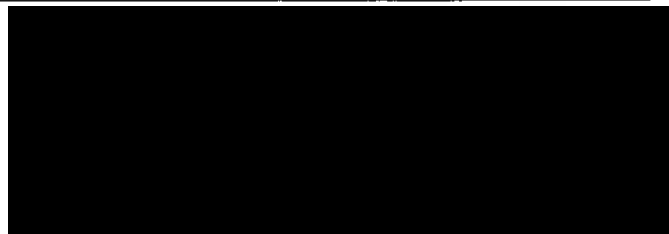


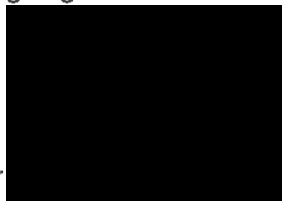
**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

ATTACHMENT WS-2 TO STATEMENT OF WENDY MAREE STEENDAM

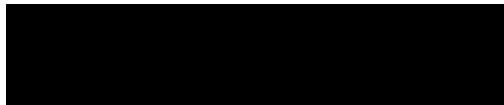
Date of document: 9 July 2015
Filed on behalf of: State of Victoria
Prepared by:
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
Level 33
80 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000



This is the attachment marked **'WS-2'** 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)**



Violence Against Women Strategy

A summary of the review into all matters related to violence against women



I first became involved with violence against women as a young constable in Sydney in the mid 1970s when, like most police, I had to attend far too many domestic violence jobs.

Some of the policewomen with whom I worked were themselves victims of violence and this realisation had a major impact on me. So, over my policing career, I have maintained an active interest in this problem and how it can best be dealt with.

It is not just a policing problem. It is a social problem, and it is complex.

The term, 'violence against women' covers violence against women perpetrated by people related to the victim – usually domestic or family violence – and violence committed by strangers. These acts are crimes, and they can usually be classified as sexual assault, physical assault, stalking, abduction or, more recently, drink-spiking. However, the overwhelming majority of reported incidents relate to family violence, where the offender has some sort of relationship with the victim.

In Victoria, a significant amount of police time is spent on violence, including sexual assault, against women. Statistics for the year to June, 2001, show that police submitted more than 20,000 reports on these incidents in the Melbourne metropolitan area alone.

Up to 80 per cent of incidents are never reported to police or other services, for reasons that would include victims feeling uncomfortable or lacking confidence in the process.

Victoria Police is committed to taking a social leadership role on violence against women by bringing together all the agencies, services, local practitioners and police in a partnership approach.

In August last year, I set up a Review Team, under Commander Leigh Gassner, to evaluate every aspect of these crimes and to come up with better strategies to deal with them.

The Review Team's findings and its recommendations were announced in broad terms on 4 June when I spoke, with the Minister for Women's Affairs, Mary Delahunty, at a family violence forum in Melbourne.

This document outlines those findings and the recommended strategies, many long-term. It is a 'living' document in that it will be subject to extensive consultation, particularly with police.

Victoria Police acknowledges that it must improve its response to victims of violence, particularly family violence.

We must make sure that victims feel comfortable about reporting these crimes, and that they feel confident that their report will lead to a seamless service from police and other agencies and services. This is a priority for Victoria Police. There is much work to be done.

On 23 August, 2001, Commander Leigh Gassner, Commander, Region 1, was nominated to review all matters relating to violence against women.

These matters were to include:

- statistical data;
- police regional, divisional and district comparisons;
- operations by police squads or units;
- liaison between all police;
- liaison by police with bodies outside law enforcement, eg, the Office of Women's Policy, Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) and other lobby groups;
- family violence and how police address all relevant issues; and
- any legislative changes required.

A Review Team, comprising Commander Gassner, Acting Inspector Wendy Steendam, of the Local Priority Policing Office, Region 1, and Senior Sergeant Lisa McMeeken, of

the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (SOCA) Co-ordination Office, conducted a review in October and November, 2001.

The team considered violence against women as:

- Incidents involving relationships between the victim and the perpetrator.
- Incidents in which a relationship is not evident.

At the conclusion of its review, the Review Team produced a report, *Victoria Police – Violence against Women Strategy – A Way Forward*, with 25 recommendations.

Due to the depth and breadth of the issue, the Review Team has not sought to be prescriptive or detailed in what it considered needed to be done. However, it has defined the issues and provided a base from which tasks can be tackled, mechanisms established and relationships built to improve the attitudes, processes, policies and structures of Victoria Police on matters related to violence against women.

The context in which this review was undertaken, and the development of the report and future direction, includes the Victorian State Government's recognition of the community imperative of providing a safe environment for women and the consequential obligation Victoria Police has in meeting this Government direction and policy.

