

# Operation Gloucester

---

On 16 August 1998, Victoria Police officers Sergeant Silk and Senior Constable Miller were shot and killed while conducting surveillance as part of an armed robbery investigation. These murders had a devastating impact on the murdered officers' families, Victoria Police colleagues and the Victorian community.

Victoria Police responded quickly to the incident establishing the Lorimer Taskforce to investigate the murders. The work of that taskforce contributed to the convictions of Bandali Debs and Jason Roberts.

IBAC started Operation Gloucester in 2015 to investigate alleged improper practices by some officers during the Lorimer Taskforce. The initial investigation was closed due to insufficient evidence, but was reopened in November 2017 when new evidence was obtained, via media reports, supporting the original allegations.

## Improper practices

Operation Gloucester uncovered evidence of a variety of improper practices by Victoria Police, some of which overlap. IBAC has clear examples of these practices occurring throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s as well as in more recent IBAC investigations.

**Improper practices identified** include officers:

- deliberately omitting descriptions of offenders from witness statements and recording them elsewhere
- developing statements that are not based entirely on the independent recollection of the witness
- omitting relevant information from witness statements because it was considered unreliable or incorrect or because it would be disclosed in some other way
- replacing original witness statements with a new statement, without disclosing the existence of the original statement (and backdating the new statement to give it the appearance of being the original statement)
- wrongly representing notes as contemporaneous
- making statements in collaboration with another officer, therefore potentially contaminating the statements
- failing to disclose all relevant material to the prosecution, defence and the courts
- destroying or discarding signed statements or unsigned completed draft statements.

## Public hearings

IBAC held [public hearings](#) from 4 February to 1 March 2019 as part of the investigation. The hearings focused on:

- the Lorimer Taskforce investigation of the murders of Sergeant Silk and Senior Constable Miller, concerning:
  - o the taking of witness statements
  - o the preparation of the brief of evidence for the trial of Bandali Debs and Jason Roberts
  - o whether there was full disclosure of witness statements or other relevant information prior to or during the trial.
- witness statement taking practices by Victoria Police
- compliance with the obligation to disclose evidence by Victoria Police.

The hearings heard evidence from 34 witnesses and 376 exhibits were tendered.