



# P190B

# STATEMENT OF POLICE

In the matter of: Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes -

Place: Sex Crimes Squad – State Crime Command

Date: 8 September 2023

Name:

Cameron BIGNELL

Tel. No:

Rank:

Detective A/Sergeant

Station/Unit:

Sex Crimes Squad - State Crime Command

## STATES:

- This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything that I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.
- 2. I am 34 years of age.
- In this statement, where I refer to documents I also include their document ID number for identification purposes, in the form SCOI.XXXX and NPL.XXXX.XXXXX.XXXX.
- 4. I make this statement in response to a letter I received from the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes (Inquiry) dated 21 August 2023 (Letter). The Letter also enclosed a summons to attend the Inquiry on 18 September 2023.
- 5. The Letter noted that second public hearing of the Inquiry (Public Hearing 2) is examining the ways in which the New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) has approached issues relating to "bias crime" and "hate crime" from 1970 to present, including the investigations conducted by Strike Forces Parrabell, Macnamir and Neiwand. The Letter further noted that sections of the submissions of Counsel Assisting the Inquiry concern my involvement in the matters currently being examined by the Inquiry in Public Hearing 2.

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- 6. The Letter identified sections of the submissions of Counsel Assisting the Inquiry (CA submissions) and the Commissioner of NSW Police (CoP submissions) that had been identified as relevant to me and invited me to provide this statement to the Inquiry.
- 7. Unless otherwise stated, I make this statement based on:
  - (a) my review of relevant records held by NSWPF;
  - (b) information known to me;
  - (c) information provided to me at my request by appropriate members of NSWPF; and
  - (d) my experience as a detective.

## Structure of this statement

- 8. The structure of my statement is as follows:
  - (a) Section A: provides background on my role and policing experience;
  - (b) Section B: sets out my qualifications and training;
  - (c) Section C: comments on the formation of Strike Force Parrabell;
  - (d) Section D: comments on what has been referred to as the "constituent documents" of Strike Force Parrabell;
  - (e) Section E: comments on the methodology of Strike Force Parrabell;
  - (f) **Section F**: discussed the interaction between Strike Force Parrabell and the Flinders University academic review team;
  - (g) Section G: comments on the Strike Force Parrabell report; and
  - (h) Section H: comments on the relationship between Strike Force Parrabell and other police.

## SECTION A: MY ROLE AND POLICING EXPERIENCE

- I am a Detective Senior Constable in the Sex Crimes Squad, State Crime Command in the NSWPF. I have held this position since 9 April 2017. Since 18 June 2023, I have been Acting Detective Sergeant.
- 10. Since 16 July 2023, I have been an Investigations Team Team Leader. As part of my role as Team Leader, I am responsible for the running and management of serious, protracted, and high-profile sexual violence investigations. I have several staff who report to me in this role and am responsible for ensuring the timely completion of allocated tasks, maintenance and review of case records, providing comprehensive briefings to Senior Management and Investigators and provide direction and guidance to junior members of the investigative team. Prior to this, I was the Sex Crimes Squad Investigations Manager.
- I have been a sworn officer of the NSWPF since attesting from the Police Academy on 8 May 2009.
- 12. Upon my attestation from the NSW Police Academy, I was stationed at the Surry Hills Local Area Command (now Surry Hills Police Area Command (PAC)). On 23 August 2011, I commenced Criminal Investigation Duties and remained attached to Surry Hills PAC.
- On 31 December 2013, I was promoted to Detective Constable and on 8 May 2014, I was promoted to Detective Senior Constable.
- 14. Between January 2015 and August 2015, I was seconded to State Crime Command Homicide Squad – Strike Force Verum (SF Verum), which was formed to investigate the Martin Place Lindt Café siege and broadly the motivations and mindset of Man Haron Monis.
- 15. On completion of my secondment to the Homicide Squad in August 2015, I returned to my role as a detective at Surry Hills PAC and continued there until April 2017. It was during this period that I was engaged with Strike Force Parrabell (SF Parrabell).

