

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

STATEMENT OF SERGEANT MARK DAMIAN SPRIGGS

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Filed on behalf of: State of Victoria
Prepared by:
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
Level 33
80 Collins Street
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I, MARK DAMIAN SPRIGGS, Sergeant, Victoria Police, SAY:

1. I am a Sergeant of Victoria Police, having held this position since 2004. Since 2012, I have been the Family Violence Advisor for Division 5 of the North West Metro Region.
2. As the Family Violence Advisor for my Division, I am responsible for providing strategic advice to the Divisional Superintendent regarding family violence service delivery across the Division, tasking and co-ordinating the Division's three Family Violence Teams and providing internal and external family violence training. I also act as a conduit between Victoria Police and the family violence service sector and I am responsible for community engagement in relation to family violence issues.
3. I am the Chair of the Northern High Risk Response Conference, which I refer to from paragraph 80 below. In February 2015, I was awarded a Divisional Commendation for the establishment of the Northern High Risk Response Conference.
4. Between 2009 and 2012, I held the Sergeant's portfolio of Family Violence Liaison Officer at Mill Park Police Station.
5. I have been a police officer since 1990. During my 25-year career I have had extensive policing experience, having performed a variety of roles. I worked for six years at the Mounted Branch and for 10 years as a general duties Sergeant.

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6. I have completed Common Risk Assessment Framework (**CRAF**) Training through Swinburne University.
7. I currently sit on a number of committees including:
 - 7.1 the Northern High Risk Response Conference (Chair);
 - 7.2 Victoria Police's Policing Information Process and Practice Reform Project (family violence subject matter expert);
 - 7.3 the North Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group;
 - 7.4 the Mercy Health Vulnerable Women and Children Committee;
 - 7.5 the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership and Men's Integrated Family Violence Service Partnership;
 - 7.6 the Department of Health and Human Service's L17 Form Triage Pilot Project Control Group;
 - 7.7 the Northern Crisis Advocacy Response Service Partnership;
 - 7.8 a range of Local Government Area Family Violence Networks (including Banyule / Nillumbik, Darebin and Whittlesea), which are multi-agency forums that share a collective commitment to addressing family violence and improving the safety of women and children; and
 - 7.9 the Whittlesea Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Family Violence Project Steering Group.
8. I am also a White Ribbon Ambassador.

SCOPE OF STATEMENT

9. I have received a notice from the Royal Commission into Family Violence pursuant to s 17(1)(d) of the *Inquiries Act 2014* (Vic.) requiring me to attend to give evidence at the Royal Commission and to provide a written witness statement.
10. In this statement I respond to a request by the Royal Commission for information regarding Module 11: Initial Police Response to Family Violence.

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11. I understand that a number of statements have been filed by other members of Victoria Police in relation to Module 11. This statement should be read together with those statements and other statements filed by Victoria Police members in so far as any issues may overlap.

FAMILY VIOLENCE SPECIALIST RESOURCES AND SERVICES

12. There are several specialist family violence roles within Victoria Police that are specifically tasked to address issues associated with family violence. Members who come across a situation involving family violence are encouraged to consult with, seek assistance from and, where relevant, refer the matter to the following specialist units and persons within Victoria Police:

- 12.1 Family Violence Teams;
- 12.2 Family Violence Advisors;
- 12.3 Family Violence Liaison Officers;
- 12.4 Family Violence Court Liaison Officer; and
- 12.5 supervising members.

13. Save for the specialist roles discussed below, I refer the Royal Commission to the statement of Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter, Family Violence Command, filed before the Royal Commission, which outlines the responsibilities of each of the specialist roles and units mentioned above.

ROLE OF A FAMILY VIOLENCE LIAISON OFFICER

14. As I have stated at paragraph 4 above, I was a Family Violence Liaison Officer at Mill Park Police Station between 2009 and 2012.
15. There is a Family Violence Liaison Officer at every 24-hour police station in Victoria.

Summary of responsibilities

16. The role of a Family Violence Liaison Officer is set out in the *Family Violence Liaison Officer Standard Operating Procedures (Attachment MS-1)*.

