

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

STATEMENT OF ANGELA MAREE SINGH

Date of Document: 16 July 2015
 Filed on behalf of: State of Victoria
 Prepared by:
 Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
 Level 33
 80 Collins Street
 Melbourne VIC 3000

I, ANGELA MAREE SINGH, Executive Director, Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria,
 Department of Premier and Cabinet, WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. I am the Executive Director of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (**OAAV**) in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (**DPC**).
2. I have occupied this role for the past two years.
3. The OAAV is responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of the Victorian Government's Aboriginal affairs policy agenda. It provides advice to the Victorian Government on policy development and it works closely with Aboriginal communities, government departments and agencies to lead a whole-of-government approach to Aboriginal affairs.
4. The OAAV also has specific responsibilities for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage pursuant to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) and the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* (Vic), supporting local Aboriginal community engagement via the Local Indigenous Networks, and administering various initiatives which honour and recognise Aboriginal Victorians, such as the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll, the Ricci Marks Award (Young Aboriginal Achiever Award), and the Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service.
5. I am a Yorta Yorta woman and I have 25 years' experience working in the State and Commonwealth public sectors in Aboriginal affairs. I am a Victorian Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia and a member of the Institute's Indigenous Advisory Committee.

- 2 -

6. Wherever I make reference to Aboriginal people, I am also being inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people.
7. Prior to my role at the OAAV, I held various specialist roles related to Aboriginal affairs, including:
 - 7.1 Director of the Aboriginal Outcomes Branch at the Department Human Services from April 2010 to April 2013. During this time I was a member of the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum;
 - 7.2 Branch Manager, Indigenous Services Branch at the former Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations from 2007 to 2010. During this time I also acted as Deputy State Manager, Victoria; and NSW/ACT; and
 - 7.3 Manager, Koorie Education Development Unit at the former Victorian Department of Education from 1997 to 2003.
8. I hold a Bachelor of Economics, a Graduate Diploma of Education (Primary), a Master of Education and a Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Management.
9. I have received a notice from the Royal Commission into Family Violence requiring me to attend to give evidence at the Royal Commission and to provide a written witness statement.

SCOPE OF STATEMENT

10. I make this statement in response to a request by the Royal Commission to give evidence regarding matters the subject of the public hearing for Module 6 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: Experiences and Lessons). In particular, I understand that the Royal Commission would like me to give evidence on the following topics:
 - 10.1 What have been identified as the particular challenges and opportunities for reducing family violence within the Aboriginal community?
 - 10.2 What is the present service and support landscape for the Aboriginal community?
 - 10.3 What is the status of progress of the "Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan"?

- 3 -

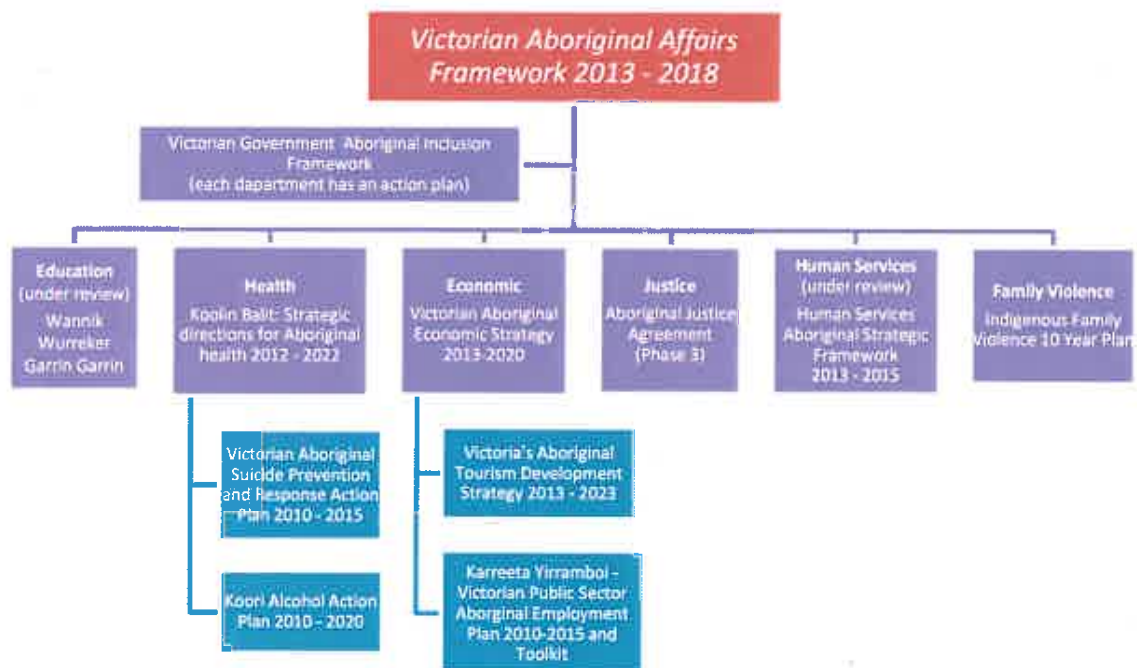
11. The OAAV is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the "10 Year Plan", which is published under the title, *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities – 10 year plan (10 Year Plan)* (**Attachment AS-1**).
12. I address these matters below. Before doing so, it is also useful that I explain more generally the Victorian policy and governance framework for Aboriginal affairs.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIES IN VICTORIA