This Government direction is articulated through the encompassing framework of *Growing Victoria Together*.

This review also draws upon and recognises the work already undertaken by the Women's Safety Co-ordinating Committee, sponsored by the Office of Women's Policy, Department of Premier and Cabinet, in the *Key Directions in Women's Safety*.

04

The review focused on researching available data to get a clear direction in:

- understanding problems in relation to violence against women;
- who was most at risk or vulnerable; and
- when, where and how violence occurred.

The review analysed the Victoria Police response by:

- consulting with Government and non-Government service providers and individuals;
- considering previous family violence projects conducted by Victoria Police;
- considering the Corporate Management Review Division review of the Family Violence Office, Victoria Police;

- holding focus group discussions with police involved in responding to family violence and sexual assault; and
- reviewing literature.

The review considered:

- expectations of service by victims and the community;
- whether victim and community expectations were being met;
- gaps in training and attitude that affect satisfaction with the police response; and
- opportunities for early identification and intervention to mitigate or avoid violence.

05

The Review Team consulted with:

- The Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, with Mary Anderson Lodge (a women's refuge), the Inner South Domestic Violence Outreach Service, the Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, Elizabeth Hoffman House (an Aboriginal women's refuge) and Western Domestic Violence Outreach.
- Victorian Magistrates.
- Women's Health – Goulburn North-East.
- Gold Coast Domestic Violence Crisis Service.
- The Office of Women's Policy (Department of Premier and Cabinet).
- Women's Safety Strategy (Department of Premier and Cabinet).
- Victorian Community Council against Violence.

- Crime Prevention Victoria.
- Department of Human Services (Family and Community Support).
- No to Violence, with Preston Creative Living and the Djeriwarth Domestic Violence Service.
- Centres Against Sexual Assault.
- Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.
- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria.
- Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Units.
- Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Co-ordination Office.
- Victoria Police Crime Investigation Units.
- Victoria Police Family Violence Unit.
- Victoria Police Prosecutions.

The Review Team found:

- Family violence increased by 6.6 per cent between 2000 and 2001. The number of police reports increased by 10.3 per cent. However, it is generally accepted that family violence is significantly under-reported.
- Incidents of violence against women where there is no relationship is a low percentage in statistics but is highly represented in media reports. This results in a reduction in women's sense of safety and security.
- LEAP (Law Enforcement Assistance Program) data indicates that approximately 21,000 Family Violence Reports are submitted annually across the State.
- There should be greater compliance with Victoria Police policy.
- Various procedural internal controls in the Family Violence Strategy do not appear to be working effectively, due to a number of causal factors including time-intensive processes, attitudinal issues and contradictory policy and procedures. Many tasks associated with the strategy are therefore not achievable.

There was persuasive evidence to indicate that police response did not meet community and victim expectations and that significant gaps exist. Although the review identified instances where police were achieving a form of best practice, the preponderance of evidence related to the negative or below-standard response by police to family violence and, in some cases, sexual assault.

The Review Team also acknowledged that there were a number of contributing elements to the standard of response. Many of these elements could be changed or influenced by Victoria Police while others required collaboration, influence and leadership by Victoria Police with other service providers, family violence workers and agencies, both Government and non-Government.

It emerged during the review that many service providers want Victoria Police to take a leadership role in addressing violence against women and there exists among these service providers a depth of goodwill for Victoria Police. Hence, there is a significant opportunity for Victoria Police to take a leadership role in the development of sustainable and effective strategies to improve its response, drawing on the expertise and resources of key stakeholders and providers.

- The expectations of victims can be met through:
 - Attitudinal change by, and education of, Victoria Police members.
 - Reviewing and resolving key police processes.
 - Victoria Police leading a multi-agency response.
 - Victoria Police exercising internal accountability, transparent to the community, through supervision and the taking of responsibility.
 - Victoria Police leading the formation of a consultation and learning process between agencies responsible for the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes.
- Victoria Police must endorse a legal model for charging perpetrators of family violence, but also be cognisant of a health model that allows for early identification of families or individuals in crisis.

07

Victoria Police has taken the first steps of self-reflection and making itself transparent in acknowledging not only room for improvement but also its willingness to improve.

The Violence against Women Strategy provides a platform from which tasks can be actioned, mechanisms established and relationships built to substantially improve, in a sustainable manner, the attitudes, processes, policies and structures of Victoria Police. This will allow Victoria Police to be a leader in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of all victims and the community in addressing violence against women.

It is acknowledged the family violence issues confronting groups such as children, Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are unique and are likely to require different responses. The Review Team recognises how critical it is that any way forward in addressing violence against women acknowledges this, and ensures appropriate representation and consultation with these communities, so their unique problems can be recognised and addressed.

