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Revised 03/10

VP Form 287

STATEMENT

Name: Solon Solomon
Address: Homicide Squad
Level 4/313 Spencer Street Docklands 3008
Occupation: Detective Sergeant of Police
Ph Work: [REDACTED]

STATES:

I provide this supplementary statement to the Royal Commission into the recruitment and management of human sources.

I have followed some of the evidence provided to the Royal Commission. I wish to respond to certain parts of evidence given beginning with the evidence given by Chief Commissioner Ashton.

1. It became apparent to me from the evidence of Chief Commissioner ASHTON that each time Nicola GOBBO met with Cameron Davey and myself to discuss matters relevant to our investigation into the Hodson murders the Source Development Unit (SDU) were being updated on the outcome of the meetings by the Petra investigation manager.

2. Davey and I were unaware that this was occurring. We were also unaware that the SDU were managing her as a human source and were being included in the briefing chain of the Petra Taskforce. It was our understanding that The Petra Taskforce managers reported directly to the Steering Committee only.

3. It also seems from Chief Commissioner ASHTON'S evidence that Nicola Gobbo herself was also briefing the SDU on the outcomes of her meetings with Davey and myself.

4. Again, we were unaware of this.



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5. Chief Commissioner ASHTON stated during his evidence at least twice that it was his belief that Nicola GOBBO was an informer for Petra.
6. He also stated that he was advised the Petra Investigation Manager was aware of GOBBO'S status (Registered Human Source) but the investigators were not aware.
7. This provides some comfort to me because it confirms my assertion that Davey and I were not aware that GOBBO was a registered human source during our dealings with her.
8. I never saw the number 3838 appearing on any document contained in the Petra Taskforce Database. Or on any correspondence relating to her. Gobbo was never referred to as 3838 in my presence at any time during my time at Petra. She was referred to by her name. Chief Commissioner ASHTON stated that during Petra Taskforce Steering Committee meetings she was referred to as 3838. Davey and I were not aware of this.
9. In evidence Chief Commissioner ASHTON stated that GOBBO had reported to her handlers that DAVEY and I asked her to covertly record conversations between her and other significant persons of interest. John HIGGS and Andrew HODSON were mentioned.
10. This is totally untrue. Neither DAVEY nor I asked her to record her conversations with anyone other than Paul DALE which I will address further on in my statement. We never ever considered such an action. Nor did we have the authority to do this.
11. Again, at risk of labouring the point we (Davey and I) were not utilising her as an informer. Our only purpose for speaking to her was to obtain information she may have which was of assistance and relevance to the murder of Terrence and Christine HODSON.
12. During Chief Commissioner ASHTON'S evidence mention was made of a polygraph in relation to Andrew HODSON. I will clarify this. Andrew HODSON was considered a potential suspect during the Hodson murder investigation. I would not say he was ever a firm suspect though however there were issues of concern to DAVEY and



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I concerning Andrew's accounts. We were conducting electronic surveillance of Andrew HODSON for a period and it was during this time we decided upon an investigative strategy which was to ask Andrew to undergo a polygraph test. I am reluctant to provide any more detail about this at this stage as it touches upon police methodology. Davey and I put this request to Andrew, and he agreed to participate in a polygraph test which was done.

13. It came out in Chief Commissioner ASHTON'S evidence that the SDU were briefed on this and there was some communication made with Nicola GOBBO by the SDU or the Petra Investigation Manager or both to involve GOBBO in the matter. That is for her to communicate with Andrew and offer some advice to him about what to do or say and that the communications should happen over the weekend so that he can only speak to her.

14. Davey and I were not aware that the SDU had been consulted about our strategy. We were unaware that Gobbo had been given an input in the matter. It was never our plan, that is mine and DAVEY'S to ever involve GOBBO in this matter. We never considered this as an option and if it did occur it should not have. There was no need whatsoever for GOBBO to be involved in this matter. Davey and I were dealing with Andrew and had his full cooperation.

15. Chris WINNEKE QC for the Royal Commission seemed to imply that GOBBO had been tasked by us regarding the Andrew HODSON Polygraph. I state categorically that she was not tasked by DAVEY and me, and we had no knowledge of any such taskings.

16. There was evidence given that Petra obtained from Nicola GOBBO notes which had been handed to her by Paul DALE when she attended upon him at Port Phillip Prison after his arrest for the Dublin Street Burglary.