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013 – 2018

13. The overarching policy framework for Aboriginal affairs across the Victorian Government is the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013 – 2018 (VAAF)* (**Attachment AS-2**). The VAAF was published in 2012 and is a more developed version of the previous *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF)* established in 2006. Following the publication of the VAAF, the OAAV was transferred in 2013 from the former Department of Planning and Community Development to DPC, to further strengthen and drive delivery of the Victorian Government's commitments in Aboriginal affairs, reinforcing the strong leadership within government and the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs to direct the implementation of the VAAF.
14. In building on the previous framework, the VAAF committed to a number of specific outcomes to be achieved through six Strategic Action Areas (page 12). It also established a coordinated governance structure and reporting protocol to ensure progress in these Strategic Action Areas would be actively monitored. The six Strategic Action Areas address the following topics:
 - 14.1 Maternal and early childhood health and development – SAA 1;
 - 14.2 Education and training – SAA 2;
 - 14.3 Economic participation – SAA 3;
 - 14.4 Health, housing and wellbeing – SAA 4;
 - 14.5 Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes – SAA 5;
and
 - 14.6 Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities – SAA 6.

15. Within each **Strategic Action Area**, the VAAF identifies (at pages 28 to 33):
- 15.1 the key strategy initiatives;
 - 15.2 the key partners (e.g. government departments and Aboriginal community organisations);
 - 15.3 the headline indicators (e.g. "Improving Aboriginal infant survival and health" in respect of SAA 1; and "Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence" and "Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision" in respect of SAA 5); and
 - 15.4 specific targets (e.g. "By 2023, close the gap in the perinatal mortality rate" in respect of SAA 1; and "By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth justice supervision" in respect of SAA 5).
16. The Strategic Action Areas are represented in the following diagram, together with their key strategy documents:



17. The VAAF reinforced the requirement for all Victorian Government Departments to develop and implement an Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan consistent with the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework*, which was released in 2011. The purpose of these Inclusion Action Plans is to identify how each Department will

- 5 -

improve access and inclusion for Aboriginal people across all of the Department's relevant service areas.

VAAF – Aboriginal community engagement

18. The VAAF recognises that the relationship between government and Aboriginal communities is vital to the achievement of the objectives in each Strategic Action Area. It therefore seeks to continue strengthening these relationships, through (see page 23):

- 18.1 State-wide and regional joint government/community groups (e.g. Aboriginal Justice Forum and Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum);

- 18.2 Local Indigenous Networks (LINs), in which community members participate to set local community plans and priorities (there are currently over 35 LINs across Victoria, with a total of approximately 2100 participants); and

- 18.3 Ministerial roundtables, bringing together Ministers and Aboriginal leaders.

VAAF – Interrelationship with National initiatives

19. An effective partnership with the Commonwealth Government is also a key element of the Victorian Government's Aboriginal affairs agenda. The VAAF underlines the importance of a coordinated effort between all levels of government, which is supported through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) process.

20. In particular, the VAAF was reflective of COAG's *National Indigenous Reform Agreement – Closing the Gap (NIRA)*. NIRA was entered into in December 2007, after the release of the VIAF, and is the key national strategy framework for reducing Indigenous disadvantage. It provided the basis for the Commonwealth, States and Territories to meet COAG's six "closing the gap" targets, which included halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five years of age within a decade, and ensuring all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years. COAG has issued a "fact sheet" which summarises the objectives and content of the NIRA (**Attachment AS-3**).

