



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

COR 2020 003186

FINDING INTO DEATH FOLLOWING INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 63(1)

*Section 67 of the **Coroners Act 2008***

Inquest into the suspected death of Veronica Catherine Green

Findings of:	Coroner Ingrid Giles
Delivered on:	9 September 2026
Delivered at:	Coroners Court of Victoria, 65 Kavanagh Street Southbank, 3006
Hearing date:	8 April 2026
Representation:	Ms Monika Pekevskia of counsel on behalf of the Chief Commissioner of Police, instructed by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office Ms Katherine Goldberg of Hall & Wilcox on behalf of former Leading Senior Constable Helen Nugent
Counsel Assisting the Coroner	Ms Jess Syrjanen, Senior Coroner's Solicitor
Keywords	Missing person; long-term missing person; potential homicide; family violence; delay, centralised missing persons registry, NSW model, I-FAMILIA, Interpol

Please note that this finding contains distressing descriptions, and reader caution is advised

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
Background	3
THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION	5
MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH A FINDING MUST, IF POSSIBLE, BE MADE	7
Circumstances in which the suspected death occurred	7
Events in the years after Veronica’s disappearance	8
FIRST POLICE INVESTIGATION.....	11
SECOND POLICE INVESTIGATION – OPERATION BELIER	13
THIRD INVESTIGATION – THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION	17
Investigation of possibility of voluntary relocation	20
Proof of life checks	22
Investigation of Veronica’s mental ill-health and the possibility of suicide.....	24
Investigation as to the existence of any remains	26
Investigation of possibility of third-party intervention (murder)	27
History of alleged family violence with Veronica.....	27
History of alleged family violence with others	34
Alleged history of sexual abuse of girls	36
VICTORIA POLICE MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATIONS.....	46
Former process for investigating missing persons	46
Changes to missing persons investigations	47
How the investigation would differ in 2026.....	50
Centralised Missing Persons Registry	51
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	56
COMMENTS.....	58
RECOMMENDATION	61
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	61

INTRODUCTION

1. Veronica Catherine Green¹ was born on 10 April 1937² and was 38 years old when she disappeared on 13 February 1976. At the time of her disappearance, Veronica lived at Ardeer, Victoria, with her husband, William ‘Bill’ Green (**Mr Green**) and daughters Jacqueline ‘Jacqui’ Green (**Jacqui**) and Joanne Penelope ‘Penny’ Green (**Penny**). In 2026, Veronica would be turning 89 years old.

Background

2. Veronica was born to parents Catherine and Herbert Medcraft and was the seventh of nine children. Veronica and her siblings grew up in Victoria and lived in various suburbs of Melbourne.³
3. Bill was one of seven siblings, although not much is known about his upbringing. He worked as a truck driver for most of his career, both as an owner-operator and working for other companies.
4. Bill married his first wife, Margaret Teague (**Ms Teague**), and together they had a daughter, Susan Green (**Susan**). Bill and Ms Teague separated at an unknown time, and they officially divorced on 3 October 1960.⁴ Ms Teague eventually moved to the United States of America, changed her name, and left Susan in Bill’s care.⁵
5. While still married to Ms Teague, Bill met Veronica and she fell pregnant with their first child together. As Veronica was from a strict Catholic family and was not married to Bill when she fell pregnant, she moved to New South Wales (**NSW**) during the pregnancy.⁶ Veronica gave birth to her first son, Stephen, in 1959, and he was immediately adopted.⁷

¹ Referred to as ‘Veronica’ throughout this finding unless more formality is required.

² Note most documents referred to Veronica’s year of birth as 1937, however her marriage certificate lists it as 1938. Given the weight of the evidence is indicative of the former, I have referred to ‘1937’ as Veronica’s date of birth.

³ Coronial Brief (**CB**), Transcript of video-recorded statement of Kathleen Laszuk, 5-3.

⁴ Exhibit Folder 1, Marriage certificate of Bill and Veronica, 2-1.

⁵ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-129.

⁶ Ibid, 3-60.

⁷ Ibid.

6. After divorcing his first wife, Bill married Veronica on 5 November 1960 at the Office of the Government Statist, on Queen Street, Melbourne.⁸ Veronica and Bill welcomed two daughters, Penny, in 1962, and Jacqui in 1969. Susan intermittently lived with Bill, Veronica, Penny and Jacqui.
7. While growing up, Penny recalled the family lived in various houses including on Hutchinson Street, Albion and Wyalong Street, Albion.⁹ Penny recalled that Susan moved out of the family home while they were still living in Hutchison Street.¹⁰ The family lived at Wyalong Street while they waited for a new house to be built at 695 Ballarat Road, Ardeer (**Ballarat Road property**)¹¹. The Ballarat Road property was registered jointly in Bill and Veronica's name on 4 April 1974.¹²
8. On 26 May 1975, Veronica commenced working at the National Trustees Executors and Agency Co of Australasia. Her office was located at 95 Queen Street, Melbourne and she was working as an employee of the National Trustees at the time of her disappearance.¹³
9. At the time of Veronica's disappearance in February 1976, Jacqui was attending the nearby Albion Primary School, while Penny was attending Sunshine High School. Veronica had an arrangement with the mother of one of Jacqui's classmates, Ingrid, who lived at Wyalong Street, Albion. Between six and 12 months before she disappeared, Veronica approached Ingrid's mother, Marianne Rampertshammer (**Mrs Rampertshammer**), to look after Jacqui before and after school.¹⁴
10. Veronica dropped Jacqui off at Mrs Rampertshammer's home before school, then drove to the nearby Albion Train Station where she would catch the train into the city for work. According to Mrs Rampertshammer and Ingrid, Veronica usually picked Jacqui up after

⁸ Exhibit Folder 1, Marriage certificate of Bill and Veronica, 2-1.

⁹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Exhibit Folder 1, Land Title for 695 Ballarat Road Ardeer, 3-1.

¹³ Exhibit Folder 1, Letter from National Trustees to solicitor Anthony Fisher, 6-1.