17. Neither Davey nor I, the key investigators in the Hodson murders have ever seen any such notes.

18. There was evidence provided by Chief Commissioner ASHTON that the SDU provided Petra with information identifying two safe phones being used by Nicola GOBBO.



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19. This is incorrect. The two safe phones which we refer to as the Valersky phone and the Koscarev phone were found by us, the Petra investigators on my team. We identified these phones through a long process of investigative work and some extremely fine work carried out by our Tactical Investigation Officer who spent weeks analysing thousands of phone numbers from many persons of interest. We received nothing from SDU. In all my time working on the Hodson investigation I don't recall a single occasion where I received any information from the SDU at all regarding this investigation.

20. The Koscarev and Valersky phone was significant to our work because it led to the identification of Paul DALE'S safe phones which would later link him to the Hillside meeting with Carl WILLIAMS where it is alleged, he asked for the murder of Terrence HODSON to be arranged.

21. Incidentally GOBBO failed to tell DAVEY and I about the existence of these two safe phones when we had our first initial meetings with her and only owned up to them when we showed her the flow chart. She then explained that she was given these phones by Azzam AHMED so that she can communicate freely without fear of any monitoring by the police with him. She also used the phones to contact DALE and others.

22. It is apparent to me now that GOBBO informed her SDU handlers that we had found her safe phones. However, there was no discussion with DAVEY or me by any investigator about the fact that the SDU knew about the phones. For all I knew the SDU may have already known about the phones. The point is that the SDU never shared any information with us about her safe phones or any other relevant matter.

I/R 44

23. There was substantial questioning of Chief Commissioner ASHTON in relation to I/R 44. This confidential police information report was circulating in the public domain prior to the deaths of Terrence and Christine HODSON. The I/R identified Terrence HODSON as a police informer thereby placing his life at risk. The leaking of I/R 44 became the subject of an OPI investigation chaired by Mr Tony FITZGERALD QC

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who conducted several coercive hearings. In the end he found that the identity of the persons or persons who unlawfully leaked the I/R was unknown, but that Paul DALE had an obvious motive and opportunity to disseminate it.

24. My team at Petra undertook an investigation into the leaking of I/R 44 as part of our overall investigation into the HODSON murders. Along with our investigative partners at the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The end result was that I believe we got to the bottom of the leaking of I/R 44. Our investigation led us to a law firm in Melbourne. With a Coroners Authority which I executed on the offices of the law firm we located a copy of I/R 44. It was handed over to us along with another document which contained a long list of names of police surveillance operatives, their phone numbers and car registration numbers.

25. We were informed that the I/R and document was inadvertently provided to the law firm who were acting for a client charged with serious drug and corruption offences amongst the disclosure materials subpoenaed by the client's defence. The documents arrived in the pile of documents provided by police involved in the prosecution of that matter which was unrelated to the HODSON investigation and had been ongoing long before the murders.

26. This appears to be the most likely explanation for the leaked I/R which was circulating at the time of the Hodson murders. It appears to me that the Royal Commission is unaware of this and seems to be settling on the suggestion that GOBBO is the source of the leaked I/R 44.

27. It should also be noted that I/R 44 was one of the I/Rs in the Hodson informer management file that went missing from the MDID office immediately after the Dublin Street Burglary (Blue Folder) and ended up in the possession of criminal elements in QLD.

28. It should also be noted that I/R 44 seemed to be circulating in Melbourne amongst lawyers, criminals and journalists as a single document before the bundle of I/Rs from



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the folder were found by us in QLD. None of the I/Rs in the bundle from the folder were circulating.

29. This is what leads me to conclude that I/R 44 was a separate leak and most probably occurred by mistake as I have outlined above.

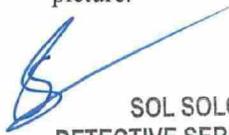
30. I feel it important that the Commission be informed about the full circumstances surrounding I/R 44 as I believe that the current narrative being presented is misleading.

31. There was substantial questioning of the Chief Commissioner in relation to the decision to withdraw Nicola GOBBO as a witness in the prosecution of DALE for multiple charges of giving false and misleading evidence to the ACC.

32. The questions that I did not hear was the reason why I was removed as the informant of that matter.

33. I remind the Commission that I investigated and prepared the brief of evidence in that matter. A substantial brief of evidence. It was received by the CDPP and I was told by the case manager that it was a very high-quality brief and the evidence was very strong. I was instructed to issue process against DALE. I filed 23 charge and summonses at the Melbourne Magistrates Court. I was then called in to a meeting with a senior officer at Crime Command who removed me as the informant. The summonses and charges I filed were replaced by a new set of identical charges and summonses with a new informant. This is a highly unorthodox action to take and for no apparent reason that I have ever been informed of.