21. The NIRA is framed around seven Building Blocks recognised by COAG as supporting the reforms aimed at Closing the Gap against the six COAG Targets.

- 6 -

The Building Blocks endorsed by COAG are early childhood; schooling; health; economic participation; healthy homes; safe communities; and governance and leadership.

22. In support of the NIRA and its objectives in Victoria, the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments have entered into a further agreement known as the *Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan (2010-2015) (OBIP)*. The OBIP records how the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments intend to work collectively, and in partnership with Indigenous communities, to meet the "closing the gap" targets in Victoria. It also provided an opportunity for a focus on areas important to Victoria, such as vulnerable children, data and economic participation.

VAAF – Reporting mechanisms

23. The Secretaries' Leadership Group oversees whole-of-government progress against the VAAF Strategic Action Areas. The Secretaries' Leadership Group is made up of the Secretaries of each Victorian Government Department and now includes the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police and the Victorian Public Sector Commissioner. The Group is responsible for ensuring effective service delivery in respect of Aboriginal affairs across government. Its Terms of Reference (**Attachment AS-4**) include guiding the development of the Departmental Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans, to ensure services are accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal Victorians. The group meets five times annually.
24. Each year, progress of the VAAF is reported publically through an Aboriginal Affairs Report, which is tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The last Aboriginal Affairs Report was published in April 2014 (**Attachment AS-5**). The current government has committed to the release of an annual report. The report will be published later this year. The Aboriginal Affairs Report provides a summary of key achievements during the year across government and in the community sector, and provides a detailed review of the headline measures and targets within each Strategic Action Area of the VAAF (see pages 21 to 58).

- 7 -

25. The following diagram from the VAAF provides an overview of the performance management and reporting framework for Aboriginal affairs in Victoria (see page 27):



10 Year Plan

Framework for implementation

26. Strategic Action Area 5 of the VAAF is titled "Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes". One of the three headline indicators for this Action Area (H9) is to "reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence" (see page 32, VAAF).
27. The two key strategy documents for Strategic Action Area 5 are the 10 Year Plan and the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA). The AJA is focused on improving justice system outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians and, in particular, to eliminate their over-representation within the criminal justice system. The AJA is overseen and delivered by the Koori Justice Unit within the Department of Justice and Regulation.