¹⁴ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Ingrid Carabott, 24-2; CB, Statement of Detective Sergeant Allan Wood (**D/Sgt Wood**), 26-61.

work,¹⁵ however according to Penny, she (Penny) usually collected Jacqui from the Rampertshammer house and walked back home.¹⁶

THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

11. On 13 June 2020, Veronica's disappearance was reported to the Coroner as a suspected death. Deaths that are reportable to the Coroner under the *Coroners Act 2008* include deaths that are unexpected, unnatural or violent or result from accident or injury, and include 'suspected deaths'.¹⁷
12. In the Police Report of Death for the Coroner (**Form 83**), it was noted that '*Police are continuing to investigate the matter and believe that the subject is most likely now deceased*'. In the days that followed the Form 83 submission, the Duty Coroner at the time, *inter alia*: (i) directed for proof of life checks to be conducted prior to a coronial brief being submitted; and (ii) issued a Coroner's Authority in relation to the premises at which Veronica last resided. Portions of the Ballarat Road property were subsequently excavated pursuant to the Authority, however no items of significant interest to the investigation were located during the search. These investigative steps are outlined further below.
13. The coronial investigation was initially assigned to a colleague of mine, until I took carriage in July 2023 for the purposes of ensuring receipt of a coronial brief, conducting further investigations and making findings. The further investigations conducted by the Coronial Investigator yielded the possibility that Veronica's disappearance involved suspicious circumstances, in relation to which no criminal charges had been laid.
14. As Veronica's disappearance and suspected death may have been the result of a homicide and no-one has been charged with an indictable offence in relation to same, I was required

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-54.

¹⁷ Section 3 of the *Coroners Act 2008* defines 'death' to include 'suspected death'. This means that coroners have jurisdiction to investigate whether a person has died, if the circumstances of the possible death fall within the grounds of a reportable or reviewable death. This frequently arises in the case of long-term missing persons (**LTMP**) cases. Whether or not the report of the LTMP case is accepted as a suspected death will be a matter for the Coroner to determine on the balance of probabilities.

to hold an inquest pursuant to the Act.¹⁸ On 8 April 2026, I held an inquest into Veronica's disappearance and suspected death.

15. The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.
16. Under the Act, coroners also have the important functions of helping to prevent deaths and promoting public health and safety and the administration of justice through the making of comments or recommendations in appropriate cases about any matter connected to the death under investigation.
17. Victoria Police assigned an officer to be the Coronial Investigator for the investigation of Veronica's disappearance and suspected death, namely Detective Sergeant Allan Wood (**D/Sgt Wood**). The Coronial Investigator conducted inquiries on the Court's behalf, including taking statements from witnesses – such as family, friends, witnesses and investigating officers – and submitted a coronial brief of evidence on 8 October 2024, minus his own statement outlining the investigation.
18. On 4 April 2025, the Coronial Investigator provided his own (extensive) statement outlining investigative steps taken over a number of years, and the coronial brief was complete.¹⁹
19. This finding draws on the totality of the coronial investigation into the disappearance and suspected death of Veronica Catherine Green including evidence contained in the coronial brief. Whilst I have reviewed all the material, I will only refer to that which is directly

¹⁸ Section 52(2)(a), 3(b) *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic).

¹⁹ I note for completeness that the due date for a coronial brief is generally 3-4 months following the report of death, and that the timing of submission of this coronial brief (i.e. between the filing of the initial report to the coroner and provision of the brief) was evidently much longer than this. Having liaised with D/Sgt Wood throughout the process of compiling the brief, and noting the comprehensive result, I am satisfied that D/Sgt Wood acted with diligence, dedication and appropriate attention to an investigation he had worked on for period over almost 20 years, and that no adverse comment is required.

relevant to my findings or necessary for narrative clarity. In the coronial jurisdiction, facts must be established on the balance of probabilities.²⁰

MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH A FINDING MUST, IF POSSIBLE, BE MADE

Circumstances in which the suspected death occurred

20. On Friday 13 February 1976, police believed Veronica dropped Jacqui off at Mrs Rampertshammer's home before school, however, were unable to confirm her movements after this time.
21. Police have been unable to confirm whether Veronica attended work, however someone told Penny that Veronica was observed crying at work that day and she left work early.²¹ The source of this information has not been able to be verified.
22. After work, Veronica did not arrive at Mrs Rampertshammer's home as expected. Mrs Rampertshammer recalled that they waited for some time, but Veronica did not arrive to collect Jacqui.²² Jacqui, who was seven years old at the time, recalled that she came home after school and her mother was not there. She recalled "*being with [her] sister Penny at a public phone booth up the road. It was dark and raining and we were cuddling each other and crying*".²³
23. Veronica's friend and neighbour, Joy Vassallo (**Ms Vassallo**), recalled that Penny and Jacqui came to her house that day, asking if she knew Veronica's whereabouts. At the time, Ms Vassallo recalled it was still daylight and it was very unusual for Veronica to be late from work.²⁴

²⁰ Subject to the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336. The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction as to those matters taking into account the consequences of such findings or comments.

²¹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-133, 3-134.

²² CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-61.

²³ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-4.

²⁴ CB, Statement of Joy Vassallo, 19-4.

24. Ms Vassallo recalled that Penny and Jacqui told her that their father was also not home. She reported that she was later informed by someone that Bill did not return home until midnight on 14 February 1976.²⁵
25. Jacqui recalled that when her father returned home that night, he was “*frantic*”. She noted he appeared upset; however, he reassured the girls that Veronica was out getting supplies for Jacqui’s birthday party the next day.²⁶
26. It is unclear what occurred on 14 February 1976. However, on 15 February 1976, Bill attended the Russell Street Police Station to formally report Veronica as missing. Either Bill or the member taking the report listed Veronica’s date of birth as 1938, instead of 1937.²⁷ Bill reported he last saw Veronica at home at 11.00am on 13 February 1976.²⁸ The significance of the 11.00am timing is unclear – it may have been an arbitrary time or possibly the last time Bill actually saw Veronica.
27. Veronica’s possible destination was recorded as “*not known*” and the possible cause of absence was listed as “*possibly depression*”.²⁹ Bill noted that Veronica had attempted suicide once previously in 1975 and that he was worried about her welfare.
28. A few days after Veronica’s disappearance, Ms Vassallo reportedly received a call from a woman who worked with Veronica. She called to ask for Veronica’s whereabouts and noted that Veronica had been upset at work that day but left at her usual time.³⁰

Events in the years after Veronica’s disappearance

29. The Victoria Police file does not document any attempts to locate Veronica in the immediate aftermath of her disappearance, nor in the years that followed.
30. Although not confirmed by police, Veronica’s vehicle was reportedly located at the Albion Train Station. She reportedly left her jewellery behind, as Penny is in possession of her

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-5.

