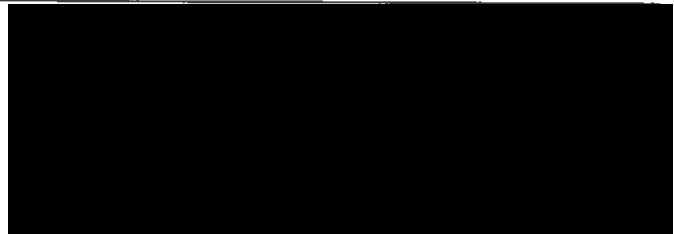


**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION  
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

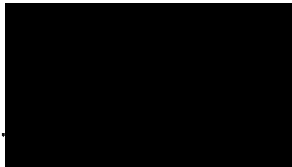
**ATTACHMENT WS-1 TO STATEMENT OF WENDY MAREE STEENDAM**

Date of document: 9 July 2015  
Filed on behalf of: State of Victoria  
Prepared by:  
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office  
Level 33  
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This is the attachment marked '**WS-1**' produced and shown to **WENDY MAREE STEENDAM** at the time of signing her Statement on 9 July 2015.

Before me: .....



**An Australian Legal Practitioner within  
the meaning of the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)**





## Appendix C: Family Violence – Victoria Police Reforms and Responses

### A Brief History of Family Violence Reform within Victoria Police

In late 2001, Victoria Police conducted a comprehensive review into violence against women. The findings of the review were published in August 2001 in *A Way Forward: Violence Against Women and Children Strategy*. Over the last 14 years Victoria Police has invested significant resources and worked hard to implement the 25 recommendations of the original strategy and to develop a consistent and comprehensive response to family violence and violence against women and children.

Victoria Police has taken the following key steps over the last decade to improve our response to family violence and sexual assault:

- Developing, implementing and regularly updating the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (from 2004);
- Developing and implementing the Sexual Assault Code of Practice 2005;
- Introducing the risk assessment and risk management report (the L17) for all reported incidents of family violence (2004);
- Creating specialist family violence roles – Family Violence Advisors (2004) and Family Violence Liaison offices (2004 onwards). As at February 2015, there are 17 Family Violence Advisors across the state and Family Violence Liaison Officers in every 24 hour police station (approximately 180);
- Establishing the sexual offences multidisciplinary teams in 2006 and piloting a new model of investigators for sexual offences known as SOCIT (Sexual Offences and Child abuse Investigation Teams);
- Introduction of Family Violence Teams (2007 onwards). Currently at 32 Teams across Victoria;
- Developing referral protocols with the Department of Health and Human Services for family violence (2005);
- Seeking additional legislative powers - Holding Powers (2006) and Family Violence Safety Notices (2008);
- Realigning the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Coordination Office (SOCACO) to the Victoria Police Crime Command in 2008;
- Implementing the *Family Violence Protection Act* (2008);
- Decision by Victoria Police to roll out the SOCIT model statewide (2008);
- Developing Violence Against Women and Children Strategies (2002 and 2009);
- Launching the Enhanced Family Violence Service Delivery Model (2011-2014);
- Incorporating Family Violence as a key Blueprint priority item (annual business plan) for Victoria Police (2012-2015);
- Co-chairing the rollout of the Risk Assessment and Risk Management (RAMP) panels across Victoria (2015);
- Appointment of Australia's first Family Violence Assistant Commissioner, Dean McWhirter (2015); and
- Establishment of the Victoria Police Family Violence Command (2015).