- 8 -

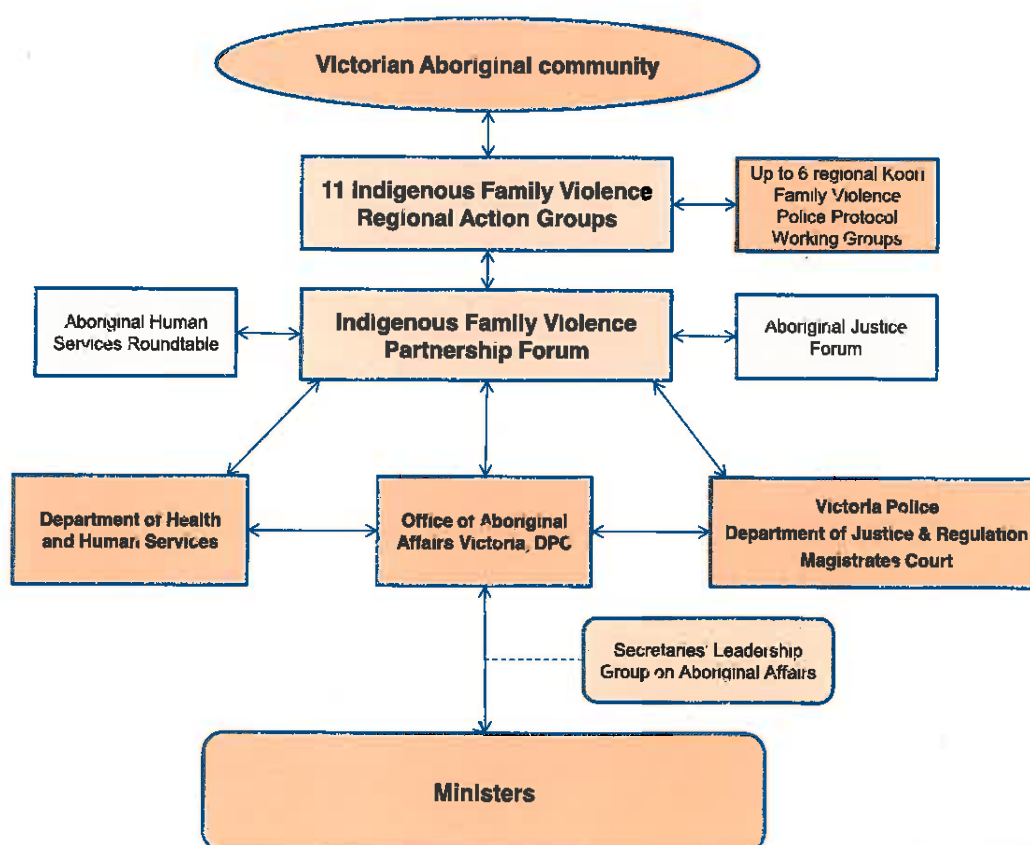
28. The 10 Year Plan was released in 2008 by the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum (**Partnership Forum**). Both the Partnership Forum and the 10 Year Plan were key recommendations made in 2003 by the *Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force Report (Attachment AS-6)*, which identified significant rates of violence within Victorian Aboriginal communities.
29. The Partnership Forum was established in 2005 and is the peak body for monitoring the progress of the 10 Year Plan. It comprises senior Aboriginal representatives from the 11 regions across Victoria, key Aboriginal community organisations and senior members of relevant government departments. I co-chair the Partnership Forum (along with the Chair of the host region's Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group) and the OAAV is responsible for coordinating the monitoring, reporting and governance arrangements for the 10 Year Plan. Previous co-chairs included the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Community Services and Deputy Secretary, Department of Planning and Community Development.
30. Strong leadership across the community and Government Departments is critical to driving outcomes against the 10 Year Plan objectives.
31. Members of the Partnership Forum are:
 - 31.1 Chairs - 11 Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups (IFVRAGs);
 - 31.2 Relevant Aboriginal statewide organisations including Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and Elizabeth Morgan House;
 - 31.3 Aboriginal Justice Forum representative;
 - 31.4 Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet;
 - 31.5 Victoria Police;
 - 31.6 Department of Health and Human Services;
 - 31.7 Magistrates' Court;
 - 31.8 Department of Justice and Regulation;

- 9 -

31.9 Department of Education and Training; and

31.10 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

32. The IFVRAGs are a vital component of the 10 Year Plan. They consist of community Elders, other leading members of the local Aboriginal community and local Aboriginal organisations and service providers. They are funded by the Victorian Government and they work with the Department of Health and Human Services, with each IFVRAG tasked to develop Regional Action Plans focusing on the services and strategies required in their region to address family violence. **Attachment AS-7** and **AS-8** are examples of Regional Action Plans for the Eastern Metropolitan Region and North and West Metropolitan Region.
33. The important role played by the IFVRAGs in the implementation of the 10 Year Plan is explained in further detail on pages 14 to 15 of the 10 Year Plan.
34. The following diagram provides an overview of the governance framework for the 10 Year Plan:



Dated end 2014

Objectives of the 10 Year Plan

35. The 10 Year Plan is based on a set of guiding principles (page 8), values (page 9) and eight objectives (page 32). The guiding principles are:
- 35.1 Family violence is not part of Indigenous culture;
 - 35.2 The nature of family violence within Indigenous communities is complex;
 - 35.3 Indigenous culture is unique and diverse;
 - 35.4 Partnership, transparency and accountability;
 - 35.5 Adequate resources;
 - 35.6 Empowering Indigenous communities;
 - 35.7 Local solutions to local problems;
 - 35.8 Holistic healing approach to family violence in Indigenous communities;
 - 35.9 Early intervention, prevention and education.
36. The eight objectives are:
- 36.1 **Cultural Safety:** Make Victoria a safer place for all Indigenous Victorians.
 - 36.2 **Healthy Families:** Support strong, robust and healthy families that provide a safe nurturing environment.
 - 36.3 **Education, Awareness, Prevention:** Intervene early to improve education, awareness and prevention of family violence.
 - 36.4 **Safety for Victims:** Increase the safety of Indigenous families and individuals, especially women and children.
 - 36.5 **Accountability:** Increase the accountability and personal responsibility of perpetrators of family violence within Indigenous communities.
 - 36.6 **Healing:** Increase opportunities for healing for victims and perpetrators.
 - 36.7 **Service Capability:** Increase the cultural competency and capacity of the service system to improve responses to Indigenous family violence.