34. I am one of the most senior investigators (length or service) in Crime Command and there has never been any suggestion made indicating misconduct or mismanagement in relation to my performance during the time I led the Hodson investigation. There was no justifiable reason in my view for me to have been removed from that prosecution. I suspect it was done to keep from me the fact that Gobbo was a registered informer and to be able to manage the risk of disclosure with me out of the picture.



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35. I am also yet to hear the real reasons why the Petra Taskforce was so abruptly and unceremoniously shut down when it was in full flight, following up viable leads and making steady progress in getting the prosecution of the Hodson murderers back on track.

36. The reality is that after the investigation was handed over to Driver Taskforce the investigation of the matter didn't advance any further. GOBBO'S possible involvement in the unlawful dissemination of the Hodson informer management file which my team was set to investigate fully and aggressively was not pursued any further to my knowledge.

37. I strongly reject any suggestion that it is settled that GOBBO was an informer for Petra. I reject it on the basis that Davey and I were the key investigators of the Hodson murders. There were no other members of that taskforce who had invested as much time and effort into it as we had. We were driving the investigation. Neither of us was aware of GOBBO'S true status. We were never told, and it seems obvious now that important matters which were occurring impacting on our efforts to solve this murder were deliberately kept from us which I will never reconcile.

38. Had we have known we were dealing with a registered human source, you would not see her name in our diaries after our contacts with her. We would not have been granted direct access to her if she was a registered human source by virtue of the strict human source management protocol (sterile corridor). All contacts would have to go through SDU. You will not see any information reports submitted by us in relation to any of our contacts which is a requirement when meeting with a registered human source.

39. In the ABC 7.30 Report interview with GOBBO, GOBBO was asked about her reason for agreeing to tape record her conversation with Paul DALE. She replied that she was "manipulated".

40. I reject this accusation of manipulation. I was the member who she immediately contacted after DALE contacted her asking to meet her. I have previously addressed this in my first statement to the commission however I reiterate that she offered to meet DALE. She stated that she was prepared to do this. It was her suggestion to tape record



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DALE not mine. She volunteered to engage with DALE and covertly tape the discussion. I did not ask her too nor did I put pressure on her to do these things. I do not see any manipulation being applied. I recall she was quite enthusiastic about it.

41. As I was going on a work-related trip to East Timor that day, I contacted Shane O'CONNELL and advised him of the situation and left it with him to deal with further.

42. Evidence was given to the Commission on 23/01/2020 during examination of Assistant Commissioner Cornelius that Petra had been approached by Purana to arrange a meeting with Nicola Gobbo and another person who was a client of hers. I was unaware of this having occurred.

43. It was also asserted that investigators from Petra were dealing with Nicola Gobbo through the SDU. I was unaware of this. I was never informed that the SDU were involved in our dealings with Gobbo.

44. Evidence was given to the Commission on 29/01/2020 during examination of Assistant Commissioner Cornelius referencing an email to Assistant Commissioner Cornelius by Detective Inspector Smith stating that Nicola Gobbo wanted to meet with a Purana witness. I am unaware of any such meeting taking place and can say that there was no operational need for her to meet with a Purana witness in relation to the Hodson murder investigation. I was not privy to any discussion about Gobbo wanting to meet any such witness.

45. During the same examination reference was made to an email from Nicola Gobbo to a member of Witness Security stating that she was an informer since 2005. There was also reference in her email of Detective Inspector Smith and Detective Senior Sergeant O'Connell knowing this. I was never made aware that she was a registered informer since 2005.

46. During the same examination it was put that Gobbo was demanding thirty million dollars as compensation for her services to Victoria Police as an informer and if paid will come to court. I was never made aware of this.


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47. During the same examination it was put that a meeting occurred between Nicola Gobbo and the DPP Jeremy Rapke SC for her use as a witness for Petra to be assessed. I was not aware of any such meeting.

48. During the same examination it was put that Nicola Gobbo was involved in other Petra Taskforce investigations. To my knowledge she was only involved in the Hodson murder investigations. I am unaware of any others.

