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TRIAGE & REVIEW BACKLOG SOPS

(Crime Operations Process)

State Crime Command, Homicide Squad

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TRIAGE AND REVIEW PROCESS - 2017

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2017 the then Commander of the Homicide Squad was requested to develop a strategy to address a large volume of unsolved homicide investigations. This resulted in establishing a prioritisation system for outstanding unsolved cases which were determined to be around 763. This process was also to align with the risk assessment matrix with the State Crime Command (SCC) assessment framework.

To manage the backlog of unsolved cases, the process involved categorising unsolved matters as undetected, undetermined, unresolved, and solved. Each case would work through four stages and then be assessed via risk weighting criteria to determine prioritisation. (Ref: D/2027/1041980)

The four stages of this process are to ***triage*** the unsolved case by UHT investigators, then to ***review*** the unsolved case, then complete ***quality control and prioritisation*** via a UHT committee of each unsolved case, then finally ***ratification and determine any reinvestigation*** of the unsolved case.

During development of this process the NSW Police Force had a significant change in its structure where Police Area Commands were amalgamated, and many officers displaced from their positions. Due to the large number of unsolved cases, it was an opportunity to use the displaced officers who had criminal investigation experience to be utilised in the review stage of this process. The displaced officers were essentially able to be used as a large review team across NSW to manage the backlog of the outstanding matters. It would also be an opportunity to provide fresh eyes over the unsolved cases during the review and manage any corporate risk due to the backlog.

The establishment of this process was proposed to CET with the focus of publishing the risk assessment matrix prioritisation of unsolved homicide investigations, and to develop the utilisation of displaced officers to review the unsolved cases. (D/2018/1027)

It was also identified that this process would flow through Crime Operations Support, State Crime Command, to task out the reviews for unsolved homicides.

1.1 CURRENT PROCESS

Since 2018 the dissemination of triages to PAC's has been coordinated under the control of Crime Operations, SCC. The PAC/PD were then required to complete a review and return the package to Crime Operations, SCC. A Summary of this operating procedure is as follows,

1. Unsolved Homicide Team prepare a triage of an unsolved case, which is then forwarded to Crime Operations, SCC.
2. Crime Operations, SCC then record and issue a SCC reference number to the triage.
3. The triage is then disseminated with a review package incorporating relevant documentation, to external and specialist commands to be assigned to an officer to prepare the review.
4. A review package is provided to the reviewing officer containing all the relevant material needed to complete the review.
5. All details regarding the dissemination of the triage are maintained by Crime Operations, SCC, including any correspondence with the PAC/PD and Specialist Commands.
6. The PAC/PD reviewing officer returns the review package to Crime Operations, SCC, where it is then provided to the Homicide Squad for quality control and assurance, along with prioritisation.

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- The review is then placed before a 'Review Committee' involving senior management of the Homicide Squad and Crime Operations, SCC. This process is to ratify and determine any reinvestigation of the reviewed unsolved homicides.

1.2 INHIBITING FACTORS

In July 2021 UHT Investigation Coordinators identified that the above review process is problematic in the management of unsolved homicide reviews.

The Homicide Squad, UHT currently does not have management and control of the dissemination of the original triage. This has impeded UHT's ability to accurately determine the status of a disseminated reviews whether completed or outstanding, or who the allocated officer is, their location, and at what stage the reviewing officer is up to with the review.

The Commander of the Homicide Squad has the corporate responsibility of managing and prioritising unsolved homicides efficiently and with accurate information.

Since the commencement of this process in 2018, complications in management of the reviews have continued to arise. The review process is meant to enable the Homicide Squad to have consistency prioritising matters for reinvestigation. This is currently not the case with the dissemination of reviews to external and specialist commands.

A delay of more than two years to complete or start reviews is impacting the solvability of those cases. With the possibility of additional information being present, ongoing changes being made to investigation techniques, electronic capabilities, and forensic advancements, in particular DNA, cases are not being given the appropriate opportunities to be investigated and possibly solved.

As of November 2021, it was identified that 126 reviews remain outstanding. The below table is a breakdown of time frames in years that reviews have remained outstanding at external and specialist commands, awaiting return to the Homicide Squad.

| Time outstanding | Qty | Percentage | |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|--|
| LESS THAN 1 YEAR = | 11 | 8.73015873 | AVERAGE YEARS OUTSTANDING 2.17 = |
| 1-2 YEARS = | 38 | 30.15873016 | |
| 2 - 3 YEARS = | 37 | 29.36507937 | |
| OVER 3 YEARS = | 29 | 23.01587302 | |
| UNDATED | 11 | 8.73015873 | |
| Total outstanding | 126 | | |

This current process is creating a backlog and considerable uncertainty as to the progress of those reviews. The time that it is taking for the reviews to be completed is a significant corporate risk to the Homicide Squad.