- 16. On 9 April 2017, I was transferred to State Crime Command Sex Crimes Squad, which merged with the Child Abuse Squad to form the Child Abuse and Sex Crimes Squad on 3 December 2017.
- 17. On 6 December 2022, the Child Abuse Squad and Sex Crimes Squad split. I remained attached to the Sex Crimes Squad. I have performed the role of Detective Sergeant for various periods and in various roles since commencing at the Sex Crimes Squad.
- 18. I have had substantial involvement in the LGBTIQ community, both in my personal capacity as a gay man and in my professional capacity. In my role as a police officer, both generally and as a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer, I have been responsible for investigations into instances of violence and other crimes against the LGBTIQ community and have attended community events such as Mardi Gras in a professional capacity.

## **SECTION B: QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING**

- 19. I have obtained the following formal qualifications:
  - (a) Associate Degree in Policing Practice on 8 May 2010; and
  - (b) Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Police Investigations) in December 2013.
- 20. I have also participated in a number of internal police training programs (including those specific to investigation practices), which are listed on my NSWPF Individual Profile at NPL.9000.0026.0001, including:
  - (a) NSW Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer Course, completed on 8 July 2011;
  - (b) NSW Police Investigator Course, completed on 18 February 2012; and
  - (c) Investigation and Management of Adult Sexual Assault Course, completed on 27 June 2014.

#### SECTION C: STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL: FORMATION

- 21. I became aware of the formation of SF Parrabell shortly before it commenced, on or around 30 August 2015. As set out above, at that time of the formation of SF Parrabell I was seconded to SF Verum.
- 22. I first learnt about SF Parrabell from Detective Sergeant Grace (DS Grace). I cannot recall the exact dates of my conversations with DS Grace, but I remember that he asked if I would return to the Surry Hills PAC from SF Verum to become involved in SF Parrabell, or words to that effect.
- 23. I am not aware of any reason why I, specifically, was asked to be involved in SF Parrabell. Potential factors that I believe could have been relevant to my selection include:
  - (a) My lack of attachment to the Homicide Squad, the Unsolved Homicide Team (UHT) or any previous investigations of the 88 cases, thereby ensuring my impartiality in reviewing the associated material;
  - (b) my experience in policing involving the LGBTIQ community during my time at the Surry Hills Police Area Command (PAC) (a PAC with a high level of LGBTIQ community interaction and policing);
  - (c) my position as one of the more senior investigators of the approximately fifteen detectives in the Surry Hills PAC at the time, which had been selected as the PAC out of which SF Parrabell was to be run; and
  - (d) my position as a NSW Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer.
- 24. On or around 30 August 2015, I was attached to SF Parrabell on a full-time basis and based in the Surry Hills Detectives Office (located within the Sydney Police Centre). I was not involved in the initial meetings or consultations that led to the formation of SF Parrabell due to my secondment to State Crime Command and involvement in SF Verum.

- 25. Whilst I believe that my involvement and knowledge of the LGBTIQ community assisted me in my role in SF Parrabell, I do not think that such experience was necessary for investigators on SF Parrabell to perform their duties competently. This is because the task of an investigator is focused on identifying, collating, and analysing information. I do not believe that an officer's sexuality would have impacted one way or the other on their ability to perform their task as an investigator on SF Parrabell.
- 26. To my knowledge, the purpose of SF Parrabell was to review the 88 historical deaths that were considered to have some material element of anti-LGBTIQ bias. Upon that review, SF Parrabell was to then conclude whether anti-LGBTIQ bias contributed to those deaths.
- 27. I understand that the list of 88 historical deaths was originally created by Sue Thompson whilst she was the Gay and Lesbian Client Consultant for NSW Police, through her own review of violence and other crime against gay men in specific locations in Sydney, inquiries with members of the NSWPF, and inquiries within the LGBTIQ community. It was my understanding that some members of the LGBTIQ community viewed this list as 88 instances where NSW police had failed to discharge their responsibility to the community.
- 28. I was not ever told, nor did I ever get the impression, that SF Parrabell was established to obtain a particular result or outcome. I always understood SF Parrabell to be a genuine and good faith attempt at responding to community concerns regarding the prevalence of LGBTIQ hate crimes in NSW. As I have been trained to do as a police officer, I approached SF Parrabell and the review of the 88 historical deaths with an open mind, with no preconceived ideas of what the outcomes of the Strike Force or its review of individual cases should be.