More detailed achievements appear in the following table:



Date	Action
Late 2001	Chief Commissioner announced a new focus on the incidence of violence against women as a major priority for Victoria Police.
May 2002	Recommendations of <i>Violence Against Women Strategy: A Way Forward</i> adopted. Violence Against Women Review Team formed to help facilitate changes within Victoria Police.
4 June 2002	Chief Commissioner makes a public announcement on the new police strategy to combat violence against women. Strategy covered police attitudes, policies and processes surrounding violence against women after extensive consultation with the State Government's Office of Women's Policy, welfare groups and refuge centres, plus broad internal consultation.
1 Aug 2002	Inaugural meeting of Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence (SSCRFV). Co-chaired by Victoria Police and the Office of Women's Policy. Wide representation from key government and peak NGOs.
25 Aug 2004	Victorian Law Reform Commission Sex Offences: Final Report tabled in Parliament.
1 Sept 2004	Launch of the <i>Code of Practice (CoP) for the Investigation of Family Violence</i> featuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ introduction of interim Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Process (VP form L17A) to supplement Family Violence Report (VP form L17);</li> <li>▪ an organisational wide training program implemented by Regional Training Officers for all operational staff - Constables to Senior Sergeants (Within 18 months six and a half thousand members attended training).</li> </ul>
2004	10 Sergeants are appointed as full time Regional Family Violence Advisors.
2004	Family Violence Liaison Officers are available at all 24 hour police stations.
2005	Release of the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault.
March 2005	Establishment of the Statewide Advisory Committee for Sexual Assault (DoJ).
June – Dec 2005	The development and dissemination of comprehensive referral pathways between Victoria Police and Family Violence Services (including specific protocol).
Oct 2005 – Oct 2006	Indigenous Violence Against Women and Children Public Awareness Campaign.
Nov 2005	Public release of the <i>Reforming the FV System in Victoria (Whole of Government document)</i> .
9 Dec 2005	Launch of the Code of Practice Tool Kit. This incorporated the merger of the Family Violence Report and the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Report into the VP Form L17 and available on LEAP. Additionally, merged the Application for Intervention Order (Summons or Warrant) and other miscellaneous enhancements.
Late 2005 – June 2006	Development and implementation of Holding Powers Legislation.
March 2006	Victorian Ombudsman's Report into improving responses to allegations involving sexual assault released.



Date	Action
May 2006	<p>State Budget provided \$34.2 million to the Sexual Assault Reform Strategy (SARS), a package of measures designed to improve the criminal justice response to victims of sexual assault. Included in the funding were two initiatives led by Victoria Police:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establishment of two sexual assault Multidisciplinary Centres (MDCs) in Frankston and Mildura</li> <li>▪ Establishment of two Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs) to be located within the above mentioned MDCs</li> </ul> <p>Other initiatives funded as part of SARS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sexual Offences Lists in the Magistrate's, County and Children's Courts</li> <li>▪ Specialist Sexual Offences Unit (SSOU) within the OPP</li> <li>▪ Child Witness Service</li> <li>▪ Forensic Nurse Network</li> <li>▪ Various legislative changes.</li> </ul>
June 2006	<p>Victoria Police and NSW Police establish the Australasian Policing Forum on Family Violence on behalf of all Australasian Commissioners of Police. First conference held in June 2006 in Sydney, followed by the second conference in Melbourne in Aug 2007 and a third conference in Alice Springs in March 2008.</p>
January 2007	<p>Opening of the Frankston and Mildura sexual assault Multi Disciplinary Centres.</p>
June 2006 – June 2007	<p>Development of a model for family violence safety notices. Agreed by the Attorney General in June 2007.</p>
July 2006 – Ongoing	<p>Implementation and management of the Sex Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT).</p>
2008	<p>Movement of SOCA Coordination Office to Victoria Police Crime Command.</p>
2008	<p>Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Investigation Team commenced operating out of Frankston Multi-Disciplinary Centre.</p>
July 2008	<p>Commencement of the Indigenous Protocol Project (Pilot).</p>
December 2008	<p>Introduction of the <i>Family Violence Protection Act</i> (2008), including the introduction of Family Violence Safety Notices.</p>
July 2009	<p>Deakin University complete an evaluation of the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams / Multi-Disciplinary Centre model.</p>
2009	<p>Victoria Police Corporate Committee approve the establishment of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams across the organisation.</p>
November 2009	<p>Launch of <i>Living Free from Violence: Upholding the Right – Victoria Police's strategy to reduce Violence Against Women and Children</i>.</p>
Early 2010	<p>Establishment of the Victoria Police Violence Against Women and Children Steering Committee.</p>
May 2010	<p>State Budget allocates funding for an additional Multi Disciplinary Centre in Geelong.</p>
December 2010	<p>Launch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the <i>Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence</i>.</p>
Mid 2011	<p>Establishment of the Sexual and Family Violence Division with a dedicated Superintendent in Victoria Police Crime Command.</p>
November 2011	<p>Launch of the Enhanced Family Violence Service Delivery Model (internal document)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand Family Violence teams</li> <li>▪ Develop strategies for repeat victims and recidivist offenders.</li> </ul>
April 2012	<p>Establishment of Taskforce Astraea to combat online child exploitation.</p>





