm or death. I also believe that the meeting would have considered what steps could be taken to protect her safety, and what resources were required to take those steps.
26. The outcome of the meeting was that the SDU and I would brief DC Overland regarding the proposal to continue to retain Ms Gobbo as a human source, without actively tasking her to gather information.
27. My diary records that on 6 August 2007, I met with DC Overland, DSU Biggin, and DDI Ryan to brief DC Overland regarding Ms Gobbo. I do not now recall what was discussed in detail. I have been shown a copy of a source management log entry for 6 August 2007<sup>1</sup> recording what occurred at this meeting. While I do not specifically recall the detail of the meeting, the record is consistent with what I remember about the approach to Ms Gobbo's management that was proposed to and accepted by DC Overland. I do not recall being involved in any further briefings with DC Overland regarding the management of Ms Gobbo.
28. My diary records that on 15 October 2007, I was informed by DDI Ryan that Ms Gobbo had received a death threat letter along with two rounds of ammunition, that the matter was being investigated and that they had a suspect. On 30 October 2007, I spoke to DDI Ryan again regarding threats against Ms Gobbo and, as my diary records, he informed me of security arrangements being made for Ms Gobbo.
29. I have been shown an entry in the source management log dated 18 December 2007, which records that DDI Andy Gustke told a member of the SDU that he had spoken to me and that Gustke had told the SDU member that the "hierarchy" were "worried" about the risk to Ms Gobbo if she was tasked to collect information relating to an

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<sup>1</sup> VPL.0005.0099.0001 at 0122.



underworld figure<sup>2</sup>. I do not recall what this refers to, but my diary records that the day before, on 17 December 2007, I had spoken with DDI Gustke. My diary records that he was to speak with the SDU about whether the SDU could provide an information report to ESD regarding a member of Victoria Police who was suspected of having links to organised crime. I believe that the reference in my diary to "HS risk issues" relates to me telling DDI Gustke of the safety concerns for Ms Gobbo and my understanding at the time that Ms Gobbo was not to be actively tasked and would be acting only as an information source.

30. My diary records that on 10 January 2008, I had a meeting with \_\_\_\_\_, DSU Graham Brown, DSS David Snare and DSS Rob Ridley regarding Operation Agamass, which was a Drug Taskforce investigation which ultimately resulted in the seizure of a large quantity of ecstasy tablets. Based on the record in my diary, it appears there had been a leak of information about that operation and we discussed some information that a human source had provided about the leak. I have been shown a document<sup>3</sup> that suggests that Ms Gobbo was the source of the information provided about the leak. I do not recall whether the human source referred to in my diary was identified during the meeting.
31. My diary for 14 July 2008 mentions Operation Vortex and Ms Gobbo returning to Melbourne. I do not recall anything about this.
32. I do not recall having any further association with investigations involving Ms Gobbo. I do not believe I was involved in any decision for Ms Gobbo to transition to become a witness as I transferred out of the Crime Department in early September 2008.

**How I learned, or were given reason to believe, Ms Gobbo was providing information (Q3)**

33. I refer to my response to Question 2.

**Awareness of others (Q4)**

34. I believe that all those present at the meetings on 24 July 2007 and 6 August 2007 referred to in my response to Question 2 were aware of Ms Gobbo's role as a human source.

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<sup>2</sup> VPL.2000.0003.3114 at 3115.

<sup>3</sup> VPL.2000.0001.1329 at 1333.



**Authorisation of the use of Ms Gobbo as a human source (Q5)**

35. I believe that all those present at the meetings on 24 July 2007 and 6 August 2007 referred to in my response to Question 2 were involved in the decision to continue utilising Ms Gobbo as a human source. Otherwise, I am not aware of who was involved in authorising her use or continued use as a human source.

**Personal contact with Ms Gobbo (Q6)**

36. I have not had any personal contact with Ms Gobbo.

**Information & assistance received (Q7 & Q8)**

37. I was generally aware from my oversight role that Ms Gobbo had given information in relation to investigations conducted by the Purana, Petra and Drug Taskforces, but I do not recall the specifics of that information. As per my response to Question 2, I believe that I learned in around July 2007 that 3838 was Ms Gobbo.

**Concerns raised as to the use of a legal practitioner as a human source (Q9)**

38. I refer to my response to Question 2.

**Concerns raised as to the use of Ms Gobbo as a human source (Q10)**

39. I refer to my response to Question 2.

**Awareness about disclosure in relation to Ms Gobbo (Q11)**

40. I have no knowledge of these matters.

**Other human sources with obligations of confidentiality or privilege (Q12)**

41. I have no knowledge of these matters.

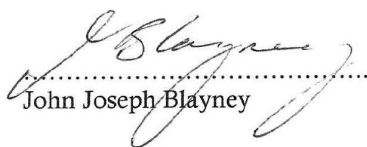
**Training (Q13)**

42. My response to this question is set out in my earlier statement.

**Other information (Q14)**

43. I have nothing further to add.

Dated: 25 July 2019

  
John Joseph Blayney