# **Engagement with Sergeant Steer**

29. Prior to my involvement with SF Parrabell, I was not aware of the pre-existing NSWPF Investigation, called Operation Parrabell, led by Sergeant Geoffrey Steer (Sgt Steer). I learnt about Operation Parrabell shortly after commencing on SF Parrabell. Whilst there were areas

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of cross-over between Operation Parrabell and SF Parrabell, I do not believe that the two had identical objectives. I believe this because I understood Operation Parrabell to be conducting complete re-investigations into the 88 cases, whilst SF Parrabell was a review. I otherwise had limited knowledge about Operation Parrabell and its objectives.

- I was not responsible for the staffing and resourcing of SF Parrabell and was not involved in any decision regarding Sgt Steer's involvement with SF Parrabell.
- 31. On or around 28 June 2016, I recall Sgt Steer attending the Surry Hills Police Station to give a presentation to me and the other SF Parrabell investigators on bias crime. Following that presentation, I sent an email to Sgt Steer that afternoon asking for additional information on the classifications of crimes discussed during his presentation. I believe I sent the email at the direction of DS Grace or Detective Chief Inspector Craig Middleton (DCI Middleton). I forwarded Sgt Steer's response on to DCI Middleton and DS Grace.
- 32. I also remember a discussion with Sgt Steer after I was made aware of his office being in possession of a number of files relating to the 88 historical cases. While I do not recall the exact words that were said, my recollection is that the conversation with Sgt Steer was only in relation to the logistics of me collecting the files and we did not discuss the progress of SF Parrabell to that point.
- 33. I have been shown minutes of a meeting on 19 January 2017 which has recorded both my and Sgt Steer's attendance. I do not recall this meeting, but I do not have any reason to doubt that the minutes accurately reflect the event in question.

# SECTION D: STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL: DOCUMENTS

# The "Constituent Documents"

34. I was not involved in the development of the Terms of Reference, the Investigation Plan, the Induction Package or the Coordinating Instructions for SF Parrabell. To my knowledge, those documents were drafted by DS Grace. The verbal briefings I provided to new staff members

covered much of the material in the Constituent Documents as I would talk them through the origins of SF Parrabell, what their role and responsibilities entailed and provide an explanation of the Bias Crime Indicator Form (**BCIF**).

35. I recall reading the 'constituent' documents when they were first made available to me and knew that if I required access, they were available on e@gle-i. These documents, alongside the initial briefing meetings with Assistant Commissioner Anthony Crandell (AC Crandell), DCI Middleton and DS Grace, informed me as to the intended activities of SF Parrabell and its objectives. This subsequent understanding of SF Parrabell's objectives guided the work I was doing at the time and the instructions I gave to the investigators.

# Terms of Reference

 I cannot now locate a copy of the SF Parrabell Terms of Reference but recall that one did exist.

# Investigation Plan

37. I recall reviewing the Investigation Plan when I commenced my duties with SF Parrabell. I understood that the purpose of the Investigation Plan was to provide the scope of the investigation, its aims and the process to achieve those aims. I recall that the Investigation Plan was available as part of administrative package of documents available to all officers working on SF Parrabell. I did not feel the need to regularly refer to the Investigation Plan during the course of SF Parrabell as I was comfortable that I understood my role and how I was to go about my duties.

#### Induction Package

- 38. I understand that the Induction Package was created in or around May 2016.
- 39. While I recall seeing the Induction Package once it had been drafted, I did not refer back to it on a regular basis as it was consistent with my understanding of SF Parrabell and the work I

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and the investigators were undertaking. I do not recall providing it to the investigators, but it was readily available to them through the administrative package of documents.

# Coordinating Instructions

40. I recall that the Coordinating Instructions were developed following changes in the thinking of the review team on the appropriate way to categorise the cases being reviewed. While I did not have input into drafting these instructions, I understand that they were to reflect the thinking of the review team at the time. Again, I did not refer back to the Coordinating Instructions on a regular basis as it was consistent with my understanding of SF Parrabell and the work I and the investigators were undertaking. I do not recall providing it to the investigators, but it was readily available to them through the administrative package of documents.