Date	Action
May 2012	State Budget allocates funding for three sexual assault Multi Disciplinary Centres as a direct response to the findings from the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry.
June 2012	Finalisation of Protecting Children Protocol between DHS and Victoria Police.
July 2012	Opening of the Geelong sexual assault Multi Disciplinary Centre.
Nov 2012	Edition 2 v2 <i>Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence</i> released.
2013	Establishment of Taskforce SANO to investigate allegations arising from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Abuse and then the Royal Commission for child abuse.
Oct 2013	Koori FV protocols launched in Ballarat.
Nov 2013	Koori FV protocols launched in Darebin.
Dec 2013	Chief Commissioner Ken Lay holds the Breaking Men's Silence Forum attended by Community leaders to bring attention to issue of men's responsibility to prevent violence against women and children.
March 2014	Release of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition of the <i>Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence</i> .
July 2014	Chief Commissioner Ken Lay is one of three male leaders involved in the ongoing Herald Sun media campaign to bring attention to the realities of Family Violence in Victoria.
July 2014	Victoria Police Blue Print Year 3 2014-2015 released. One Blue Print Project is to implement a family violence policy that enhances frontline focus and service delivery effectiveness, appropriate resource allocation and support a more effective whole of Victorian Government response.
Sept 2014	Opening of the Dandenong sexual assault Multi Disciplinary Centre.
November 2014	Chief Commissioner Lay announces VHREOC review of sexual harassment and sexism in Victoria Police, contributing to the primary prevention of violence against women.
December 2014	Chief Commissioner Lay announces the establishment of a Family Violence Command in Victoria Police and the appointment of a dedicated Family Violence Assistant Commissioner.
March 2015	Appointment of Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter as the head of the newly established Family Violence Command.

### How Victoria Police Currently Responds to Family Violence

The Victoria Police response to family violence is governed by the *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* (Code of Practice), applicable legislation and the Victoria Police Manual. Our three main priorities in responding to family violence are to:

- Maximise the safety and support to those involved;
- Identify and investigate incidents of family violence and prosecute persons accused of criminal offences arising from family violence; and
- Assist in the prevention and deterrence of family violence in the community by responding to family violence appropriately.



### *Risk Assessment and Risk Management*

Police action is determined by a risk assessment conducted when police respond to an incident and a subsequent risk management plan. A Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report (VP Form L17) is completed for every incident of family violence reported to police. The primary purpose of the report is to help guide police through a complex process which includes:

- Identifying and recording the most relevant evidence based risk factors and indicators;
- Ensuring decisions by police or others regarding the safety and welfare of Affected Family Members are well informed;
- Making a structured assessment on the likelihood of future family violence; and
- Determining the most appropriate risk management strategy.

The risk assessment process undertaken by police is consistent with the Common Risk Assessment Framework that is used widely across the Victorian family violence system.

### *Options Model*

The Code of Practice establishes an Options Model for responding to family violence. The Options Model sets out three actions that police can take when responding to an incident:

- Refer parties to appropriate support agencies;
- Apply for family violence intervention orders, or issue family violence safety notices to protect the victim and any children;
- Pursue criminal charges against the perpetrator.

