Additional information requested for the inquiry and review of the
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Human Rights Integration within Victoria Police has been marked by executive sponsorship from across the organisation’s leadership who continue to meet regularly to oversee human rights organisational change effort. The commitment of senior organisational leaders and the direct involvement of other senior management is instrumental in showing a united purpose and commitment.

This unified, committed and involved leadership has been recognised as an essential ingredient for change efforts in general, but particularly so in a hierarchical organisation like Victoria Police. The appointment of a Deputy Commissioner as the human rights sponsor, supported by the Director of Legal Services and Assistant Commissioner Ethical Standards as well as other senior managers is interpreted broadly as leaders confidently communicating that change is needed, they are committed to it, and when Victoria Police funded the activities after the ERC funds were expended, this was further evidence that the organisational leadership continues to be committed to the process. Furthermore, the involvement of the Victoria Police Executive, as well as Senior Managers in assessing and guiding the effort through Human Rights Compliance Advisory Committee, has further confirmed the certainty of the organisational commitment to a human rights framework.

Victoria Police Executive and Senior Management direct involvement has been interpreted widely across the organisation as their sharing of commitment, ownership and ultimate accountability for human rights organisational change. The Director of Corporate Strategy and Governance (CSG) has always had a critical role in the integration of human rights in the planning and reporting (internally and externally), because CSG provides the organisation’s strategic direction through:

- Validating Victoria Police’s current strategic approach
- Developing initiatives and evidence-based options for organisational change
- Fostering the consideration of our analysis through our corporate governance committees, national policing bodies and Government.

Thus the additional information that the Committee has requested was generated to support a gap that was identified as critical if the organisation was to honour their obligation towards victims of crime. Victoria Police partnered with Monash University in exploring police perspective and experiences in delivering services and supporting victims of crime (The Station Study Report – attached). This is because involving stakeholders is critical for policing organisations seeking human rights acculturation. Human rights issues are evident across policing activities, therefore relevant to internal and external stakeholders. It is therefore assumed that human rights concerns can emerge in all areas of police activity, and particularly in direct interactions with the public. Involving external stakeholders like Monash University was instrumental in identifying all relevant concerns, in an area that is so under researched. This report does provide scope for realistic solutions.

Victoria Police acknowledges that the impact of crime varies from person to person, and that certain situations and crimes may require a more intensive service delivery response. With this in mind, it is essential that the policing service provided to victims of crime is delivered in a meaningful way that intelligently targets those victims who have the need for support.
This study came is the result of Victoria Police acknowledging that police are often the first point of contact for a victim following a crime, therefore providing a crucial gateway to the criminal justice system and access to victim support services. As a first point of contact for people in need of assistance, Victoria Police can respond immediately and through our partnerships, connect people with government and community organisations who can provide further assistance.

While Victoria Police has always executed their duties to the best of their abilities, the introduction of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Victims Charter Act 2006 has served to reinforce many aspects of existing Victoria Police policy as well as provide minimum standards. Such legislation emphasises the need for an awareness of human rights to be central to police work, particularly in relation to those most in need of protection. Victoria Police is committed to providing a responsive service to all victims; one that is commensurate with the victims needs while being respectful of their circumstance.

In 2007 Victoria Police introduced the Victoria Police Victims of Crime Policy Statement as a way of formalising our commitment to victims of crime. The document creates a framework for the delivery of a quality service to all persons who have experienced crime. The Policy Statement also reflects the Victoria Police Service Delivery Principles of an equitable, responsive and client focused service. Further, the Victoria Police Service Standards for victims of crime reflect our Organisational Values and guide the way we as police, should respond to victims of crime. These Service Standards are a commitment by us to provide victims of crime with information and support at key stages of the investigation and prosecutions process, in addition to treating all victims of crime with dignity, courtesy and respect. At the heart of the Policy Statement is the recognition of the important role that victims play in the criminal justice system.

The Victoria Police, through the Victims’ Advisory Unit (VAU), are working to document evidence of human rights compliance through the production of human rights risk assessments and good practice audits. As the VAU develops policy as well as provides a service, these tools are used to test policy and practice in an operational setting in order to identify areas of success and areas that require further improvement. Victoria Police continues to measure its practice against international human rights standards for law enforcement (see attached), while promoting human rights compliance at a regional level by providing leadership, guidance and support to operational members.

Kieran Walshe
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Chair – Human Rights Compliance Advisory Committee
Victoria Police

21/7/2011