DISCLOSURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE and BREACHES OF PROTOCOL BY LAURANCE WEBB, FORENSIC BIOLOGIST, PATHWEST, BETWEEN JUNE 2008 and 31 OCTOBER 2014

The ODPP has recently been provided with information about a person who regularly provided reports and gave evidence as an expert witness for the State. The State considers this information should be disclosed.

The ODPP has attempted to identify all matters involving this witness in which a person was convicted and individually notify those people or their legal representatives. However, there is a possibility that some matters have not been identified, so this general notice has been issued.

The witness is Laurance Webb, who was an employee of the North Metropolitan Health Service (as part of PathWest, in the forensic biology section).

No information has been provided to the ODPP which suggests that there was any irregularity associated with the PathWest results in any matter; however, there may be issues of which the ODPP is not aware to which this information is relevant, hence this disclosure.

Briefly, the information received by this Office is that four allegations of breaches of protocol by Mr Webb, allegedly committed between 8 June 2008 and 31 October 2014, were found to have been substantiated.

The information provided as to the specific allegations is as follows:

- 1. Between 8 June 2008 and 27 August 2014, Mr Webb breached the PathWest Forensic Biology Reports Manual guidelines concerning telephone and Email Reports, when he did not get results peer reviewed prior to releasing the results to WA Police.
- 2. Between August 2013 and October 2014, Mr Webb breached the PathWest STRmix Interpretation and Reporting Guidelines, when he did not conduct the required STRmix monthly Quality Control test.
- 3. Between 29 August 2013 and 31 October 2014, Mr Webb breached the STRmix Interpretation and Reporting Guidelines, when he entered STRmix monthly Quality Control test result data into the STRmix Quality Control (QC) Excel spreadsheet, without the result data being subjected to the mandatory pre-requisite STRmix monthly Quality Control test.
- 4. Mr Webb breach the WA Health Code of Conduct by not demonstrating ethical behavior, when he entered Quality Assurance results data that had not been subjected to the mandatory pre-requisite Quality Assurance analysis for the period 29 August 2013 and 31 October 2014.

The ODPP has been advised that, the allegations having been found to have been substantiated, the disciplinary action taken was the termination of Mr Webb's employment. Mr Webb went on leave on 13 January 2015, and never

returned to duty. His contract of employment with NMHS ceased at close of business on 9 August 2016.

The ODPP was informed that an audit by PathWest did not reveal any cases in which a written report was issued by Mr Webb which had not been peer reviewed. It was also informed that, in the cases detected where telephone or email results were not peer reviewed, the results were not faulted on review.

The ODPP was also advised that the breaches of the protocol regarding STRmix related to proficiency testing and the failure to complete it. An audit by PathWest showed that, since the introduction of the STRmix software, no report produced by Mr Webb required or included STRmix results.

The ODPP has no further detail of these matters. Any further information, if required, will need to be sought directly from PathWest, by writing to Dr Gavin Turbett, Head of Department, Forensic Biology.

Amanda Forrester SC

Acting Director of Public Prosecutions

29 March 2017