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17. Family Violence Liaison Officers are responsible for a number of activities within their station or cluster, including:
 - 17.1 monitoring and reporting on family violence, including adherence by members to the Victoria Police *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (Code of Practice)*;
 - 17.2 providing a station contact point for local referral agencies;
 - 17.3 maintaining relationships between police and other agencies;
 - 17.4 coordinating further responses for victims who are the subject of repeated incidents of family violence (i.e. recidivist management) and victims who are deemed to be at 'high risk' of violence; and
 - 17.5 providing a consistent and coordinated approach to family violence.
18. In addition to the roles outlined above, it is expected that all Family Violence Liaison Officers (or deputy Family Violence Liaison Officers) will also:
 - 18.1 provide quality assurance by monitoring and reviewing all *Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Reports (L17 Forms)* and ensure they have been completed correctly;
 - 18.2 ensure appropriate criminal and/or civil action has been taken and referrals made in relation to family violence incidents;
 - 18.3 co-ordinate and ensure all enquiries and investigations arising from family violence matters are followed up by the investigating officer;
 - 18.4 provide advice and assist members preparing family violence intervention order applications; and
 - 18.5 provide relevant training (together with a Family Violence Advisor where appropriate) where a station training day involves a family violence training component.
19. In the next part of my statement I provide some examples of my key responsibilities when I was a Family Violence Liaison Officer.

Monitoring adherence to the Code of Practice

20. When I worked as a Family Violence Liaison Officer I would review police responses to ensure that members had acted in accordance with the Code of Practice in responding to family violence incidents, including taking any necessary civil and/or criminal action, serving intervention orders, and making any necessary referrals.
21. Pursuant to the Code of Practice, police are to initiate proceedings for intervention orders where either criminal offences occur as a result of family violence, or where the safety, welfare or property of a family member appears to be endangered by another family member. This process could be commenced by either issuing a family violence safety notice, an application and summons, or an application and warrant.
22. If criminal charges are considered, the five options available to police are:
 - 22.1 charge and remand;
 - 22.2 charge and bail;
 - 22.3 charge and summons;
 - 22.4 intent to summons; and
 - 22.5 no further police action following submission of a brief for authorisation.
23. Where an affected family member (**AFM**) requests no further police action, police must adhere to relevant provisions of the Code of Practice. In cases where the AFM insists on this course of action, the investigating member must take the AFM's full statement including the request for no further police action and then liaise with their Family Violence Liaison Officer.
24. As a Family Violence Liaison Officer, I had to consider all relevant circumstances including, where appropriate, making perpetrators accountable by pursuing criminal and/or civil options where there was sufficient evidence to do so. This was regardless of whether an arrest had been made and whether the AFM was reluctant to proceed further.

Case reviews with AFMs

25. Where an AFM requested no further police action I would also consider having the informant arrange a case review with the AFM as soon as possible.
26. Case reviews were introduced as a means of further supporting AFMs in deciding whether or not to continue with criminal proceedings in instances where a criminal offence has been identified but AFMs are reluctant to proceed, or in instances where AFMs want to proceed, but there is insufficient evidence to support any charges. I would typically conduct the case review either by telephone or in person.
27. The purposes of case reviews are to:
 - 27.1 identify and help allay any fears or concerns held by the AFM;
 - 27.2 discuss the prosecution and court process with the AFM;
 - 27.3 identify and develop a strategy to overcome any coercion of the AFM by the accused;
 - 27.4 encourage the AFM to stay engaged with criminal action, civil protection and family violence services; and
 - 27.5 discuss the cycle of violence with the AFM.

Monitoring and service of family violence intervention orders

28. I was also responsible for monitoring all active intervention orders and applications forwarded from the Magistrates' Court to the station for service in my local area. Those orders would require management on the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP). A police station may be responsible for serving a large number of intervention orders and have many on hand for service at any one time.
29. The busiest station in my Division, Epping Police Station, typically had around 40 to 50 intervention orders to serve at any one time. However, usually towards the end of the week, courts could fax up to 10 to 15 additional orders for service in one afternoon. Such a high number of orders awaiting service would require a specific operation for additional police resources to be removed from other duties to serve these orders. I ensured that members applied for substituted service of documents

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where appropriate (for example, where a perpetrator actively avoided personal service on multiple occasions).

Referral information

30. I was responsible for ensuring that my station had adequate information available about referral options for victims and perpetrators of family violence. This was usually in the form of pink and blue referral cards produced by Women's Health in the North (in 14 different languages) containing information about crisis response services, as well as a number of Victoria Legal Aid publications such as 'Safe at Home' and 'How to respond to a family violence intervention order'. I would ensure that members stocked these in the station's police vans and that there were adequate copies on the station counter.
31. These informal referral cards are particularly useful where a victim refuses to permit their information to be provided to referral services but there is an obvious referral need.