## Bias Crime Indicator Form

- 41. The BCIF was created to assist the task which SF Parrabell was to undertake. It contained a list of ten factors which were considered to be potential indicators of anti-LGBTIQ crime, guiding the triage review's determination of what material could be relevant to a determination of anti-LGBTIQ crime being present.
- 42. To my knowledge, there were three versions of the BCIF used throughout SF Parrabell.
- 43. I understood the factors which ultimately came to be included in the BCIF originated from the United States, more specifically from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and had been in use to some degree by Operation Parrabell (but I am not certain of the extent of that use).
- 44. I am not aware of who created the first version of the BCIF I used in the process of SF Parrabell. The first version of the BCIF I am aware of can be found in the Investigation Plan. I understand that this version of the BCIF has been referred to by Counsel Assisting as "Form 2".

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- 45. The need to introduce modifications to the BCIF (the second version of which I was aware and which is referred to by Counsel Assisting as "Form 3") is found in the Coordinating Instructions) became clear to DCI Middleton, DS Grace and I during the early stages of the review process. I cannot now recall the exact reasons why we thought an amendment was required but recall that it was because the descriptions of bias did not accord with the task which we were undertaking, which was to consider anti-LGBTIQ bias rather than bias more generally. An additional category of "Insufficient evidence" was also added because the category of "Not Bias" would not capture the nuance of whether there is not sufficient information to determine whether there is or is not a motivation of anti-LGBTIQ bias. I recall that all cases were reviewed using this version of the BCIF and I recall that this was the version of the BCIF provided to the Flinders Academic Review team.
- 46. The third BCIF in use during the course of SF Parrabell involved changing the categories titled "Bias Crime" and "Not Bias Crime" to "Evidence of bias crime" and "No evidence of a bias crime" respectively. I understand that this version of the BCIF is referred to by Counsel as "Form 4". All cases were ultimately reviewed on the basis of the BCIF in the final report. In the course of preparing this statement I have been shown a copy of minutes from a meeting on 19 January 2017 which recorded my attendance (at SCOI.74429).
- 47. I do not believe the difference between the various constituent documents had any material impact on SF Parrabell. As I will elaborate on below, all cases were eventually reviewed according to an updated BCIF. Additionally, I do not believe the investigators were greatly influenced by the constituent documents. Whilst they were available to the team, investigators largely relied on verbal briefings and instructions from me. These instructions covered the "triage review" process described below at paragraphs [49] to [60]. I made sure to update the team on any changes made to the BCIF and ensured they followed a consistent approach to the triage review. As discussed below at paragraph [61], I was also the only one who completed the BCIF forms used in the review process. The job of the other investigators was to identify potentially relevant material (which they were instructed to do in

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an overinclusive way) which I do not consider was impacted by the amendments to the BCIF

or differences between the constituent documents.

SECTION E: STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL: METHODOLOGY

There were three primary stages to SF Parrabell – the triage review, the completion of BCIF

and the assessment of cases.

**Triage Review** 

49. As Team Leader, it was my role to coordinate and supervise the triage review conducted by

investigators.

50. In the central working area in the Surry Hills Detectives Office, a progress tracker was

created and updated on a whiteboard. This whiteboard listed all 88 names in order of the

year of death and was colour coded based on the status of review. Some of the statuses

included:

(a) when the case was not to be reviewed due to ongoing investigation;

when the case was assigned to an investigator and the review was underway; and (b)

(c) when the case had been completed.

51. Generally, each case had one investigator assigned to collate and review the relevant

material. That investigator was responsible for making the necessary inquiries for documents

for their allocated case. The process for obtaining NSWPF holdings for SF Parrabell was to

first conduct a search of e@gle-i and COPS, then send a request to Archives for relevant

material. Due to the fact that e@gle-i and COPS post-dated the relevant deaths, there would

often be limited material available on those systems and generally the information was

collated from the hardcopy archive material.