1.3 CAUSE OF BACKLOG

- Although some reviewing officers have replied, many have not, and the status of those reviews are still unknown.
- Some reviews have been sent back to the Homicide Squad and bypassed Crime Operations, SCC, resulting in the current spreadsheet not being up to date due to communication gaps between UHT and Crime Operations, SCC.
- Allocated reviewing officers did not receive any review package and have not commenced the review.
- Reviews have not yet been allocated from the region office to an appropriate designated officer.

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5. Claims are being made that the reviewing officer never received the notification to carry out a review.
6. Reviewing officers continuing to request extensions due to relieving requirements they are performing in another command and role.
7. The reviewing officer is unable to dedicate time to the review due to competing priorities, resources, and staffing shortages.
8. The review has been re-allocated to another officer which has not been followed up.
9. Reviewing officer commenced the review and has not been able to complete it due to competing priorities at their command. This includes current investigations, secondments to strike forces or court commitments. This forces the need for an extension or passing onto another officer.
10. Reviews which have been allocated to an officer within the command have subsequently been promoted or has transferred and the review remains idle.
11. Reviews are being allocated to plain clothes investigators, who lack experience or expertise.
12. A reviewing officer has been under a non-performance issue relating to the review.
13. A single officer has been allocated a protracted organised crime investigation with a large amount of material that is overwhelming for the individual officer. This type of review should be allocated to more than one officer to reduce the burden and time to complete.

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2.0 UHT REVIEW TEAM - ACCESS

In conjunction with Crime Operations, State Crime Command, a spreadsheet has been created which identifies the current outstanding triages disseminated to PAC/PD. This can be located on the 'Team' application - T-SCC-Unsolved Review Team. See also below hyperlink.

<https://nswpolice.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/-T-SCC-Unsolved-Review-Team/Shared%20Documents/General/Unsolved%20Review%20Spreadsheet%20-%20Up%20to%20date.xlsx?d=w453c5753accf4337aa1d9ba3bf40bod4&csf=1&web=1&e=VCoeJs>

2.1 UHT REVIEW TEAM - CONTROL & DETERMINATION

UHT Review Team will need to review this spreadsheet under the control and direction of the Review Team, Investigations Coordinator, or delegated Team Leader.

The following determination will need to be made to establish the current whereabouts and progress of each Triage and Review from the spreadsheet. UHT Review Team will need to identify the following.

1. The number of **completed reviews** that have been returned to the UHT via Crime Operations, SCC. Identify the location of the completed review and whether it has been through the quality control and prioritisation committee (QCPC) with the Senior Management Team (SMT). If they are missing or have not been before the QCPC then bring to the attention of the Investigations Coordinator or delegated Team Leader.
2. The number of **outstanding reviews** that are **more than one year** at the external or specialist command.
3. The number of **outstanding reviews** that are **less than one year** at the external or specialist command.

2.2 UHT REVIEW TEAM - NOTIFICATION & RETURN

It has been determined that the outstanding reviews should be returned to the UHT Review Team as detailed in the background of this document. This process needs to be managed and recorded accurately to ensure continuity of the returned outstanding triages and reviews.

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This needs to be recorded via the Records Management System (RMS), the 'Teams' spreadsheet and within the UHT tracking file. Delegation of UHT staff will be necessary to contact the respective PAC/PD and establish from the allocated reviewing officer the current position of the allocated triage or review. PAC/PD locations are recorded in the 'Teams' spreadsheet and RMS stipulating who reviewing officer is. Some may not have recorded the reviewing officers' details as the triages have not been allocated.

2.3 OUTSTANDING REVIEWS - MORE THAN ONE YEAR

Identify current reviewing officer. As the research has identified, several reviews have been re-allocated to another officer which is not recorded on the 'Teams' spreadsheet. Update the 'Teams' spreadsheet once the reviewing officer is identified.

Establish from the reviewing officer whether the review is **partially completed** or has **not commenced**.

Partially completed

Establish what stage the review is at, i.e., has any components of the review package been started or completed such as the summary, exhibit matrix etc.