Recidivist management

32. I also had responsibilities in relation to recidivist management. A key role involved reviewing the Family Violence Recidivist List each month to ensure that members had taken appropriate action in line with the Code of Practice in response to the incidents involving people on the list.
33. A recidivist is primarily identified through the Family Violence Recidivist List generated by the local Divisional Information Unit each month. Recidivist Lists are generated for offenders, AFMs and 'locations'.
34. A family violence recidivist is defined by the Code of Practice as a person involved in three or more family violence incidents in a rolling twelve month period. The same definition is applied to repeat victims.
35. I would also review the listed person's prior involvement with police and any existing family violence intervention orders. I would work with members to try to understand the nature of the family violence occurring in relation to the recidivist offender, repeat AFM and/or repeat location.

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36. This sometimes involved discussing with the primary investigator in a given case the need to formulate an investigation or management plan to try to reduce the likelihood of family violence occurring in the future. Part of the management plan may have involved further conversations with referral agencies as required. These plans were largely informed by the Code of Practice.

High risk AFMs

37. As a Family Violence Liaison Officer I also had oversight responsibilities for victims who were deemed to be at 'high risk' in line with the Code of Practice and the *Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine*.
38. A guide for determining 'high risk' in a given case, as explained in the *Family Violence Liaison Officer Standard Operating Procedures*, is that there has been a recent incident or escalation in violence or threats of violence, and either:
- 38.1 an AFM (and any children) is present in a single incident with significant risk and vulnerability factors; or
 - 38.2 a family member has suffered, or there is significant concern that a family member may suffer, life threatening or serious harm.
39. There will always be a strong element of professional judgement and intuition that will exist in a police member's ultimate determination of the level of risk. This is extremely valuable in guiding responses and predicting the likelihood of future or escalating family violence. Further, it is important to clearly recognise and respect the differences between recidivism, 'high risk' cases, and cases that meet the threshold for 'serious and imminent risk', for information sharing through multi-agency initiatives such as the Northern High Risk Response Conference discussed from paragraph 80 below.

ROLE OF A FAMILY VIOLENCE ADVISOR

40. As I have stated above, I am currently working as a Family Violence Advisor based in Division 5 of the North West Metro Region.
41. There is a Family Violence Advisor of the rank of Senior Sergeant or Sergeant attached to each Division of every Victoria Police Region.

Summary of responsibilities

42. The role of a Family Violence Advisor is set out in the *Family Violence Advisor Standard Operating Procedures (Attachment MS-2)*.
43. Family Violence Advisors are to:
 - 43.1 act as an interface between operational police, Family Violence Liaison Officers and family support agencies;
 - 43.2 ensure operational police are aware of the issues and impact of family violence and violence against women on victims and the general community;
 - 43.3 establish and maintain formal consultative community networks and represent Victoria Police at appropriate forums relating to family violence;
 - 43.4 coordinate, develop and conduct training workshops for operational police in consultation with the Family Violence Command and Divisional Training Officers;
 - 43.5 monitor station Family Violence Liaison Officers in relation to the family violence portfolio responsibilities to ensure a consistent and contemporary approach to addressing and managing family violence;
 - 43.6 coordinate the dissemination of information (including new initiatives), policies and frameworks relating to the family violence portfolio positions and maintain pro-active linkages to relevant areas of Victoria Police;
 - 43.7 maintain a relationship with the Family Violence Command, Executive Crime Command and Family Violence Command governance structures; and
 - 43.8 research and identify local issues, trends and incidents of family violence in the community and develop initiatives and strategies to break the cycle of family violence.

Areas of responsibility

44. As a Family Violence Advisor for Division 5 of the North West Metro Region, I am responsible for the Police Service Areas of Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik and Whittlesea. This covers 11 police stations and three Family Violence Teams with a combined total of 680 members.
45. I am responsible for the tasking and coordination of the three Family Violence Teams. My position is the only gazetted dedicated family violence position in the Division and I do not have line control of any members in the Division.
46. In the next part of my statement I provide some examples of my main responsibilities as a Family Violence Advisor.

