

This document has been redacted for Public Interest Immunity claims made by Victoria Police. These claims are not yet resolved.

Mr Thomas

STATES:

1. I make this statement in relation to my knowledge of the death of Victor PEIRCE [REDACTED]
2. I didn't personally know [REDACTED] as a friend, but I had met him on a few occasions at Italian weddings. From memory one of these weddings was the MANNERINI's, who had a store at the Footscray market, another wedding was PII [REDACTED] These weddings would have been over 15 years ago. Besides these occasions I didn't have any other dealings with [REDACTED]
3. The first time I met Victor PEIRCE was at Carl WILLIAMS' wedding. He was there with Sharon MERCIECA. Carl introduced me to him and I only spoke briefly with him. Besides this I only met him on one other occasion when I went to the movies at Crown Casino gold class with [REDACTED] Glen WILLS and his girlfriend. Victor PEIRCE was already at the movies with a lady and he came up and said hello.
4. Around 2000 I was introduced to Andrew VENIAMIN by Dino DIBRA. Just before Dino was murdered, Dino and Andrew had a big argument but I don't know what over. After Dino was shot there was a rumour that Andrew was involved. I didn't really believe the rumour. Andrew was at Dino's funeral with Faruk ORMAN who was a close friend of his and was always with him. At the mosque Dino's father came up to me and pointed out Andrew and said he was the one who had killed Dino. When we went to the cemetery I approached Andrew and asked him if he knew who had murdered Dino. He said he would try and find out for me.
5. PII [REDACTED]
6. It would have been around 6 months after Dino's murder, I was down at the R Bar in Port Melbourne having a coffee outside with Glen WILLS

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- when I saw Andrew VENIAMIN across the road. Andrew came over and spoke to me and we exchanged numbers.
7. About 2 days later I got a call from Andrew and he said he wanted to catch up for a chat. We organised to meet at an Ampol service station on the corner of Beach Rd and Victoria St, Port Melbourne. I met him there in the afternoon and he was with Faruk. At the time Andrew was driving a silver Porshe Boxter convertible. At first we just spoke generally and then Andrew asked me if he knew where Victor PEIRCE lived. I told him that I didn't know and that I had only met him a couple of times. The first thing I thought when he asked me was that he wanted to get PEIRCE; by this I mean he wanted to kill him.
 8. About 3 or 4 weeks later we caught up again in Beach Rd after he had rung me. Andrew turned up with Faruk. During this meeting he again asked me if I had heard anything about PEIRCE. I said no and he asked me if I could find out where he lived. I asked him, "What's the problem with PEIRCE?" He said "If I don't get him, he would get me." By this I knew Andrew meant if he didn't kill PEIRCE, PEIRCE was going to kill him.
 9. On one other occasion Andrew was with me and we were driving along Beach Rd in my black Holden ute. We met up with Faruk at the convenience store in Port Melbourne just up from the R Bar going towards the West Gate. Andrew asked Faruk if he had any news about PEIRCE. Faruk said he couldn't find him and Andrew got angry and called him an idiot, but he calmed down quickly.
 10. I met Andrew a few times after this but he didn't talk about PEIRCE any more. We became closer friends over this time. He actually may have mentioned PEIRCE but I didn't really take any notice of it.
 11. Around this time I had moved to [REDACTED] St, Docklands. I was at home watching television when I heard about Victor PEIRCE being shot

in Bay St, Port Melbourne. Straight away I thought it would have been Andrew and Faruk who had killed PEIRCE.

12. The next day just after lunch Andrew and Faruk came and saw me at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] St. I met them downstairs at my building. I think from memory Andrew had rung prior to this to organise the meeting. The three of us went for a walk along the waters edge to talk so it couldn't be picked up by listening devices. Andrew asked me if I knew how the E-Tag cameras worked on city link. He asked me this because he knew I didn't have an E-TAG and I removed my front number plate from my car to avoid paying the tolls. He wanted to know when the cameras took a photo, if they covered the front windscreen area of the car and if the people in the car could be seen. I asked him why, even though I knew what was going on. Andrew then said, "It was us last night." I knew he was referring to PEIRCE's murder. He said "You wouldn't believe what happened." He then went on to detail that when Faruk pulled up next to PEIRCE's car, Andrew jumped out and started to shoot through the window but then the gun jammed. He threw this gun back in the car and took another gun which he had on him. He then used his elbow to smash the driver's window and continued shooting with the second gun. When he was telling me this he used his arms to show me the actions of shooting and the smashing of the window. I don't know what sort of guns he used but after this he said he wouldn't use an automatic again.
13. He went on to say he was concerned that they had been photographed by the City Link cameras and that he was heading towards Sunshine. I told him he would be okay as it only photographed the bottom of the car. Andrew didn't say anything else about the murder. I said to Faruk, "You blokes are crazy." He just shrugged his shoulders and said, "Ah well."
14. Awhile after PEIRCE's murder, it could have been about a year, I was the middle man between RADEV and Carl for the sale of chemicals to make amphetamines. RADEV was supplying the P2P and Carl supplying the gas. On one occasion during this time I went to a meeting