On or around 7 September 2015 (prior to SF Parrabell investigators making requests of

Archives), I met with Sandra King (a then team leader at Archives) and Michelle McKinley (a

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coordinator at Archives) to give them an overview of SF Parrabell and the types of records the Strike Force would be requiring from them in the coming months. This assisted them with beginning their searches for the relevant materials. I relied on their expertise to be able to identify and retrieve all available documents. As I was the contact person between SF Parrabell and the Archives team, any request lodged by investigators in connection with SF Parrabell was registered in my name.

- 53. Where limited or no information was available from the Archives, investigators would then reach out to the Coroners Court of NSW (when the matter had gone before the Coroner) and ask the administrative staff of the PAC which carried out the original investigation to conduct a search on a system called TRIM. I cannot now recall what TRIM stands for, but it was a police record management system that recorded all the files held locally in various PACs which detailed their location and filing status.
- 54. Where archives had extensive material on a case, it suggested that the PACs had successfully filed relevant material and therefore the Archives possessed the full extent of the material. This is because, in my experience as a police officer, materials are either filed and archived all at the same time or not at all; they generally are not filed in progressive waves. Therefore, only where no or little material was available did it suggest that relevant files may still be with the PAC. An example of this would be where only occurrence pad entries were recorded these were documents that were kept separate and automatically filed independent to remaining case files. Where only occurrence pad entries were found, then we would know that further inquiries would need to be made to locate investigation files. I do not recall how many TRIM searches were conducted, but to the best of my memory no documents were ever located in response to those searches.
- 55. Where there was an exceptionally large volume of material in connection with a single case, more than one investigator was assigned to work on that case and collectively review the volume of material. I recall that this only occurred in two cases Frank Arkell and David O'Hearn.

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Once it was concluded that all available material had been collated, the role of an investigator was to review every document in the file and extract anything that could be relevant to a determination of whether the incident featured anti-LGBTIQ bias. Investigators would then make a copy of the relevant material, returning the original to the case file items, and upload a digital copy to e@gle-i. When uploading the materials to e@gle-i, investigators were required to enter an overview of the document. Here investigators would note what they believed were key sections of the document that I should direct my attention to during my review. The physical copy was then filed away into a new and separate SF Parrabell file. Following the conclusion of SF Parrabell, the copies of the physical documents we had been working with were destroyed as digital copies had been made and uploaded to e@gle-i.

- 57. Once all material has been reviewed, investigators would then prepare a summary or synopsis of the case.
- 58. When commencing on SF Parrabell, investigators were given a copy of the BCIF and expected to familiarise themselves with the ten indicators and what type of material could be responsive to each of them.
- 59. The process of extracting relevant material was a collaborative one between the investigators and me. We all worked in a common area and there were many informal discussions regarding what material should be included, with investigators often running specific documents past me for my opinion. I always encouraged investigators to be overinclusive with their upload to e@gle-i on the basis I could review the records and make a determination of relevance while completing the BCIF.
- 60. I believe the investigators did follow these instructions as there was a considerable amount of material available to me which did not necessarily assist me in my completion of the BCIFs. (that caused me to believe they had been over, rather then under-inclusive). I did not feel the need to go back to the original file to check the work of the investigators as the discussions we had throughout their reviews assured me they were taking the correct approach (i.e. to be overly inclusive in the information they provided to me). Further, the

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large volume of material made it unfeasible for me to conduct a re-review of the entire file for each case.

# **BCIF Completion**

- 61. Once the investigators had extracted and uploaded all relevant material to e@gle-i and completed the relevant summaries, it was my role to review this material and populate the BCIF for each case. I was the only SF Parrabell member who completed the BCIFs used in deciding which category a case should be placed into. The purpose of this was to ensure consistency in approach to the BCIF across all cases. As discussed above, due to the collaborative nature of the triage review during which investigators regularly consulted with me about their approach to identifying relevant information, I did not feel it was necessary to perform checks to ensure no material had been missed.
- 62. Following the change from the first to the second form of the BCIF (from "Form 2" to "Form 3"), all cases which had used the original form were subsequently re-reviewed and a copy of the updated BCIF was populated.
- 63. At the conclusion of SF Parrabell, all cases were reviewed against the same version of the BCIF, the second BCIF discussed above at paragraph [45] (i.e. "Form 3"). Following the changes to the BCIF agreed at the meeting of 19 January 2017, the updated BCIFs (i.e. "Form 4") were populated with the information from the second BCIF.