²⁷ Exhibit Folder 1, Missing Person Report, 4-1.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CB, Statement of Joy Vassallo, 19-4.

eternity ring and Jacqui has her engagement ring.³¹ She also did not take her clothes or her Bible with her.

31. On 24 January 1978, solicitor Anthony Fisher (**Mr Fisher**) acting on behalf of Bill wrote to the Missing Persons Department of Victoria Police, seeking information about Veronica's whereabouts. Mr Fisher detailed that Bill was "*anxious to contact his wife...so that an Application for Dissolution of Marriage can be served upon her*".³²
32. On 25 January 1978, Mr Fisher wrote to the 'Social Welfare Department' and asked if Veronica was in receipt of any social welfare assistance, and if so, whether they could provide her address for service.³³ He also wrote to the Department of Social Security with the same enquiry.³⁴
33. That same day, Mr Fisher also wrote to the Motor Registration Branch and requested information about any motor vehicles registered to Veronica.³⁵
34. On 27 January 1978, a representative from the Social Welfare Department replied to Mr Fisher and advised that they had no recent record of Veronica. The representative also advised that even if they did have a record of her location, they would be unable to disclose same.³⁶
35. A representative from the Department of Social Security also wrote back to Mr Fisher on 27 January 1978 and advised that it was unable to disclose any information about their clients.³⁷ The Motor Registration Branch similarly advised that it was unable to disclose any information.³⁸

³¹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-76.

³² Exhibit Folder 1, Victoria Police file for Veronica Green, 7-6.

³³ Exhibit Folder 1, Family Court file for dissolution of Veronica and Bill's marriage, 5-4.

³⁴ Ibid, 5-8.

³⁵ Ibid, 5-6.

³⁶ Ibid, 5-5.

³⁷ Ibid, 5-9.

³⁸ Ibid, 5-7.

36. On 22 February 1978, Victoria Police wrote back to Mr Fisher and advised that police do not undertake to locate missing persons with the aim of assisting divorce proceedings. The letter confirmed that Veronica's whereabouts were unknown to police.³⁹
37. On 11 April 1978, Mr Fisher wrote to the Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic Society and requested Veronica's last known address. He also requested that if the Catholic Society was in contact with Veronica, that they ask Veronica to contact him.⁴⁰ Mr Fisher also wrote to Veronica's former employer, National Trustees, and the Parish Priest at Our Lady's Catholic Church in Sunshine with the same request.⁴¹
38. A representative of National Trustees wrote back on 14 April 1978 to advise that Veronica worked for them from 26 May 1975 to 13 February 1976 and that her last known address was the Wyalong Street, Albion address.⁴²
39. The Vicar General of the Catholic Diocesan Centre wrote back to Mr Fisher on 17 April 1978 and advised that Veronica was not known to their office.⁴³
40. On 17 April 1978, Mr Fisher wrote to the occupant of the Wyalong Street address, asking for Veronica's last address and to ask her to contact him.⁴⁴ A few days later, the occupant of the Wyalong Street address wrote back to Mr Fisher to advise that they only knew Veronica as the previous occupant of the house but did not know her new address.⁴⁵
41. On 17 May 1978, Mr Fisher wrote to the Sun News Pictorial and The Australian newspapers to place an advertisement. The advertisements were published on 19 May 1978 and provided notice that Bill Green intended to file for divorce. The advertisement asked Veronica to contact Mr Fisher.⁴⁶

³⁹ Exhibit Folder 1, Victoria Police file for Veronica Green, 7-9.

⁴⁰ Exhibit Folder 1, Family Court file for dissolution of Veronica and Bill's marriage, 5-10.

⁴¹ Ibid, 5-12, 5-14.

⁴² Ibid, 5-13.

⁴³ Ibid, 5-11.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 5-15.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 5-16.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 5-17, 5-18, 5-19, 5-20.

42. On 23 May 1978, Mr Fisher wrote to Veronica's friends, Billie Davidson and Joy Vassallo, sister Katherine Laszuck (**Mrs Laszuk**), and brother Jim Medcraft, asking for information about Veronica's whereabouts.⁴⁷ Mrs Laszuk wrote back to advise that she had not seen or spoken to Veronica in more than two years.⁴⁸ 'B Davidson' also wrote back to advise Veronica's last known address was 695 Ballarat Road, Ardeer.⁴⁹
43. Mr Fisher filed for dissolution of the marriage on behalf of Bill in 1978, and the matter was listed for hearing in court on 24 October 1978.⁵⁰ It is not known when the marriage was formally dissolved, however the title of the Ballarat Road property was moved into Bill's name only on 22 March 1979.⁵¹

FIRST POLICE INVESTIGATION

44. The available evidence does not suggest when, however at some point in the 1990s or early 2000s, former Leading Senior Constable Helen Nugent (**LSC Nugent**) was attached to the Missing Persons Unit as a Tactical Intelligence Operative.⁵² She was the Victoria Police contact for both current and historical missing persons cases. At some point, she became the point of contact for Veronica's file, however, her job was not one of an investigator.⁵³
45. During her investigation, LSC Nugent conducted various 'proof of life' checks across Australia, including:

⁴⁷ Ibid, 5-23, 5-25, 5-26, 5-28.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 5-27.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 5-24.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 5-36.

⁵¹ Exhibit Folder 1, Land Title for 695 Ballarat Road Ardeer, 3-2.

⁵² CB, Statement of Helen Nugent, 28-1.