Relationships with local agencies and local networks

47. Family Violence Advisors are responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with local agencies and state-wide services, including outreach services. We are a contact point for agencies and we provide pro-active linkages to external agencies.
48. We attend regular meetings with external stakeholders to:
 - 48.1 ensure there is an integrated approach to responding to family violence;
 - 48.2 maintain a shared understanding of expectations in service delivery between agencies and police;
 - 48.3 maintain open communication; and
 - 48.4 strive for consistent service provision in responding to family violence.
49. I believe it is imperative that the sector works together to find solutions to the problem of family violence. An important part of that process is assisting agencies to understand the Code of Practice, Victoria Police's responses to family violence incidents, referral pathways and recidivist management.
50. It is also important for Victoria Police to acknowledge that working together with agencies involves responding to any identified or perceived deficiencies in police

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responses. In my view, a collective approach to transparency, accountability and consistency produces the best results.

Monitoring the work of Family Violence Liaison Officers and reporting

51. I monitor the work of Family Violence Liaison Officers in my Division to ensure Victoria Police delivers a consistent and contemporary approach to addressing family violence. As a Family Violence Advisor, I rely on the Family Violence Liaison Officers in the stations within my Division to provide oversight and case management of family violence incidents.
52. I regularly engage Family Violence Liaison Officers to identify service deficiencies, provide Code of Practice advice as subject matter experts to members within their Station, and to provide individual guidance and training to members to overcome gaps in knowledge within their Station.
53. I encourage Family Violence Liaison Officers to access and review family violence related LEAP incidents, conduct audits and case reviews to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice, and to liaise with me to establish consistency and compliance through training and information provision.

Producing the Family Violence Advisor report

54. All Family Violence Liaison Officers provide a monthly report to the Officer in charge of their Station, the Local Area Commander and the Family Violence Advisor. I receive 11 monthly reports from Family Violence Liaison Officers from which I produce a monthly Family Violence Advisor report. This report contains information about:
 - 54.1 emerging risks and other issues;
 - 54.2 community and sector engagement;
 - 54.3 training which has been conducted;
 - 54.4 Divisional family violence performance; and
 - 54.5 Code of Practice compliance.
55. I produce this report to the Planning Inspector as my line controller.

Non-compliance reports

56. I am also responsible for distributing and monitoring the monthly Regional Family Violence Non-Compliance reports. These reports identify crimes reported to police in the context of a family relationship but where an associated L17 Form has not been completed. This report is forwarded to individual report authors, Family Violence Liaison Officers and Station Officers in Charge.
57. Frequently this reporting process will result in one-on-one phone calls with the member concerned or further education regarding non-compliance with the Code of Practice and associated matters such as Divisional instructions, the use of LEAP Electronic Data Recorder (LEDR) MK2 and LEAP management.

Training the sector

58. As a Family Violence Advisor, I provide family violence training to a large number of external organisations, particularly about Victoria Police's role in the family violence sector. I created a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Investigation of Family Violence and the High Risk Identification and Management Strategy (Attachment MS-3)*, which I have presented, and continue to present, to organisations and community groups including, but not limited to:
- 58.1 Berry Street;
 - 58.2 Child FIRST;
 - 58.3 Community Corrections Services within Corrections Victoria;
 - 58.4 the Department of Health and Human Services (specifically, I have provided new worker training as an introduction to the CRAF and police responses);
 - 58.5 the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (specifically, I have provided new family violence worker training);
 - 58.6 the Greensborough Family Relationships Centre (to a reference group and lawyers);
 - 58.7 the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Strategic Network (49 partner agencies);

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- 58.8 Mercy Hospital health staff;
- 58.9 maternal and child health nurses;
- 58.10 culturally and linguistically diverse Women's Advisory Groups; and
- 58.11 the Whittlesea Early Years Partnership.

Training police members

- 59. As a Family Violence Advisor, I also provide a range of internal family violence related training, which includes:
 - 59.1 the family violence refresher course, which is an informal needs-based course aimed at increasing members' skills in risk assessment (under the CRAF), L17 Form evidence gathering, victim empathy, responding when children are present, the cycle of violence and barriers to reporting;
 - 59.2 the Sergeant Qualifying Program; and
 - 59.3 co-delivery of training on the Darebin Koori Family Violence Police Protocols, which includes cultural awareness training. This protocol contains requirements in addition to the Code of Practice when responding to family violence involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I deliver this training with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community trainers, Victoria Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, Victoria Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Family Violence Liaison Officers.