- 36.8 **Research and Evaluation:** Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of responses to Indigenous family violence through ongoing research and evaluation.
- 37. Each of these objectives is to be met by identified actions outlined at pages 35 to 50 of the 10 Year Plan.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REDUCING FAMILY VIOLENCE WITHIN THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

- 38. The 10 Year Plan locates the causes of family violence in Indigenous communities in the history and impacts of white settlement and aspects of the structural violence of race relations since that time (page 12), including:
 - 38.1 dispossession of land and traditional culture;
 - 38.2 breakdown of community kinship systems and Indigenous law;
 - 38.3 racism and vilification;
 - 38.4 economic exclusion and entrenched poverty;
 - 38.5 alcohol and other drug abuse;
 - 38.6 the effects of institutionalisation and child removal policies;
 - 38.7 inherited grief and trauma; and
 - 38.8 the loss of traditional roles and status.
- 39. Broadly speaking, and informed by comments from the Partnership Forum, the key challenges and opportunities for reducing Indigenous family violence are:
 - 39.1 understanding family violence in the context of intergenerational trauma and abuse and the need for addressing family violence within a holistic healing model;
 - 39.2 understanding and appropriately responding to the differing causes and definition of family violence within Aboriginal communities, as compared to the broader Australian community, and responding within a holistic healing approach;
 - 39.3 addressing a lack of access to reliable, Aboriginal specific family violence data, including the need to strengthen the requirement to ask the Aboriginal identifier question to inform service provision;

- 39.4 solving the problem of fragmented service delivery for Aboriginal victims and perpetrators; and
- 39.5 ensuring non-Aboriginal services are culturally responsive and sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal victims and perpetrators.

Different causes and definition of family violence

- 40. The underlying causes of Aboriginal family violence are different to those in the mainstream community. Within Aboriginal communities family violence is a problem rooted in concepts of dispossession and colonisation, social exclusion, intergenerational trauma and racial disadvantage.
- 41. The Aboriginal community also maintains a different definition of family violence, which is described in the 10 Year Plan as (page 11):

“An issue focussed around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.”
- 42. The Aboriginal community, as demonstrated in the Partnership Forum’s and Aboriginal Justice Forum Koori Caucus’ Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, frames family violence through an Aboriginal cultural lens. The community does, however, promote prevention and response strategies that are specific to men, women and children.
- 43. It needs to be recognised that responses to family violence need to build on the strengths of Aboriginal families and communities and encompass Aboriginal concepts of social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing and healing.
- 44. The challenge of preventing and responding to Aboriginal family violence is therefore complex, multifaceted and requires a deep commitment to understand and acknowledge these root causes. This is not something that mainstream services necessarily respond well to. In addition, as a result of dispossession and intergenerational trauma, there is often distrust of government agencies and service providers by members of Aboriginal communities, and this means that Aboriginal people affected by family violence may be less likely to report incidents for fear of unwanted intervention.
- 45. However, this trust is building, largely through the work of the IFVRAGs, Aboriginal organisation, and leaders in the community, including our White Ribbon

Ambassadors (Victoria has a significant number of White Ribbon Aboriginal Ambassadors than any other State or Territory). We are beginning to see an increase in reports and engagement with services, as identified in the 10 Year Plan mid-term evaluation summary findings, undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting, which I discuss below.

Lack of reliable data

46. Having access to reliable, Aboriginal specific data is a critical issue. In particular, the IFVRAGs are in need of reliable localised data as to, for instance, the number of victims and perpetrators resident within a local area. Without such data, it is very difficult to tailor service responses and to gauge their effectiveness. Currently data sources used to determine the Aboriginal population comes from the ABS which also conduct the Women's Safety Survey every four years. We utilise data from the Crime Statistics Agency to determine the number of Family Incident Reports by Aboriginal status of the affected family member, however the Partnership Forum and particularly IFVRAGs have requested access to a range of data including assaults by gender, where charges are laid, number of Family Violence Intervention Orders and the number of breaches of Family Violence Intervention Orders. Victoria Police can provide data relating to family violence referrals from the L17's. We have limited access to data regarding Aboriginal access to family violence response services, including health data. If we had a better understanding of service access, we can better identify gaps in service provision and influence the necessary changes to provide a better outcome for both victims and perpetrators.
47. One of the factors driving the lack of reliable data is the challenge in Victoria Police recording the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity of victims and perpetrators. Police do not always, or are not always able to, ask whether a person is Aboriginal when recording family violence incidents. For some incidents, Police focus primarily on the safety of the victim and any children present, not on the ethnicity of the perpetrator. Alternatively, people attended by Police may not provide adequate responses to these questions. The concern is that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in family violence statistics may be even higher than currently reported.
48. Work is being conducted to address this particular issue, through the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols. The aim of the Protocols is to enhance the police response to incidences of Aboriginal family violence, including by promoting an Aboriginal specific referral process. The Protocols now operate in Ballarat, Darebin and Mildura, with another three sites to be rolled out in Greater Shepparton,