⁵³ At inquest, Insp Anthony Combridge noted that Leading Senior Constable Nugent "was a tactical intelligence officer which means that her role was to gather intelligence to inform decision-makers and investigators on investigative directionality. It would be fair to say that at prior to the inception of Operation Belier in 2007, Leading Senior Constable Nugent effectively carried the weight of all long-term missing persons for Victoria Police and was a primary point of contact for a number of families who had remained engaged with investigators. But her role wasn't to investigate these matters; her role was to endeavour to ensure that if there was pertinent information that might inform investigative directionality, that it was located. So whether that be there was a possible location of a missing person or if there was evidence that might point towards one causality or another, she could then direct that back to an investigator. It's probably pertinent at this point, Your Honour that Leading Senior Constable Nugent's knowledge and her level of compassion for the families was unsurpassed. Her ability to recall details about missing persons cases informed a lot of the decision-making I made when I was at Belier task force, and I'm certain it probably assisted other members that were there as well" – see Transcript of Inquest (T) T-70 line 16 to T-71 line 10.

- a) Births, Deaths and Marriages registries.
 - b) Utility providers including electricity and gas providers.
 - c) Telecommunications companies.
 - d) Vehicle registration and licencing records.
 - e) Passport checks.⁵⁴
46. In her statement to the Court, LSC Nugent noted that she has since retired from Victoria Police and the location of her documentation from the investigation was not known to her. She reported that her investigations during this time did not yield any information, other than the identity of Stephen, Veronica's adopted son.⁵⁵
47. In 2006, Victoria Police participated in a national television program entitled 'Missing Persons Unit', which centred on missing persons in Australia. LSC Nugent submitted Veronica's case for inclusion on the show, which was accepted. LSC Nugent appeared on the program alongside Jacqui and Penny and made a public appeal for Veronica to come home to her daughters.⁵⁶
48. LSC Nugent explained that all the information she received during her investigation was either investigated further by her or other members of the Missing Persons Unit, however none of the leads assisted in locating Veronica.⁵⁷
49. When asked whether LSC Nugent considered interviewing Bill in relation to Veronica's disappearance, she advised that Bill refused to be interviewed for the 'Missing Persons Unit' television program. She also noted that as her inquiries were strictly focused on locating Veronica, rather than investigating the cause of her disappearance, she did not pursue an interview with Bill any further.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ CB, Statement of Helen Nugent, 28-1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

50. Unfortunately, the LEAP and Interpose records available to the Court from Victoria Police do not include any details of the investigation pursued by LSC Nugent. Due to the age of the file, it is possible that these files exist in hard copy, however their location is unknown.

SECOND POLICE INVESTIGATION – OPERATION BELIER

51. In January 2007, D/Sgt Wood commenced a secondment to Operation Belier (**Op Belier**), based at the Crime Department of Victoria Police. Op Belier was managed under the control of the Cold Case Taskforce, and its objective was to investigate and identify any unidentified human remains located in Victoria since 1960.⁵⁹ D/Sgt Wood commenced investigating Veronica's disappearance in late-January or early-February 2007.
52. D/Sgt Wood received background information about the investigation from SC Nugent about Veronica's disappearance. He was also aware that her disappearance had received some media attention as a result of the 'Missing Persons Unit' television program.⁶⁰
53. Over the course of Op Belier, D/Sgt Wood interviewed a range of immediate and extended family members, friends and other witnesses. Not all witnesses provided a statement; however, many participated in recorded interviews. The transcripts of these interviews have been used in place of formal statements on the Coronial Brief. D/Sgt Wood included other information from his various interviews in his detailed statement to the Court (in lieu of a formal statement/interview from that witness).
54. In 2007, D/Sgt Wood spoke to the following witnesses:
- Jacqui Wright (nee Green), daughter.
 - Penny Green, daughter.
 - Susan Green, Bill's daughter to his first wife.
 - KF (a pseudonym), Little Athletics Club member.

⁵⁹ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-1.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 26-2.

- KK (a pseudonym), KF's sister and Little Athletics Club member.
- AF (a pseudonym), mother of KF and KK.
- Ivo Burum, producer of the 'Missing Persons Unit' television program.
- Ronald Medcraft, Veronica's brother.
- Margaret Medcraft, Veronica's sister-in-law, married to Ronald Medcraft.
- James Medcraft, Veronica's brother.
- Kathleen Laszuk, Veronica's sister.
- Theresa Kusanke, Veronica's niece and Ms Laszuk's daughter.
- Ronald Green, Bill's brother.
- Melva Green, Bill's sister-in-law, married to Ronald Green.
- Anne County, Veronica's former neighbour.
- Joy Gale, Veronica's former colleague.
- Deane Hibbs, former friend who attended same school as Veronica.
- KQ (a pseudonym), Little Athletics Club member.
- DR (a pseudonym), father of KQ.
- LR (a pseudonym), mother of KQ.
- Vicky Teague, daughter of Bill's first wife.
- Pam Ahles, who made an Information Report about a possible sighting.
- Joy Vassallo, Veronica's former neighbour and friend.

- Brian Nowell, Bill's nephew.
- Terrence Nowell, Bill's nephew.
- Leonard Green, Bill's brother.
- Jill Reeves, who made an Information Report about a possible sighting, following the 'Missing Persons Unit' television show.
- Xiu Green, Bill's third wife.
- Shirley Gibbs, sister of Margaret Teague (Bill's first wife).
- Ursula Mikicuk, former friend of Veronica and Bill via her husband.
- Karen Ivkovic and her sister Nardia Parissis.
- Vern Gray, who reportedly saw Veronica after her disappearance.
- Helen Balboni, Little Athletics Club member.
- Betty and Leo Balboni, parents of Helen Balboni.
- Lorraine Woodman, former registrar and coach at the Little Athletics Club.
- Alan James, former coach at the Little Athletics Club.
- MD (a pseudonym), Little Athletics Club member.
- MD's mother.
- Marlene Sutherland, Bill's sister.
- Mark Tremlett, who spoke to Vern Gray about a possible sighting.
- AK (a pseudonym), Little Athletics Club member.
- Mick Cassar, who reportedly saw Veronica in Malta.