08

Summary of Review Team's Recommendations

- Two Statewide committees of key Government, welfare, police and court representatives, sponsored by the Chief Commissioner, as a joint approach towards family violence and sexual assault.
- Improved data collection.
- A Code of Practice for family violence.
- A review of the role of Family Violence Liaison Officers and operating procedures.
- Enhanced training and education of police.
- Increased police accountability.

The following recommendations are open to an extensive consultation process, particularly with police.

1. A Victoria Police Violence against Women Steering Committee be established to implement the recommendations, as well as strategies and initiatives emanating from a Statewide Steering Committee.

Recommendations related to family violence

2. A Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence, comprising key stakeholders, including Government and non-Government agencies, the courts and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, be established to work in partnership with the Women's Safety Strategy, Department of Premier and Cabinet in a more integrated response to the issues (see flow chart on page 8).
3. A memorandum of understanding be developed by all agencies in the Statewide Steering Committee, nominating the committee's aims and objectives.
4. Training in the management of family violence be reviewed, changed and broadened by Victoria Police to include legislation and policy and to:
 - educate members in the dynamics of family violence situations;
 - educate members in victimology issues, including the impact of police action on victims;
 - enhance members' evidence gathering and investigative techniques in family violence incidents;
 - Improve cross-sector training; and
 - emphasise the need for a pro-arrest policy to facilitate a deterrent effect.
5. Best practice in investigative techniques be pursued by Victoria Police.

6. Complaint and warrant procedures by Victoria Police be reviewed and changed to simplify application and granting, and to provide maximum security and safety to victims.

7. A Code of Practice for the police response to family violence, similar to the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault, be developed by Victoria Police and the Statewide Steering Committee.

8. An accountability framework, transparent to outside scrutiny, be developed by Victoria Police and the Statewide Steering Committee to monitor the police response to family violence.

9. Internal processes be implemented to allow the Homicide Squad to scrutinise any previous police involvement in domestic homicides.

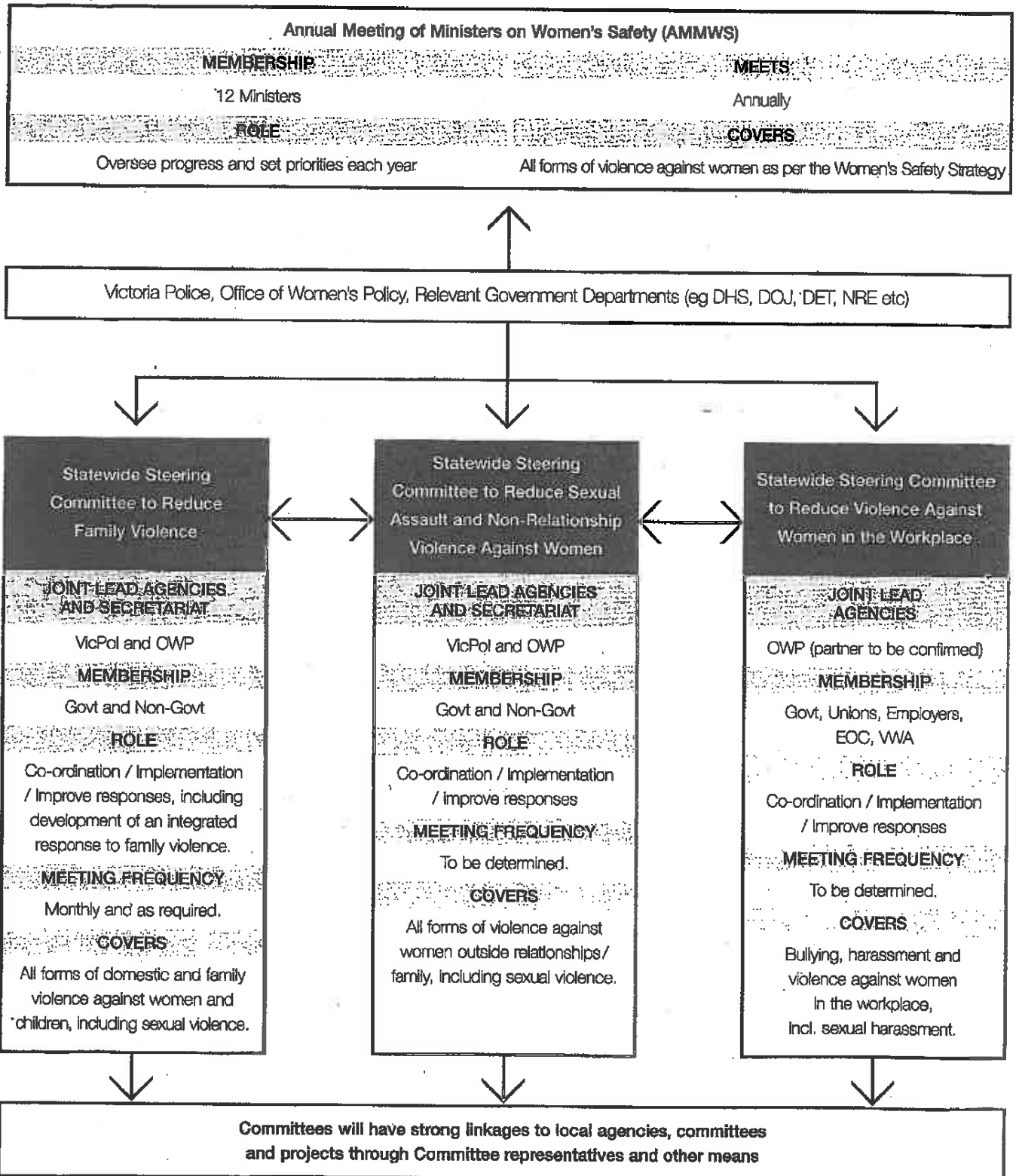
10. The role of the Family Violence Officer be reviewed and resourced at district or divisional level and considered as to whether it should be a full-time position.