Bairnsdale and Greater Dandenong. An evaluation of the Police Protocols was prepared for Protocols Steering Committee, which is chaired by Victoria Police and includes key partners, in March 2015 (**Attachment AS-9**). The evaluation found that the Protocols are an “effective and useful” contribution to assisting Police to improve their responses to Aboriginal family violence.

49. I note there are a range of strategies that may be used to more accurately capture Aboriginality data. This includes appropriate training of police and better use of information communications technology. At the most recent Partnership Forum, an example of Tasmanian police practices was provided, where police are able to enter data directly into tablets (iPads) when they attend an incident. This could be an opportunity to enhance Aboriginal data collection in Victoria.
50. The development of the Family Violence Index has the potential to provide us all with better access to, and understanding of, the **scale** of the issue. It is critical that the Family Violence Index has the capacity to disaggregate the information by Aboriginality; by victim and perpetrator; by age and gender; region and LGA to enable us to fully appreciate the full picture and appropriately target service responses.

Culturally unsafe/inappropriate services

51. Another challenge in preventing and responding to Aboriginal family violence is the currently fragmented nature of service provision. Aboriginal people frequently report that they do not feel able to access mainstream services, because they find them to be culturally inappropriate. For example, we have been advised that an Aboriginal woman seeking support was told that she “doesn’t look Aboriginal” and that they treat all clients the same. Another example is where an Aboriginal mother was offered accommodation at a non-Aboriginal refuge but her male child(ren) over the age of 12 could not stay with her. Commonly, Aboriginal women seek support to stop the violence, not necessarily wanting to leave their partners. Refusals to offer ongoing support in this scenario are quite common.
52. Aboriginal perpetrators of family violence are severely limited in the culturally appropriate services they are able to access. Current information suggests five organisations have been funded to deliver case management for Aboriginal men, four of which are Aboriginal organisations. There are four Time Out services, one of which is also a Healing Service combined. There are two men’s group programs funded and an Indigenous Men’s Resource and Advisory service.

- 15 -

53. These services are limited to Melbourne metropolitan area, Mallee area, Gippsland and Goulburn.
54. We have heard examples at both the Partnership Forum and Aboriginal Justice Forum of how Victoria Police L17 reports in relation to Aboriginal victims of family violence are often not being referred to the existing, appropriate local Aboriginal service, but instead to a mainstream service provider. In some instances, mainstream service providers are working around this by on-referring victims to the appropriate Aboriginal service. This has exposed, however, the need to improve the referral of Aboriginal victims and perpetrators directly to the services of their choosing, particularly in areas where Aboriginal specific services are being provided. There is a clear desire from Aboriginal organisations delivering family violence services to receive direct L17 referrals.

CURRENT SERVICE AND SUPPORT LANDSCAPE / PROGRESS OF THE 10 YEAR PLAN

55. The current service and support landscape is best described by reference to progress against the 10 Year Plan.

Biannual progress monitoring

56. The Partnership Forum convenes biannually to monitor the progress of the 10 Year Plan and provides a mechanism to guide the direction for services that address Aboriginal family violence in the short, medium and long term. It continues to provide a vehicle for connecting Aboriginal community members to key decision makers across Government. Importantly it provides the opportunity for government and community to address family violence issues together, including emerging issues. OAAV manages the process of collecting information and updates from all key partners and preparing a progress report against the 10 Year Plan for distribution to the Partnership Forum members. This is commonly referred to as the "traffic light" report.
57. The traffic light report seeks to provide an update against each of the objectives and supporting actions in the 10 Year Plan. The report typically contains a description of the current projects and activities, agency responsibility, status, and a discussion of milestones reached over the previous 6 month period in respect of each action.
58. The most recent report was provided to the Partnership Forum at its first meeting for 2015 held on 17-18 June 2015 (**Attachment AS-10**). The report is current as at April 2015 and is the sixth progress report provided so far.