The risk management strategy taken by police must be based directly on the most current risk assessment. Under the Options Model, police are guided to pursue either one, or any combination of these actions.

### *Criminal Action*

A key responsibility of police in reports of family violence is the pursuit of criminal charges, where appropriate. If criminal charges are considered, police have five options:

- Charge and remand
- Charge and bail
- Charge and summons
- Intent to summons
- No further police action (NFPA) following submission of a brief for non-authorisation.

Criminal options do not replace the need to pursue civil options. If there are sufficient grounds to make application for a Family Violence Intervention Order then police must pursue that course of action in conjunction with criminal and referral options. Depending on the circumstances, attending police may request assistance from Victoria Police specialist units.

### *Civil Action*

Where a family violence incident indicates the safety, welfare or property of a family member is endangered, the attending officer may make an application for a Family Violence Intervention Order under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*. There are several options available and the appropriate course of action depends upon the assessment of present and future risks and circumstances of the case. The options available include:

- Family Violence Safety Notice
- Application and Warrant
- Application and Summons
- Application for a Family Violence Interim Intervention Order
- Vary an existing order.



Family Violence Safety Notices are the most common civil action taken by police. These notices enable police to place immediate restrictions on the perpetrator, in a similar form to an intervention order. The notice is issued by a senior police member and is in place for up to 5 business days. The notice is also an application for an intervention order and acts as a summons to appear in court. Most safety notices result in the issuing of a final family violence intervention order by a court.

### *Referral Options*

Police must refer all persons involved in family violence incidents to appropriate specialist family violence support agencies. Across Victoria, specialist support agencies receive dedicated funding from DHHS to manage police referrals. There are two referral options:

- Formal referrals - police provide a copy of the parties' details directly to specialist support services, who proactively make contact with the referred person
- Informal referrals – police give the parties the contact details of appropriate agencies and encourage the parties to make contact with those agencies independently.

In addition, police also have dedicated pathways to report at risk children to Child Protection within DHHS to fulfil mandatory reporting options. Where the risk to children is lower, but still of concern to police, referrals are made to Child First.

### *Specialist Police Resources*

There are several specialist family violence roles within Victoria Police to address the issues associated with family violence. Victoria Police currently has: 32 Family Violence Teams; 17 Family Violence Advisors and Family Violence Liaison Officers at 24 hour police stations.

### *Role of Family Violence Teams*

The role of Family Violence Teams will vary across the state. The core roles may include:

- Immediate specialist response to a family violence incident
- Secondary response unit in support of primary units
- Proactive investigations and case management of recidivist offenders, repeat Aggrieved Family Members and high risk clients
- Investigation of criminal offences, including breaches of intervention orders.

### *Family Violence Advisors*

The role of the Family Violence Advisors is to:

- Provide a focal point for the interface between operational police, Family Violence Liaison Officers and local agencies
- Ensure operational police are aware of the issues and impact of family violence and violence against women upon Aggrieved Family Members and the general community
- Establish and maintain formal consultative community networks and represent Victoria Police at appropriate forums relating to family violence
- Coordinate, develop and conduct training workshops to operational police in consultation with the Family Violence Coordination Unit and Divisional Training Officers
- Maintain a relationship with the Sexual and Family Violence Unit, Crime Command and state wide integrated family violence service governance structures
- 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.





### *Family Violence Liaison Officer*

The Family Violence Liaison Officer at each 24-hour police station in Victoria is a supervisor and is responsible for the following activities within their station or area of control to:

- Provide a consistent and coordinated approach to family violence
- Monitor and report on family violence, including adherence by members to the Code of Practice
- Provide a station contact point for local referral agencies
- Maintain relationships between police and other agencies
- Coordinate further responses for Aggrieved Family Members where issues of re-attendance or multiple attendances exist.