- Martin Portelli, who knew Veronica when he was about 19 years old.⁶¹
55. In late-2007, the police investigation was effectively suspended due to a management decision to re-focus the priorities of Op Belier. D/Sgt Wood explained that unless a missing person was directly being compared to on-hand unidentified remains, it did not align with the refined scope of Op Belier.⁶² D/Sgt Wood completed a report on the progress of his investigation to date and included his belief that Veronica's disappearance was suspicious and required further investigation.⁶³
 56. In his report, D/Sgt Wood noted that while there had been several reported sightings of Veronica, the most notable alleged sighted was by Vern Gray. He noted that Bill died in 2006, which was prior to him taking carriage of the matter, and noted it did not appear that Bill had been spoken to by police, save for the original report he made in 1976.⁶⁴
 57. D/Sgt Wood outlined his investigation to date, which identified the circumstances of Veronica's last known movements and that she appeared to have left behind her personal belongings and car. The investigation also uncovered numerous witnesses who alleged that Bill sexually abused young girls before, at the time and after Veronica's disappearance. This is discussed in further detail below.⁶⁵
 58. D/Sgt Wood noted throughout his investigation, none of the witnesses he spoke to had heard from Veronica since her disappearance. He noted magazine articles and the 'Missing Persons Unit' television show both failed to invite any contact or communication from Veronica. Many of Veronica's friends and family stated that her disappearance is out of character and stated that she would not have left her children behind.⁶⁶
 59. D/Sgt Wood noted three possible scenarios for Veronica's disappearance:

⁶¹ Ibid, 26-2 - 26-49.

⁶² Evidence at Inquest of D/Sgt Wood, T-17 lines 20-25.

⁶³ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-49; Evidence at Inquest of D/Sgt Wood, T-18 lines 2-20.

⁶⁴ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, Annexure 1, 26-65.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 26-66.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

- a) That Veronica left of her own accord, chose not to contact anyone including family and friends.
 - b) That Veronica took her own life, and her remains have not been found or identified.
 - c) That Veronica was the victim of homicide, with the primary person of interest being Bill.⁶⁷
60. D/Sgt Wood concluded that in his opinion, the most likely outcome was homicide, given the evidence gathered to date. He recommended that the case be investigated further, including by locating further witnesses, locating other alleged victims and obtaining further statements. He also opined that the matter should proceed to an inquest, and that it would be appropriate for Op Belier to complete the inquest brief,⁶⁸ however this did not occur.
61. D/Sgt Wood completed his secondment to Op Belier in October 2009 and transferred to the Maribyrnong Crime Investigation Unit (CIU).

THIRD INVESTIGATION – THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

62. In 2018, D/Sgt Wood was stationed at the Brimbank Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT). He was approached by a member of the Brimbank CIU in relation to Veronica's disappearance. Veronica's case had been transferred to the Brimbank CIU; however, it had not been actively investigated since 2007. The members agreed that D/Sgt Wood would take carriage of the matter again, and it was formally transferred back to him in February 2018.⁶⁹
63. D/Sgt Wood revisited many of the witnesses he originally spoke to in 2007 and obtained statements and/or further information. He also spoke to additional witnesses, including:
- a) Winsome Peace, Bill's sister.
 - b) Stephen Green, Bill's nephew.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 26-68.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-49.

- c) Cameron Moodie, whose sister was friends with Penny or Jacqui when they were younger.
 - d) John Moodie, Cameron Moodie's father. Penny stayed with the Moodies for some time.
 - e) Stephen Medcraft, Veronica's nephew (son of Margaret and Ronald Medcraft).
64. In December 2019, D/Sgt Wood attended the Ballarat Road Property to speak with the (then) owners. The new owner showed D/Sgt Wood through the house, and to the backyard. D/Sgt Wood observed a filled-in swimming pool in the backyard. He spoke to the owners again that month to explain his intention to conduct a search of the property, including excavation of the pool area.⁷⁰
65. In February 2020, D/Sgt Wood attempted to contact Bill's first wife without success. He determined that she was living in the United States of America and did not answer his calls.⁷¹ He corresponded with police in North Carolina, where Bill's first wife was believed to be living, and attempted to obtain a statement from her.⁷² This was ultimately unsuccessful.
66. As noted above, Veronica's disappearance was reported to the Coroner as a suspected death on 13 June 2020. Over the course of the following years, D/Sgt Allan Wood began the painstaking task of compiling a comprehensive coronial brief detailing all of the investigative steps he had undertaken, including those under Op Belier, as well as fresh steps taken in recent years, including up-to-date proof of life checks.
67. Many of the witnesses D/Sgt Wood spoke to for the purposes of Op Belier provided written statements or video-recorded statements. As noted above, the transcripts of these interviews have been used in place of written statements. Some witnesses D/Sgt Wood

⁷⁰ Ibid, 26-53, 26-54.

⁷¹ Ibid, 26-55.

⁷² Ibid, 26-57.

spoke to did not provide a statement; however, D/Sgt Wood provided a record of their conversation in his sworn statement to the Court.

68. The Coronial Brief included all the original material obtained by D/Sgt Wood through the Op Belier investigation, as well as additional statements obtained in the years after Op Belier. Additional witnesses spoken to from 2020 onwards included:
 - a) Joan Lee, Bill's former sister-in-law (formerly married to Archie Green, Bill's brother).
 - b) Ingrid Carabott, former neighbour and daughter of Mrs Rampertshammer.
 - c) Marianne Rampertshammer, former neighbour and informal carer for Jacqui before/after school.
 - d) Joseph and Teresa Farrugia, former friends of Bill.
 - e) Gary Reid, extended family member.
 - f) Janet Green, Bill's sister-in-law (married to Leonard Green, Bill's brother).
69. As with the Op Belier investigation, D/Sgt Wood focused on three main possibilities for Veronica's disappearance:
 - a) That Veronica left of her own accord, chose not to contact anyone including family and friends.
 - b) That Veronica took her own life, and her remains have not been found or identified.
 - c) That Veronica was the victim of homicide, with the primary person of interest being Bill.
70. These investigations also considered the alleged acts and offences committed by Bill prior to Veronica's disappearance, as the basis or context for Veronica's alleged murder. D/Sgt Wood's investigations are detailed further below.

Investigation of possibility of voluntary relocation

71. In the years that followed Veronica's disappearances, there were a handful of witnesses who came forward, claiming to have seen or spoken to Veronica. In her statement to the Court, Jacqui explained that she was desperate for answers and contacted various people, who reportedly sighted Veronica.