Archive - Determine if the reviewing officer has any archive material at their location. Establish what the reference numbers are and record same onto the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Contact - Determine if they have contacted any NOK, witnesses, sources (intel) or other persons relating to the unsolved case. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Exhibits - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created any 'jobs' for exhibits to be reviewed and examined. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

S/F & Media - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created a Strike Force investigation on E@glei or media releases. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Other - Establish any other matters that may be of interest which the UHT should be aware of. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

IF the matter cannot be returned within the 1 month, advise that an email will be sent to them advising them of the return of the review and to follow the instruction within the email.

Not Commenced

Archive - Determine if the reviewing officer has any archive material at their location. Establish what the reference numbers are and record same onto the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Contact - Determine if they have contacted any NOK, witnesses, sources (intel) or other persons relating to the unsolved case. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Exhibits - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created any 'jobs' for exhibits to be reviewed and examined. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

S/F & Media - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created a Strike Force investigation on E@glei or media releases. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Other - Establish any other matters that may be of interest which the UHT should be aware of. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet. Advise that an email will be sent to them advising them of the return of the review and to follow the instruction within the email.

OFFICIAL: Sensitive**2.4 OUTSTANDING REVIEWS - LESS THAN ONE YEAR**

Identify current reviewing officer. As the research has identified, several reviews have been re-allocated to another officer which is not recorded on the 'Teams' spreadsheet. Update the 'Teams' spreadsheet once the reviewing officer is identified.

Establish from the reviewing officer whether the review is **partially completed** or has **not commenced**.

Partially completed

Establish what stage the review is at, i.e., has any components of the review package been started or completed such as the summary, exhibit matrix etc.

Archive - Determine if the reviewing officer has any archive material at their location. Establish what the reference numbers are and record same onto the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Contact - Determine if they have contacted any NOK, witnesses, sources (intel) or other persons relating to the unsolved case. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Exhibits - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created any 'jobs' for exhibits to be reviewed and examined. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

S/F & Media - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created a Strike Force investigation on E@glei or media releases. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Other - Establish any other matters that may be of interest which the UHT should be aware of. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

If the matter cannot be returned within the 1 month, inform the reviewing officer that consideration with the Investigations Coordinator or delegated Team Leader will take place to determine a return date. When a return date is determined, the reviewing officer will be notified via email and recorded on the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Not Commenced

Archive - Determine if the reviewing officer has any archive material at their location. Establish what the reference numbers are and record same onto the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Contact - Determine if they have contacted any NOK, witnesses, sources (intel) or other persons relating to the unsolved case. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Exhibits - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created any 'jobs' for exhibits to be reviewed and examined. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

S/F & Media - Determine if they have made any arrangements or created a Strike Force investigation on E@glei or media releases. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Other - Establish any other matters that may be of interest which the UHT should be aware of. Record the details upon the 'Teams' spreadsheet.

Advise that an email will be sent to them advising them of the return of the review and to follow the instruction within the email.

3.0 PRIORITY OF REVIEWS - UHT

Upon the return of the partially completed and not commenced triages and reviews to UHT Review Team, prioritisation will take place in consultation with the Investigations Coordinator or delegated Team Leader. Priority will be given in the following order.

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1. **HIGH PRIORITY** - Reviews which are partially completed and contact, or arrangements have been made with NOK, witnesses, sources, exhibits reviews or other matters that may require the review to be a high priority.
2. **MEDIUM PRIORITY** - Reviews which are partially completed without the above contact or arrangements made.
3. **LOW PRIORITY** - Reviews that were not commenced.

4.0 ALLOCATION OF REVIEWS - UHT

With the assistance of the Investigations Coordinator of the Review Team, Teams 7/8, and Teams 9/10. Assign returned triages or incomplete reviews, to a UHT officer. To assist the UHT Officer the following process should be followed.

- 4.1 Identify any previous reviews and any recommendations conducted on the case. If a previous review has been conducted, utilise this review to establish background and recommendations of the previous review. This will be considered for completing the current review removing any duplication and increase efficiency.
- 4.2 Identify additional information such as intelligence reports, opportunity of further forensic examinations, covert opportunities, and strategies with persons of interest and/or witnesses.
- 4.3 Prepare and complete the current review with recommendations which will be submitted to the UH Quality and Assurance Review Committee. The committee will then determine and prioritise the case if further investigation is needed.

5.0 INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

During the preparation of the review, engage UHT Intelligence Officer to assist in identifying any intelligence reports or other information that needs to form part of the current review.

6.0 COMPLETION OF BACKLOG

Once the backlog of reviews is in a manageable state, this process will need to be further analysed to determine the ongoing management and process of unsolved homicide reviews.