At Risk Juvenile AFM Project list

- 60. As part of the *At Risk Juvenile AFM Project*, each month Family Violence Advisors receive a list generated by the Regional Intelligence Management Unit to address juvenile AFMs at risk of family violence. This list identifies juvenile AFMs who are Intervention Order Complainants (**IO Complainants**) on the basis of risk factors flagged in relation to Intervention Order Defendants (**IO Defendants**).
- 61. To identify IO Defendants for the purposes of this list, data is extracted from LEAP using the following parameters:

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- 61.1 identification of all active intervention orders where at least one IO Complainant is under 18 years of age;
 - 61.2 checking whether an IO Defendant has three or more breach of order offences in the last 12 months;
 - 61.3 checking if there are any mental health or suicide warning flags for the IO Defendant;
 - 61.4 checking whether the IO Defendant has ever been processed for a violent crime against the person; and
 - 61.5 if the IO Defendant meets the above criteria, looking at all orders where they are the IO Defendant and extracting all IO Complainants who are under 18 years of age.
62. The list is also forwarded to Family Violence Teams and the family violence portfolio detective to conduct an audit of all family violence incidents. This audit includes assessing current risk assessments to ensure family violence activity is identified and civil protection is in place and appropriate to the current risk assessment.
63. Family Violence Advisors conduct audits of responses and we task compliance of the Family Violence Teams to the project.

Other responsibilities

64. Another one of my responsibilities as a Family Violence Advisor is to coordinate and attend the Northern High Risk Response Conference with other specialist family violence support agencies. This initiative is discussed in greater detail from paragraph 80 below.

ROLE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE TEAMS

65. The role of Family Violence Teams is set out in the *Family Violence Teams Standard Operating Procedures (Attachment MS-4)*.
66. The role of Family Violence Teams can vary across the state. The core responsibilities of a Family Violence Team generally include:
- 66.1 providing an immediate specialist response to family violence incidents;

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- 66.2 providing a secondary response unit to support primary units;
- 66.3 proactively investigating and case managing recidivist offenders, repeat victims and high risk clients;
- 66.4 investigating criminal offences including breaches of intervention orders;
- 66.5 applying for intervention orders;
- 66.6 making appropriate referrals for all parties involved in a family violence incident; and working jointly with family violence service providers and other referral agencies to assist persons affected by family violence;
- 66.7 providing an expert point of reference, advice and assistance to other police with tasks or investigations resulting from a family violence incident;
- 66.8 identifying, implementing and co-ordinating proactive strategies in consultation with the Divisional Family Violence Advisor, Family Violence Liaison Officer and Tasking & Coordination Committee; and
- 66.9 developing and maintaining partnerships with external agencies and support services.

My relationship with the Family Violence Teams

- 67. Family Violence Advisors are not part of the Family Violence Teams. The way we interact with a Family Violence Team varies across the state.
- 68. My three Family Violence Teams are resourced from 11 police stations and belong to the Local Area Commander for their respective Police Service Area.
- 69. My three Family Violence Teams are structured in the following ways:
 - 69.1 Banyule/Nillumbik Family Violence Team, comprised of one Sergeant, six other members of differing ranks, and one Detective with a family violence portfolio;
 - 69.2 Darebin Family Violence Team, comprised of one Sergeant, six other members of differing ranks, and one Detective with a family violence portfolio; and

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69.3 Whittlesea Family Violence Team, comprised of one Sergeant, 10 other members of differing ranks, and one Detective with a family violence portfolio.

70. My responsibilities in relation to the Family Violence Teams are as follows:

70.1 in consultation with the Divisional Superintendent I set the operating model (tasking) for the three Family Violence Teams;

70.2 I provide in-depth advice regarding police responses as a family violence subject matter expert;

70.3 I resolve emerging issues 'in both directions' between the family violence service sector, courts, divisional members and Family Violence Teams;

70.4 I resolve emerging internal organisational issues identified by the Family Violence Teams through communication or training to drive consistency in family violence response;

70.5 I co-ordinate the fortnightly High Risk Response Conference Case list and conduct reviews for cases involving 'serious and imminent risk';

70.6 I advise Family Violence Team supervisors and staff regarding the identification of people who are at 'serious and imminent risk' and high risk, as well as risk assessment generally;

70.7 I facilitate discussions with partner agencies in referring a case to the Family Violence Team for listing for High Risk Response Conference; and

70.8 I provide external presentations to community and the family violence sector on behalf of Family Violence Teams regarding their operation, interaction and engagement.