49 During the same examination it was put that on 10 March 2010 Petra Officer in Charge Inspector SMITH and Investigation Manager Detective Senior Sergeant O'Connell met with the SDU to discuss a request by Dale's solicitor Tony Hargreaves for Nicola Gobbo's informer management file. This was in the Dale/Collins pre-Committal period. This comes as a surprise as Cameron Davey and I were handling the Committal from the police perspective and dealing with all defence subpoenas. I was unaware that Smith and O'Connell were liaising with the SDU regarding subpoena requests.

50. I have no recollection of any request or subpoena being issued for the production of a Gobbo informer management file. That is not say there wasn't such a request. In any case my response to any such request would have been short and simple; nothing to produce because I wasn't aware that she was a registered informer.

51. On the subject of subpoenas I can recall that the task of complying with subpoenas was extremely onerous. Initially we received a subpoena request by the Collins defence team requesting some 105 items, which we provided pre committal. We received a similarly extensive subpoena from the Dale defence team a few weeks prior to the commencement of the Committal requesting production of in excess of 100 items, with which we complied. At the commencement of the Committal hearing we were served with additional subpoenas by Dale's defence. The 14 thick folders containing subpoena material grew to approximately 30 folders in the days that followed. It was necessary to make PII claims regarding numerous documents with proceedings being interrupted by interlocutory hearings to the Supreme Court. Of all the PII claims made I cannot recall a claim relating to the Gobbo informer management file. That is not to say there wasn't one.


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52. Davey and I were the investigators responsible for the management of subpoena applications and compliance. We were represented by Barrister Ron Gipp. I do not recall any discussion with Ron Gipp about a Gobbo informer management file.

53. My state of knowledge and belief at that time was that no such informer management file existed. I now know that such a file did exist and appears to have been the subject of discussion between two senior Petra officers, the SDU and legal counsel representing the Chief Commissioner in the Dale/Collins Committal subpoena PII claims without the knowledge of Davey and me. To say this was inappropriate in the circumstances would be an understatement. I now wonder at what point in time those in the know were going to inform us of the existence of her informer management file.

54. During evidence given to the Commission on 12th February 2020 by Inspector SMITH, he stated that when he commenced his role as Officer in Charge of the Petra Taskforce he received an introductory briefing from the taskforce investigation manager Shane O'Connell and the primary investigators (Davey and me). During that briefing he was informed that Nicola Gobbo was a registered human source. The date of 1st July 2008 was mentioned as to when that briefing occurred.

55. I dispute this. I was never present at any briefing while at Petra where there was ever any mention of Nicola Gobbo being a registered informer or registered human source.

56. During Inspector Smith's evidence to the Commission it was raised that in May of 2007 the SDU were tasked by Simon Overland to question Gobbo about her knowledge of Dale and the Hodson murders.

57. I am unaware of any such tasking of the SDU. My clear recollection and understanding are that Davey and I were given approval to engage with Gobbo about those very matters, which we did.

58. During Inspector Smith's evidence to the Commission it was stated that Senior Sergeant Shane O'Connell was preparing a confidential affidavit in which he was going to declare Nicola Gobbo's informer status. It was further stated that Cameron Davey and I were involved in conversations with Inspector Smith and Senior Sergeant



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O'Connell about this. This is said to have occurred during the time when Davey and I were dealing with subpoenas, disclosure and PII for the Committal hearing.

59. I dispute this. I was never involved in any conversations with Senior Sergeant O'Connell, Inspector Smith or any other persons about Nicola Gobbo being a registered informer nor was I aware that Senior Sergeant O'Connell was preparing a confidential affidavit declaring that she was.

60. Davey and I were handling the Dale/Collins Subpoenas and engaging with legal counsel from the VGSO in relation to PII claims. The fact that Gobbo was a registered informer or there was an informer management file in existence relating to her was never raised with us.

61. During Inspector Smith's evidence to the Commission the subject of Nicola Gobbo making a second statement was raised.

62. This is correct. At one of the meetings that Cam Davey and I had with her prior to the commencement of the Committal at an interstate location she disclosed to us that she could produce an email she sent to Solicitor Tony Hargreaves shortly after speaking to Dale when he was in custody for the Dublin Street burglary stating that she cannot act for Dale due to a conflict of interest. She suggested that this would be useful evidence to corroborate or support the assertion that there was no LPP between her and Dale. She also stated that during the conversation she had with Dale which she covertly recorded Dale wrote on a piece of paper "ACC" The context being he wrote "ACC" and said to her, "Have you?" Meaning that he had been to an ACC hearing and he wanted to know if she had also.