11. The operation, staffing and function of the Family Violence Unit be reviewed.

Recommendations relevant to sexual assault, but also with ramifications for family violence

12. A Sexual Assault Liaison Committee, comprising representatives from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Victoria Forensic Science Centre, the Sexual Crimes Squad, the Office of Public Prosecutions, the SOCA Co-ordination Office and other key stakeholders, be established by Victoria Police to improve service delivery to sexual assault victims and ensure continuous improvement through information sharing, learning opportunities and identification of best practice (see flow chart on page 8).

13. SOCA Unit members respond to sexual assault cases in plain clothes and plain cars.
14. The SOCA Co-ordination Office develop a model of a co-ordinated Crime Investigation Unit (CIU) and SOCA Unit response to sexual offences with a view to developing statewide practice guidelines.
15. A training package for SOCA Unit members be developed to enhance investigative techniques. The package is to include a discrete sexual offence investigation module to be designed by the Crime Courses Unit in conjunction with the SOCA Co-ordination Office and the Liaison Committee.
16. A joint working party be established by Victoria Police, involving the Sexual Crimes Squad, the SOCA Co-ordination Office and the Liaison Committee, to develop a protocol for response to a suspected drug-related assault.
17. The focus of Victoria Police training involving sexual offences be broadened to include legislation and policy, victimology training and, in particular, interpersonal skills development.
18. A review of Victoria Police operating procedures be conducted to:
 - determine appropriate time-lines for investigation of sexual offences;
 - ensure effective monitoring of cases;
 - increase supervision of investigation time-lines for sexual assault cases, focussing on prompt attention and victim follow-up; and
 - develop monitoring guidelines/time-lines for supervisors.
19. The Violence against Women Steering Committee arrange the research and implementation of monitoring and supervision processes to ensure an accountable and transparent process, open to external scrutiny.
20. The Violence against Women Steering Committee have policy reviewed to allow SOCA Unit members of either gender to take statements.
21. The Sexual Assault Liaison Committee, based on the review findings, develop a model that ensures that the process for authorising sexual assault briefs is consistent, transparent and accountable, particularly to the victim, and that the effect of the likelihood of costs being awarded against prosecutions does not unduly affect the decision-making process.
22. The impact of court costs on authorising sexual offence briefs be reviewed.
23. The delegation of brief authorisation for sexual offence cases be reviewed with a view to delegating this authority to officers in charge of SOCA Units and, accordingly, that a sexual assault brief manager's course be developed.
24. A working party, involving Victoria Police, the Office of Public Prosecutions, the Law Reform Commission and Centres Against Sexual Assault, be established to consider the videotaping of statements from adult sexual assault victims.
25. The Sexual Crimes Squad develop and implement processes to ensure that:
 - its information resources are utilised by all members investigating sexual offences; and
 - it is capable of gathering information on trends and opportunities for improvement.



Wings Over Victoria: Working A Way Forward

11

Further information

This summary document is also available on the Victoria Police Intranet and Internet sites.

- For further information, contact Acting Inspector Wendy Steendam on **9247 5695** or Sergeant Peter Benjamin on **9247 6916**.

You are encouraged to give feedback to Acting Inspector Steendam or Sergeant Benjamin.



VICTORIA POLICE

For further information contact

Acting Inspector Wally Steendam on 9247 3695

or Sergeant Peter Bonham on 9247 6816