## **Review Process**

- 64. Approximately once a month I would meet with DCI Middleton and DS Grace to discuss the recently completed BCIF forms, the associated material myself and the team had found and to come to an ultimate determination of anti-LGBTIQ bias. Occasionally, AC Crandell or Jacqueline Braw would sit in on these meetings.
- 65. Apart from these review meetings, I do not recall having any other regular meetings with DCI Middleton or DS Grace. I would occasionally have informal conversations with DS Grace

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regarding SF Parrabell's progress and send emails to DCI Middleton, upon his request, with

updates on the number of outstanding cases.

66. In the monthly review meetings, I would provide DCI Middleton and DS Grace with a

synopsis of the case and take them through each part of the BCIF form and the relevant

evidence I had included. Discussion would then occur as to whether the matter showed signs

of anti-LGBTIQ bias.

67. In my view, DCI Middleton, DS Grace and I acted as a panel, forming an opinion on each

case independently. We each reviewed the materials for each case and would come to the

meeting with our own opinions on points such as the categorisation of the case and the

impact or interpretation of different pieces of relevant material.

68. The meetings were approached with open minds and with a focus on achieving the correct

identification of whether anti-LGBTIQ bias affected the relevant case. We capitalised on each

other's different life experiences, professional knowledge and skills throughout our discussions. These meetings were often full of robust discussion as we sought to challenge

both our own and each other's way of thinking to reach the most appropriate categorisation

for each case.

69. I do not recall any instances where I felt pressured to change my opinion on the designation

of a case, that my opinion had been unfairly shut down, or that I had disagreed with the final

designation selected. No member of the review team had "veto power" or the final say on

how to categorise the case, nor was hierarchy determinative of outcome where views

differed. I was content with the final determinations that were reached in each of the cases

during SF Parrabell.

SECTION F: STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL: INTERACTION WITH FLINDERS ACADEMIC

**REVIEW TEAM** 

70. I was not involved in the selection or appointment process of the academic review team.

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Corrs Chambers Westgarth

8 September 2023

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- 71. I first met Professor Willem DeLint and Dr Derek Dalton when they travelled to Sydney to meet the SF Parrabell team. I understand that the purpose of the meeting was so that we could introduced ourselves and provide an overview of the work that was being completed for SF Parrabell. I do not recall when this meeting took place or how long it ran for.
- 72. I recall that during the course of the meeting, I discussed the BCIF form and explained the methodology for completing those forms to ensure that the academic review team was familiar with our process. I cannot recall any other topics of discussion at this meeting.
- 73. I believe I met with Flinders Academic Team, or at least part of the team, on one other occasion. However, I do not recall when this was or what was discussed.
- 74. I had minimal ongoing involvement with the Flinders Academic Team review. The only interactions that I can recall was when I would provide time estimates or updates as to when all the BCIFs would be complete. This was because the Flinders Academic Team only wished to begin their review after all BCIFs were settled. I do not recall whether these interactions were directly between myself and the Flinders Academic Team or if the updates were reported through DCI Middleton and DS Grace.
- 75. The vast majority of BCIFs were completed and reviewed by 25 November 2016 when they were sent via post to the Flinders Academic Team. The remaining cases (I cannot now recall how many) were finalised shortly thereafter.
- 76. I did not have any further interactions with the Flinders Academic Team.

# SECTION G: STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL: THE REPORT

77. I was not involved in drafting the final report of SF Parrabell. I recall that a draft was provided to me and I reviewed it but I was not asked to comment on the contents of the report.

# SECTION H: INTERACTION WITH OTHER STRIKE FORCES

78. I did not seek out the views of the investigators in Strike Force Macnamir or Strike Force Neiwand on the cases in SF Parrabell which were the subject of their respective Strike Forces. The only interaction I have with those Strike Forces was to gain access to the relevant files on e@gle-i, consistent with the process I described above for collating documents.

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