63. Nicola Gobbo agreed to make a second statement about these matters at a time to be scheduled with us. The second statement never eventuated because the relationship between Gobbo and Victoria Police deteriorated to a point where she ceased contact with us.

64. During the evidence on 20 February 2020 of former Assistant Commissioner MOLONEY, it was raised that Nicola GOBBO told Peter DESANTO that \$500,000 cash was taken from the proceeds of the Dublin Street Burglary prior to the arrival of



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Ethical Standards Department investigators. The money was said to be used in the financing of Miechel's legal defence.

65. This information was never passed on to Davey and me. The missing cash from the Dublin Street drug safe house was an important piece of evidence in the Hodson murder investigation. Davey and I were informed by Azzam AHMED who was the person in charge of the drug manufacturing operation at the Dublin Street address that approximately \$700,000 cash should have been on the premises at the time of the burglary, therefore the information provided to DESANTO by GOBBO would have corroborated what we were being told by AHMED. We should have been made aware of this.

66. It was also raised with former Assistant Commissioner Moloney during his evidence that it was a Petra Taskforce strategy that once Dale was charged by Petra, there would be no need to disclose any information about Gobbo's past history with the SDU.

67. Neither Davey nor I were ever made aware of any such strategy and we were never privy to any discussions about any such strategy. We simply were not aware of Gobbo's involvement with SDU.

68. During the evidence on 21 February 2020 of Shane O'Connell, it was raised with him that Davey and I asked Nicola Gobbo to engage in conversations with John HIGGS and Andrew HODSON and to tape record those conversations.

69. This never happened. Neither Davey nor I ever asked Gobbo to engage in conversations or record conversations with any person other than the meeting she had with Paul Dale which is well documented and which she volunteered to do.

70. Shane O'Connell indicated in his evidence on this issue that it was possible that Davey and I did ask Gobbo to engage in conversations with Higgs and Hodson and to record those conversations without us discussing with him that we would be doing this.



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71. I reject the suggestion of any possibility of this happening. We would never have embarked upon such a plan without advising Shane O'Connell who was our investigation manager. We simply do not operate like that.

72. There was never any discussion between Gobbo and us about this matter.

73. During Shane O'Connell's evidence it was raised with him that there were strategies being developed by Petra investigators involving Gobbo.

74. I am not aware of any such strategies being developed by Petra involving Gobbo other than obtaining a witness statement from her regarding the Hodson murders.

75. It was also raised with O'Connell that Gobbo had provided her notes to handlers at the SDU concerning interactions with Dale in which he apparently provided her with some instructions.

76. I have never seen any such notes. I was not aware of the existence of any such notes and if in fact they do exist, Davey and I should have been provided with them for inclusion in the Brief of Evidence because I believe they would have been discoverable.

77. It was alleged by Nicola Gobbo in her evidence on 11 February 2020 that I tactically do not provide statements for briefs of evidence to avoid being cross examined. She also alleged that there is a current trial in the Supreme court which I had substantial involvement in the investigation and have not provided a statement for that reason.

78. This is untrue. I always provide a statement for briefs of evidence if required. I am not clear on the current trial that Gobbo is alluding to. There is a current murder trial at the Supreme Court that my team is involved in. However, my role and actions during that investigation did not necessitate me having to provide a statement. I simply have nothing of evidentiary value to add to the prosecution. My involvement in the investigation is well known to defence and prosecution and there have been no requests made for a statement from me.



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79. It is obvious to me now that there was a lot going on that Davey and I were not aware of in relation to the Hodson murder investigation. Looking back, I wonder how on earth my team managed to progress the investigation to where we got it, that is, to arrests, charges and committal, with so much turmoil and interference going on in the background.

80. It is also obvious to me that we were up against a powerful force operating behind the scenes who were determined to ensure that the case against the Hodson murderers and the other significant prosecution of Dale would never see the light of day in a courtroom.

81. I wonder if one day the full circumstances surrounding the murders of Terrence and Christine Hodson and the identities of all those involved will ever be known.



Sol Solomon
Detective Sergeant 21136

I hereby acknowledge that this statement is true and correct, and I make it in the belief that a person making a false statement in the circumstances is liable to the penalties of perjury.



Sol Solomon
Detective Sergeant 21136

Acknowledgment made and signature witnessed by me
At 8.50 a.m. on 02/03/2020 at Homicide Squad, Level 4/313 Spencer
Street, Docklands, 3008.

Pixie FUHRMEISTER
Detective Senior Sergeant 28422



(.....)

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