- a) Bill's brother, Archie, told Jacqui that he drove past Veronica at an unknown time and it appeared as though she was waiting for someone.⁷³
- b) Janet's⁷⁴ ex-husband, Roy Hitchings, told the family that he saw Veronica driving a truck in the Mildura area in the late-1970s.⁷⁵
- c) Veronica's relative, Vernon Gray, reportedly spoke to Veronica when she attended his tyre business. Vernon spoke to Veronica and she reportedly stated she did not want to have anything to do with anyone in Melbourne.⁷⁶ Veronica was reportedly in the company of a man named 'Stevo'.
- d) Veronica's niece, Kate Medcraft, told Jacqui that she saw Veronica at a truck stop in NSW, however Veronica was gone before she was able to speak to her.⁷⁷
- e) Veronica's brother, Herb Medcraft, told Jacqui that he was told by an unknown person that Veronica had a mastectomy at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Hospital.
- f) Stephen's⁷⁸ wife met a woman at a NSW train station who took a special interest in her daughter, commenting that she had green eyes, despite her daughter having blue eyes.⁷⁹

⁷³ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-9.

⁷⁴ It is unclear from the statement whether this is Janet Green, the wife of Leonard Green (Bill's brother) or a different Janet.

⁷⁵ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-9.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Who was adopted as a newborn.

⁷⁹ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-9.

72. D/Sgt Wood spoke to Mr Gray in relation to the reported sighting of Veronica. Mr Gray stated that when he and his brother encountered Veronica, she was in the company of an unknown male. At the time, she was travelling between Alice Springs and Darwin and was living in Western Australia or Darwin.⁸⁰ Mr Gray told police that the male travelling with Veronica told him that Veronica had her breasts removed in Melbourne and that this was cancer-related.⁸¹
73. D/Sgt Wood has been unable to confirm the validity of the sighting. I note that Veronica's sister-in-law, Margaret Medcraft, doubted the sighting.⁸²
74. D/Sgt Wood was otherwise unable to corroborate any of the other reported sightings of Veronica. He noted that as Veronica is believed to have left the majority of her personal possessions behind, including her vehicle, she would have had very limited resources to start a 'new life' interstate or overseas. With limited resources, D/Sgt Wood opined that she may have struggled to start a 'new life'.
75. Many of the witnesses D/Sgt Wood spoke to about Veronica's disappearance also doubted that she would have abandoned her children:
- a) Margaret Medcraft stated that Veronica "*would have never, ever have left her kids. Wouldn't have mattered what happened, she would never have left them*".⁸³
 - b) KF stated that Veronica "*was a loving mother and I don't believe that she would ever have left her girls*".⁸⁴
 - c) Joy Vassallo stated "*I do not believe that she would have left her kids. I certainly do not believe that she would have been involved with anyone else. If she did leave of her own accord, I would have thought that she might have gone to the church or into a women's refuge*".⁸⁵

⁸⁰ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-37, 26-38.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 26-45.

⁸³ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Margaret Medcraft, 6-22.

⁸⁴ CB, Statement of KF, 17-2.

⁸⁵ CB, Statement of Joy Vassallo, 19-5.

- d) Brian Nowell stated that even if Veronica left her children, her *“nature would be that she would come back. If she could come back, she’d come back and let the kids know everything’s all right. Or come back just to make sure that the kids are all right”*.⁸⁶
- e) Winsome Peace (Bill’s sister) opined that it *“really shocked [her] to think she left them [the children]”*.⁸⁷
- f) Gary Reid (Bill’s extended family member) stated that *“it was a...really big shock...because she doted on those two girls”*.⁸⁸
- g) Deane Hibbs (Veronica’s childhood friend) stated that Veronicas *“was a very devoted mother and she adored her children...I don’t believe that she would have left of her own accord or that she would have left the kids.”*⁸⁹
- h) KQ (Bill’s alleged victim and family friend) opined *“I don’t think that Veronica would have left the kids. When I used to go over there all the time she was always very loving. I used to sit next to her and we would play little games...The kids all loved her, I can’t imagine that she would have left the kids happily”*.⁹⁰
- i) LR (KQ’s mother) stated *“I could never imagine Vonnie ever leaving her girls. She absolutely loved her girls and I don’t believe that she would have ever left them. If she did leave, she must have felt like she was in an absolutely hopeless situation.”*⁹¹

Proof of life checks

76. As part of his investigation, D/Sgt Wood conducted routine and up to date ‘proof of life’ checks, to determine if Veronica was living interstate. I note that these checks would not assist in determining if Veronica was living interstate under a different identity, however they are equally important checks to undertake. D/Sgt Wood conducted these checks under

⁸⁶ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Brian Nowell, 7-36.

⁸⁷ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Winsome Peace, 12-11.

⁸⁸ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Gary Reid, 16-28.

⁸⁹ CB, Statement of Deane Hibbs, 18-3.

⁹⁰ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-7.

⁹¹ CB, Statement of LR, 21-6.

Veronica's maiden (Medcraft) and married (Green) names, and with both dates of birth (10 April 1937 and 10 April 1938). These enquiries included:

- a) National Trustees – Advised that Veronica had not contacted them after 13 February 1976.⁹²
- b) Contact with family/friends – Veronica has not contacted her daughters, extended family or friends since 13 February 1976.⁹³
- c) Bank records – The property at Ballarat Road had a mortgage registered with the National Australia Bank (**NAB**) at the time of her disappearance. D/Sgt Wood's enquiries with NAB revealed that NAB do not hold records back to 1976.⁹⁴
- d) Driver's licence – Veronica does not have a current driver's licence under the surnames Green and Medcraft. The licence she held at the time of her disappearance expired on 8 October 1977 and was not renewed.⁹⁵
- e) Department of Immigration and Home Affairs – Enquiries revealed no records in the name of Veronica Green/Medcraft, with either date of birth.⁹⁶
- f) Australian Passport Office – Enquiries revealed no record of Veronica holding an Australian Passport in either name.⁹⁷
- g) Centrelink – Centrelink (Services Australia) does not hold any data prior to 1984.⁹⁸
- h) Australian Tax Office – Enquiries revealed no record of Veronica filing a tax return, noting that the ATO does not hold records prior to 1996.⁹⁹

⁹² Exhibit Folder 1, Letter from National Trustees to Anthony Fisher regarding employment, 6-1.