Triaging of family violence incidents

71. In relation to the case management of family violence incidents, in my Division Family Violence Teams triage family violence incidents across their Police Service Areas during their day shifts.

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72. Ordinarily, members make notes at the scene of a family violence incident, return to their station, complete the electronic L17 Forms on LEDR MK 2 and submit the form to a Sergeant for approval. At that point the referrals are automatically sent to family violence services according to the pre-set referral matrix. A Sergeant checks and approves the report and it is then committed to LEAP. The report will continue to exist on both LEDR MK 2 and LEAP.
73. The Family Violence Team then reviews the LEAP entries to, among other things, ensure compliance with the Code of Practice and to identify high-risk cases which might need assistance and further investigation by the Family Violence Teams. LEAP entries are also assessed for listing in the Northern High Risk Response Conference (which I refer to below).
74. My Family Violence Teams use an actuarial 'First 48' risk assessment prioritisation tool which allows them to score different risk factors to obtain a risk assessment rating (i.e. low, medium or high) for a particular family violence incident. This tool was devised by Senior Sergeant Wayne Stokes in Southern Division 3 but has not yet been tested or evaluated.
75. The First 48 risk assessment, or a variant of it, is also used in some other Divisions.
76. Where the tool, in combination with members' professional judgement, identifies a high-risk case as a 'serious and imminent risk', the case is nominated to the Northern High Risk Response Conference (discussed from paragraph 80 below).

Primary response

77. In my Division all Family Violence Teams provide primary first response to family violence incidents on all afternoon shifts. New incidents are allocated to the Family Violence Teams over normal duty members.

Dedicated detective embedded in Family Violence Teams

78. To my knowledge, my three Family Violence Teams are the only Family Violence Teams in the State that have an embedded or dedicated detective working for them. This allows for a greater investigative capacity and a smoother handover to Crime Investigation Units.

79. Having Crime Investigation Unit members work with Family Violence Teams enables better tracking and locating of perpetrators and dealing with recidivist criminal activities. This enables us to better respond to family violence.

RECENT INITIATIVES TAKEN BY VICTORIA POLICE

Northern High Risk Response Conference

80. High Risk Response Conferences provide an integrated agency response led by Victoria Police to reduce the risk and potential for harm to victims at highest risk as identified by the Family Violence Teams.
81. In early 2013, I approached Berry Street, Child Protection, Child FIRST, Community Correctional Services, Northern Area Mental Health Services, Safe Steps and Kildonan Uniting Care to seek an unfunded commitment to form the Northern High Risk Response Conference to produce a dynamic and robust integrated response to high-risk family violence.
82. The Northern High Risk Response Conference differs from other high risk initiatives as it is the only police led initiative and it deals with all family violence cases of serious and imminent risk, regardless of sex, age or relationship.
83. Cases can be referred to the Northern High Risk Response Conference in a number of ways. As I refer to at paragraphs 74 to 76 above, Family Violence Teams nominate cases to be referred after using the 'First 48' triaging prioritisation tool and further risk assessment.
84. Partner agencies can also request Victoria Police to consider the nomination of a particular family to the Northern High Risk Response Conference through the Family Violence Teams. If Victoria Police agrees that the risk is 'serious and imminent' then the family is added to the Northern High Risk Response Conference case list. Further investigation by Victoria Police is sometimes required to establish whether the risk is serious and imminent.
85. Since the first sitting of the Northern High Risk Response Conference in August 2013, the process has developed into a fortnightly (full day) meeting where the top 16 to 20 incidents across four Police Service Areas are 'brought to the table' for discussion, planning and tasking. To date, 807 cases have been assessed through the Northern High Risk Response Conference process.