Mid-term evaluation

59. In September 2014, OAAV commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting (**PIC**) to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the 10 Year Plan. The mid-term evaluation is intended to report on overall progress of the 10 Year Plan at the halfway point, but also to consider the effectiveness of the current governance structures and to assist the Partnership Forum to develop further targets and performance measures.
60. The Partnership Forum approved terms of reference for the mid-term evaluation at its meeting held on 8-9 October 2014 (**Attachment AS-11**). The terms of reference provide a set of questions and considerations for PIC to explore, including for example:
 - 60.1 What progress has been made in implementing the specific commitments in the 10 Year Plan and have these been effective in achieving intended impacts? (Question 1)
 - 60.2 What opportunities exist to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation processes over the remaining 5 years of the 10 Year Plan? (Question 3)
 - 60.3 What are the benefits and lessons of the 'community led implementation model' expressed through the Regional Action Group Model, outcomes delivered and potential for improvements? (Question 4)
 - 60.4 How effective is the Partnership Forum in guiding the delivery the 10 Year Plan and what are the opportunities to improve its effectiveness and efficiency? (Question 5)
61. The terms of reference also sought some evaluation of the evidence so far for the achievement of outcomes under the 10 Year Plan. For example, PIC were asked to consider:
 - 61.1 What evidence is there to suggest improved family violence related service responses and outcomes, at a regional and/or State-wide level?
 - 61.2 What can be done to improve the evidence bases and inform future initiatives that contribute to improved family violence outcomes?
62. PIC's evaluation is not yet complete. However, at the most recent meeting of the Partnership Forum held on 17-18 June 2015, PIC provided a draft report for consideration and feedback. As the report is still in draft form and is confidential, I

have not attached it to this statement, but it has been provided to the Royal Commission in response to the Notice to Produce.

63. The draft summary report contains some important findings. These include:
 - 63.1 A number of the actions under the 10 Year Plan are “on track” and there have been some key achievements, such as the creation of strong community engagement through the IFVRAGs and Partnership Forum, the piloting of an Aboriginal specific risk assessment approach under the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF), the development of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols and the establishment of Koori family violence initiatives within the Magistrates’ Court. Whilst actions are “on track”, however, outcomes are difficult to assess at this mid point stage of the 10 Year Plan.
 - 63.2 Whilst the Partnership Forum is highly valued within the sector, there is scope to strengthen its terms of reference and operation so that it is better able to monitor the progress of the 10 Year Plan.
 - 63.3 The IFVRAGs have contributed to a substantial increase in awareness and knowledge about family violence in Aboriginal communities. The Action Plans developed by the IFVRAGs are key initiatives, but there is some inconsistency across the State in the way that they align with the objectives of the 10 Year Plan.
 - 63.4 The rate of reporting of family violence within Aboriginal communities is increasing, which demonstrates the need to continue developing prevention and early intervention initiatives, but is also reflective of improvements in awareness and willingness to report family violence.
64. It is expected that PIC will finalise its evaluation report incorporating feedback and input that was given by members of the Partnership Forum at the recent meeting, with a final version being completed by the end of August 2015.

Key initiatives and services

65. There are a number of key initiatives relating to Aboriginal family violence, including under the 10 Year Plan are discussed in:
 - 65.1 the Aboriginal Affairs Report (2013) (Attachment AS-5, above), particularly at pages 48 to 54;