⁹³ CB, Police summary, 1-15.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Exhibit Folder 1, VicRoads licence extract, 8-1.

⁹⁶ CB, Police summary, 1-15.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

- i) Missing Persons Databases – Enquiries with Victorian and National Missing Persons Databases has not returned a match.¹⁰⁰

77. Prior to this matter being listed for Inquest, I requested D/Sgt Wood to conduct fresh proof of life checks in relation to Veronica, including familial matching via the Victorian and national DNA databases. D/Sgt Wood confirmed that the DNA sample provided by Penny has been profiled and placed on both the Victorian and National Missing Persons DNA Databases. To date, there have been no direct or familial matches.

Investigation of Veronica’s mental ill-health and the possibility of suicide

78. Several witnesses noted that Veronica suffered from mental ill-health in the years prior to her disappearance. Bill listed her reason for disappearance as possibly being related to depression and noted a suicide attempt in the previous year.

79. Susan opined that Veronica was a “*very sad woman*”¹⁰¹ although denied ever witnessing her self-harm. She opined that Bill “*tortured [Veronica] for years with other women*” and that he would put her down and make her feel like “*garbage underneath his feet*”.¹⁰² Susan thought the allegations of Bill’s inappropriate relationships with underage girls was “*enough for her*”.¹⁰³

80. Bill’s sister-in-law, Joan Lee, similarly opined that Veronica was a “[*b*]roken, sad woman”.¹⁰⁴ Ms Lee alleged that Bill refused to be intimate with Veronica and Veronica was trying to find a doctor to perform a hysterectomy.¹⁰⁵ Ms Lee was unaware of the specific issues in Veronica and Bill’s marriage, however she was aware of the rumours that Bill was allegedly abusing underage girls, and that this may have played a role in her poor mental health.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 1-16.

¹⁰¹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Susan Green, 8-68.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Joan Lee, 15-31.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 15-30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 15-31.

81. Mrs Laszuk recalled that Veronica attempted suicide at some point prior to her disappearance, however believed that Veronica was “*just pretending*”.¹⁰⁷ Mrs Laszuk noted that Veronica was admitted to the Alfred Hospital after taking an overdose of pills and they “*had to pump her stomach*”.¹⁰⁸ Mrs Laszuk visited Veronica in hospital at the time, and Veronica reportedly refused to tell her sister about what happened, other than to say that she had “*had enough*”.¹⁰⁹
82. Penny also recalled her mother taking an overdose.¹¹⁰ Penny’s recollection of the incident was that Veronica sent her and Jacqui to the home of her friend, Joy Vassallo, in the middle of the day. Penny also remembered her mother in the car, throwing up out the window. Penny could not recall any other incidents of Veronica attempting or talking about suicide.¹¹¹
83. I note for completion that Ms Vassallo does not have any recollection or knowledge of Veronica attempting suicide. Ms Vassallo recalled an incident when Veronica suffered a miscarriage at home, and she sent Penny and Jacqui to Ms Vassallo’s home to seek help. Bill was at home with Veronica; however, he reportedly refused to do anything to assist Veronica as he believed the baby was not his child. Ms Vassallo called for a doctor to visit Veronica at home and cared for Veronica in the interim.¹¹²
84. Penny remembered that not long before her mother disappeared, Veronica “*packed up [Jacqui] and [Penny] into her little Morris and she drove to Melton and then just drove back*”.¹¹³ Penny recalled fearing for her life during the car ride. Veronica would not tell her daughters where they were going or why they were in the car, however they were going “*flat out*”.¹¹⁴ Penny reflected later about this incident and queried whether Veronica was thinking about suicide when she got into the car and drove at speed.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Kathleen Laszuk, 5-15.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 5-17.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 5-18.

¹¹⁰ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-58.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² CB, Statement of Joy Vassallo, 19-3.

¹¹³ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-55.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 3-56.

85. Veronica's brother, James Medcraft, told D/Sgt Wood that Veronica attempted suicide twice. He recalled visiting Veronica in hospital on two occasions – once at a hospital on St Kilda Road and once in Footscray.¹¹⁶ Bill's brother and sister-in-law, Ronald and Melva, recalled that Veronica was seeing a psychiatrist at Footscray Hospital, after a suicide attempt.¹¹⁷
86. In 1974, Margaret Medcraft recalled visiting Veronica at Footscray Hospital, following a suicide attempt. She could not recall how Veronica attempted suicide, however remembered that Veronica "*seemed distressed*".¹¹⁸
87. D/Sgt Wood opined that whilst there *was* evidence of previous suicidality, there was no evidence of suicidal ideation proximate to Veronica's disappearance. He noted that Veronica had made plans for her daughter's birthday party, due to be held on 14 February 1976, which suggested she was planning for the future. He further noted that in Veronica's previous attempt(s), she had either been found or sought treatment, so if she did attempt suicide on this occasion, he thought it likely that she either would have been found alive, or her remains would have been found.¹¹⁹

Investigation as to the existence of any remains

88. To date, Veronica's remains have never been located. Several witnesses suggested that Veronica's remains were located underneath the swimming pool that was built at the Ballarat Road property.
89. Jacqui recalled her father installed the swimming pool after he won a quadrella on Melbourne Cup Day in 1979.¹²⁰ Jacqui recalled watching the tradespeople install it, as she was so excited to have the pool.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-8, 26-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 26-15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 26-45.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 27-9.

¹²⁰ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-5.

¹²¹ Ibid.

90. D/Sgt Wood contacted the Brimbank City Council and enquired whether there were any permits for a swimming pool in relation to the Ballarat Road property. The Council advised that there were no such permits.¹²² I note that the pool was likely installed in an era when building permits were not mandatory.
91. D/Sgt Wood attended the Ballarat Road property in December 2019 and spoke to the new owners. He noted that the previously built swimming pool had been filled in.¹²³
92. On 29 June 2020, D/Sgt Wood attended the Ballarat Road property for the purposes of searching and excavating the property. The search commenced that day and lasted five days, however nothing of significance was located.¹²⁴

Investigation of possibility of third-party intervention (murder)

93. Many of the witnesses spoken to by D/Sgt Wood alleged that either Bill murdered Veronica or believed that he was capable of doing so. In order to properly consider such an allegation, I must first consider the broader context of Veronica and Bill's marriage, and Bill's alleged offending against children.
94. I also note that as Bill died in 2006, and his alleged victims only made statements to the Court after his death, he has not had the opportunity to provide a response or defence to same. I note that it is not the role of a coroner to apportion blame or determine civil or criminal liability.