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86. The following has occurred as a result of this collaborative approach:
- 86.1 new intervention orders have been issued, exclusion conditions have been added to existing intervention orders and children have been added as protected persons to existing orders;
 - 86.2 child-specific risk assessments have been undertaken;
 - 86.3 breaches of intervention orders and other offences have been identified and pursued;
 - 86.4 there has been a greater engagement with service providers and targeted support by victims (including children) and perpetrators;
 - 86.5 there has been enhanced safety planning for the families concerned;
 - 86.6 crisis, refuge and long term housing has been obtained for families;
 - 86.7 security reviews have occurred, safety devices have been utilised and locks to properties have been changed;
 - 86.8 there has been increased disclosure by victims resulting in additional charges being laid by police;
 - 86.9 perpetrators have had their parole revoked;
 - 86.10 Corrections Victoria has increased monitoring of perpetrators with intervention orders;
 - 86.11 Child Protection investigations have been commenced and re-instated; and
 - 86.12 more perpetrators have been remanded in custody.
87. We have identified a range of advantages to Victoria Police assuming a leadership role in the Northern High Risk Response Conference. For example, this provides a greater focus on perpetrator accountability at meetings. It allows us to proactively implement actions and impose sanctions in relation to perpetrators and increase safety for victims.
88. Further, the trust and working relationships between Victoria Police, partner agencies and other key organisations have been strengthened. Far greater empathy

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and understanding of each other's needs, capabilities and limitations produces a truly integrated and collaborative response and highlights future possibilities.

89. Importantly, the task-oriented nature of meetings allows each agency to have clearly defined tasks and timelines and it strengthens our individual and collective management plans.
90. Lastly, the Northern High Risk Response Conference complements existing Victoria Police initiatives and specialist responses to recidivist family violence offenders.

Whittlesea Family Violence Police Outreach Partnership Response

91. Another innovative local initiative that has developed over the past 12 months in my Division is the Whittlesea Family Violence Police Outreach Partnership Response Pilot (**Whittlesea Outreach Pilot**). The Whittlesea Outreach Pilot involves a family violence outreach worker from Berry Street being embedded in the Whittlesea Family Violence Team (at the Mill Park Police Station) two afternoons per week.
92. The Pilot was launched at the end of November 2014 and has been running for approximately eight months.
93. The outreach worker's primary responsibility is to make contact with women experiencing family violence residing in the City of Whittlesea and to offer them a service. The outreach worker does this after completing a family violence risk assessment, and after taking into account any other support needs.
94. The outreach worker conducts joint home visits with a member of the Whittlesea Family Violence Team if it is assessed as safe and appropriate to do so.
95. Together the outreach worker and the police member also triage L17 Forms in relation to family violence incidents occurring in the City of Whittlesea. They commence telephone contact with victims to offer support and safety planning. They also do any follow up work as required (for example, assessments, referrals, advocacy and duty appointments).
96. Victims also have the option of attending outreach appointments with the outreach worker, a police member or both. Meetings can be conducted in the police station or the victim's home. Meetings are 'fluid' and respond to the needs, level of engagement and level of apprehension of the victim. The aim is to strengthen and

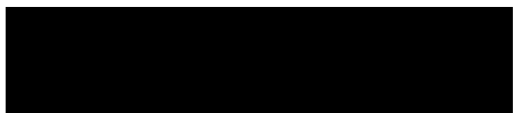
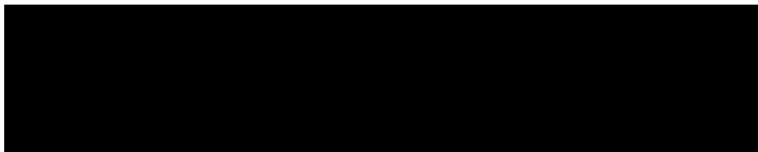
encourage the victim to engage with the criminal process, civil protection and any referral opportunities.

- 97. This co-location has produced interesting learning opportunities for all involved. Staff involved from both agencies have developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's role.
- 98. In my view, the program has been very effective and I would like to see more of these types of embedded programs throughout my Family Violence Teams. Further expansion of the Whittlesea Outreach Pilot to incorporate collaboration with a second Family Violence Team is underway. Evaluation of this pilot is planned but has not commenced. Further funding has extended the pilot for another 12 months.
- 99. I acknowledge that, despite the family violence initiatives that Victoria Police is involved in at the regional level, there is still much to be done to improve the way we evaluate, manage and respond to family violence incidents as an organisation.
- 100. I welcome any recommendations that might arise as part of this Royal Commission that will assist our family violence specialist roles in this regard, and invite any comment that might constructively assist us in our endeavour to provide the best possible service to victims of family violence.

Signed by)
MARK DAMIAN SPRIGGS)
 at Melbourne)
 this 27th day of July 2015)



Before me:



an Australian legal practitioner
 within the meaning of the
 Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)