- 65.2 the most recent Partnership Forum progress report given on 17-18 June 2015 (Attachment AS-10, above); and
 - 65.3 PIC's draft evaluation report.
66. They include:
- 66.1 Four "Time Out" services: in Yoowinna Wurnalong in East Gippsland (a consolidated Healing and Time Out service), Robinvale, Shepparton and the Aboriginal Male Centre in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne (incorporating a healing service). These services work with Aboriginal perpetrators to explore their motivations for violence and provide them with ways to avoid violent responses. They are run by Gippsland Lakes Community Health (an auspice agency), Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd and Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative and are funded by DHHS.
 - 66.2 Four "Healing" services were established: Yoowinna Wurnalong in East Gippsland (a consolidated Healing and Time Out service); Ngurelban in Rochester, Boorndawan Willam in Eastern Metropolitan Melbourne and the Aboriginal Male Centre in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne. These are holistic services where individuals parties are supported to identify and address the underlying causes of the family violence in a constructive and culturally appropriate way.
 - 66.3 Women's and children's Aboriginal specific residential response services: Meminar Ngangg Gimba in Mildura (which opened in 2012), Orana Gunyah in Morwell (which opened in 2014) and the recently rebuilt Elizabeth Morgan House in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne. These 24 hour purpose built residential complexes provide short stay accommodation for women and their children dealing with family violence. Service provision includes case management and healing services. The lack of appropriate long-term housing for women and children in these facilities often result in long-term stays, limiting the capacity of the service to provide immediate support to other women and children fleeing a family violence incident. These refuges are considered to be of a contemporary standard. They are cluster style and contain 15 independent living units between them. Two of these services offer 24 hour, seven days per week support for Aboriginal women and children, and another one offers extended hours support.
 - 66.4 Organisations funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver case management and support for Aboriginal women and children

experiencing family violence, linking women and children to a range of supports and services, including counselling and assisting with longer-term housing outcomes.

- 66.5 Case management responses for Aboriginal men who use violence, also funded by DHHS. Five organisations are funded, including a non-Aboriginal service, provider to promote effective healing and address a range of other issues that impact on men's use of family violence.
- 66.6 Indigenous Family Violence Community Initiatives Fund, an annual grants program of \$650,000 administered by DHHS, that supports Aboriginal community based projects that respond to family violence. Examples of funded projects include art therapy, family camps and education and awareness activities.
- 66.7 The development of a set of Aboriginal focused training materials to form part of the CRAF risk assessment process. These materials were piloted in Dandenong in 2013 and then in Geelong and Mildura in 2014. Following an evaluation of the pilot sites, materials are being finalised including a Trainers Guide, Participant Handbook and supporting materials that are due to be finalised within the next month. These will then be provided to DHHS, who will consider the implementation of the training.
- 66.8 Funding support for the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria for Aboriginal legal responses. Two paralegal support workers are funded to support Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence and sexual assault. This includes coordinating and linking clients to external support services including counselling, drug and alcohol, mental health, parenting programs and housing.
- 66.9 Ongoing community engagement work through the IFVRAGs, which continue to respond locally to specific needs and to help formulate future planning and policies for the regions across Victoria.
- 66.10 An Indigenous men's resource and advisory service – delivered by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited – a statewide resource that provides information, advice and resources for professionals and organisations that work with Aboriginal men who use violence and Aboriginal men's group programs that facilitate healing for Aboriginal men who use violence through camps and group work programs.
- 66.11 Feedback from the Partnership Forum includes the need for Aboriginal specific men's behaviour change programs. Whilst the current programs

- 20 -

have been used by Aboriginal male offenders, the Partnership Forum has indicated they are not culturally appropriate and fall short of working towards family and community strengthening, which is critical to supporting a holistic healing model.

66.12 The Koori Family Violence Court Support Program Pilot, administered by the Magistrates Court of Victoria, provided a culturally appropriate and supportive response to Aboriginal people who have a family violence matter at court. The program employed an Aboriginal male and female support worker.

66.13 The Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework is designed to support primary prevention capacity building, effective sustainable activities, and ownership and leadership within Aboriginal communities. It also includes practice tips to assist stakeholders involved in primary prevention activities. (**Attachment AS-12**).

67. The mid-term evaluation and the Royal Commission provide us with a unique opportunity to strengthen our systemic response to Aboriginal family violence. This includes providing for Aboriginal representation or involvement in all current and future reforms including models of service delivery. Going forward, there may be opportunities to strengthen the Risk Assessment Management Panels under the Strengthening Risk Management Program by including respected Aboriginal persons on panels where a case with an Aboriginal victim or perpetrator is being considered. This would help to ensure that all relevant information is considered as part of risk management and safety planning for people experiencing family violence.

Signed by

Angela Singh

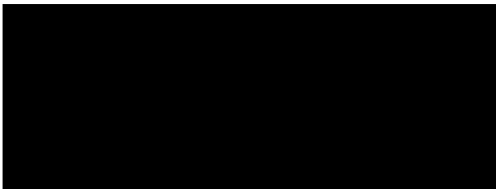
at Melbourne

this 16th day of July 2015

)
)
)
)



Before me



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