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with RADEV at a bar in Bay St, Port Melbourne. I can't remember what it's called but it's on the opposite side of the road to Coles and towards the beach. At the meeting was myself, RADEV, Andrew VENIAMIN and one other person. I can't remember if it was Damien COSSU or Ange GOUSSIS. We were sitting outside the bar so we could smoke, and Vince BENVENUTO walked up to RADEV. I knew who Vince was but I wasn't a close associate. As Vince walked towards the table I said to Andrew this bloke owes a mate of mine \$5000. I was going to say something to Vince about it but Andrew told me to let it go as Vince had done him a favour. Vince dropped off some money to RADEV, which I believe was for drugs; I don't know how much this was. After this Nick and I sorted out when the next pick up of oil would take place.

15. Andrew and I then walked off together and I asked Andrew what favour Vince had done for him as it appeared they didn't know each other well. Andrew told me that Vince was the one who set up Victor PEIRCE for him. He then went into detail about how Vince had helped him. Andrew said that as he was having trouble locating PEIRCE, he asked Mick GATTO to see if he could get someone to set up PEIRCE for him. Mick organised with Vince BENVENUTO to do the set up. Vince was buying drugs off PEIRCE at the time. Andrew told me the murder was supposed to happen the night before it actually did. Vince had organised to meet PEIRCE in the car park on top of Coles in Bay St, Port Melbourne but PEIRCE didn't turn up. After this Vince organised a second meeting and this was when Andrew shot him. I asked Andrew why he did it in the main street and Andrew told me that the meeting was again supposed to take place in the car park but PEIRCE wouldn't go up there. They saw him parked in the street and took the opportunity to get him then as he had been hard to catch.
16. A month or two later I was with Andrew and I asked him why PEIRCE? What was behind it? Andrew then told me that he used to work for Frank BENVENUTO in the late 1990's and that when PEIRCE got out of gaol he started working with Andrew for Frank. PEIRCE had worked

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- previously for Frank before going to gaol. Andrew told me that Frank gave him and PEIRCE a contract to kill Mick GATTO, Andrew didn't tell me how much money was involved.
17. Andrew told someone about the deal and it got back to Mick. Mick then turned up at Andrew's house with Steve KAYA and they asked him what was going on. Andrew ended up telling Mick what Frank had wanted done. Steve KAYA had known Andrew for a long time from the Sunshine area.
 18. Andrew told me that GATTO then gave him an ultimatum that he come and work for him and for Andrew to [REDACTED] or else Andrew would cop it. At the time there was a dispute between the Italians in Melbourne.
 19. Andrew only told me a little bit about [REDACTED]. He said that he was driving along and met [REDACTED] on the side of the road. I don't if the meeting was pre arranged or how it was set up. All Andrew said was he got in the front passenger seat next to [REDACTED] who was sitting in the driver's seat, and he [REDACTED]. He didn't go into any further details than this.
 20. About two years after [REDACTED] Andrew said he heard PEIRCE had found out ^{PII} [REDACTED] and he was worried that PEIRCE was going to get revenge on both him and Mick GATTO. That's why he asked Mick to help him set up PEIRCE. I don't know if any money exchanged hands.
 21. I have heard it has been said since, that Carl ordered Andrew to do the hit on PEIRCE. I know this is not true as Carl was in gaol at the time. He hadn't met Andrew at this stage, as I was the one who introduced Andrew to Carl when he got out of gaol after PEIRCE's murder.

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Statement made and signature witnessed
by me at Melbourne on 19/07/2006

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Nigel L'ESTRANGE
Detective Senior Constable 30968

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.

.....
Mr Thomas

Acknowledgement made and signature witnessed
by me at Melbourne on 19/07/2006.

.....
Nigel L'ESTRANGE
Detective Senior Constable 30968