History of alleged family violence with Veronica

95. Various witnesses have provided different views of the relationship between Veronica and Bill.

¹²² CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-41.

¹²³ Ibid, 26-53.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 26-59, 26-60. See also evidence of D/Sgt Wood at inquest, T-20 line 13 to T-21 line 6.

Penny Green

96. Noting Penny was 14 years old when her mother disappeared, she recalled some discord between her parents. She explained that she did not have a “*really good close family kind of existence*” as they “*never did stuff together*”.¹²⁵ She recalled Bill was the patriarch, so while Veronica had a job, he still expected her to have dinner on the table when he got home from work.¹²⁶ Penny noted that her mother was not “*completely dominated*” by Bill, as she occasionally fought back when they argued.¹²⁷
97. Penny did not recall witnessing any physical violence between her parents,¹²⁸ however she remembered “*lots of screaming*”.¹²⁹ She thought Bill and Veronica might have “*wrestl[ed]*” a little, but that was the extent of her recollection.¹³⁰ Penny conceded that she also never witnessed her father physically assaulting Susan, and Susan has since disclosed same.¹³¹
98. When Penny was younger, she recalled that her parents’ arguments were largely normal arguments that a husband and wife would ordinarily have.¹³² However, when Penny was older, she noted that the arguments were often about the amount of time that Bill was spending with KQ and her family.¹³³ When her parents argued, Penny noted that Bill regularly said to Veronica “*Don’t you ever take those children with you, ‘cause I will find you and I’ll kill you*”.¹³⁴

Jacqui Wright

99. Jacqui noted that her memories of Veronica and Bill were limited, as she was only seven years old when Veronica disappeared. She explained that Bill was often absent as he was

¹²⁵ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-12.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 3-16.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 3-21, 3-84.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 3-21.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, 3-22.

¹³² Ibid, 3-23.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 3-83.

busy coaching Little Athletics or training greyhounds. She did not have any memories of her parents fighting.¹³⁵

Susan Green

100. Susan lived with her father, Veronica, Penny and Jacqui until she was about 16 years old. She recalled that her father was physically violent to her and to Veronica and noted that “*kicking...was his forte*”.¹³⁶ She alleged that Bill was physically violent towards Veronica, and this occurred both before and after Penny was born.¹³⁷
101. Susan recalled an incident when Penny was with her in bed and they could hear Veronica “*getting bashed one end of the room to the other*”.¹³⁸ She noted that Bill had “*such a temper*”, liked to drink alcohol and that these incidents occurred once every few weeks.¹³⁹
102. Susan explained that the family had to walk on “*tiptoe[s]*” around Bill.¹⁴⁰ On one occasion, Veronica returned home with groceries and Bill did not like what Veronica said or did, so he picked up a leg of lamb and threw it through two doors.¹⁴¹ I note for completeness that Penny recalled that Veronica was the person responsible for throwing the lamb through two screen doors.¹⁴²

Extended family – Joan Lee

103. At the time Veronica and Bill were together, Joan Lee was married to Archie Green, Bill’s brother. Ms Lee recalled that Veronica and Bill’s relationship was “*pretty tumultuous*” and that Bill was “*very, very, very awful to me [Ms Lee]*”.¹⁴³ Ms Lee alleged that Bill controlled Veronica and that she had to do whatever he said.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ CB, Statement of Jacqueline Wright, 4-3.

¹³⁶ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Susan Green, 8-27.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 8-28.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 8-29.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 8-73.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Penny Green, 3-16.

¹⁴³ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Joan Lee, 15-7.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

104. Ms Lee recalled that Veronica, Bill and Penny lived with her, her husband and their children for a period of time. During that time, she reported that Bill had a “[v]ery controlling mind” and was a “nasty man”.¹⁴⁵ Ms Lee reported that Bill was a “brain man...and that can be just as bad”.¹⁴⁶ She witnessed Veronica crying and noted that while she worked, Bill did not and Veronica was his “cash cow”.¹⁴⁷ Ms Lee reported witnessing Bill putting Veronica down by saying she was not attractive enough or was not young enough, which Veronica took to heart.¹⁴⁸
105. Ms Lee also recalled that Bill was very controlling with the finances and would tell her what she could and could not spend money on. She also noted that Bill had a problem with gambling.¹⁴⁹ The only time Ms Lee recalled witnessing a physical incident between Bill and Veronica was when she saw Veronica hit Bill over the head with a pan, however she conceded that she did not know what happened behind “closed doors”.¹⁵⁰
106. Ms Lee visited Veronica in the old Sunshine Hospital in about 1977 and recalled this was the last time she saw or spoke to Veronica. Ms Lee was planning to leave her husband at the time, but she did not want to disclose same to Veronica, as she was worried it would get back to Archie. Ms Lee explained she was at the hospital for a check-up when she ran into Veronica and was surprised to see her. Ms Lee noted Veronica “looked dreadful” and when she asked Veronica what she meant by that, Veronica said “Oh, things aren’t good, Joan...with me and Bill. I’m having medical problems...I’m trying to find a doctor to give me a hysterectomy because Bill won’t sleep with me [...]”.¹⁵¹

Extended family – Stephen Green

107. Bill’s nephew, Stephen Green (son of Ronald and Melva Green) opined that Bill treated Veronica poorly. He explained that Bill “expected things like his dinner to be made when

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 15-8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 15-10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 15-13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 15-22.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 15-30. I have omitted the rest of the quote which is sensitive in nature.

*he wanted it and if it wasn't what he wanted he would let her know. By that I mean that he would assault her".*¹⁵²

108. Stephen recalled an incident when he was at Bill and Veronica's home. He heard a commotion in the kitchen and walked into the kitchen to investigate. He observed Veronica on the floor and recalled "*Bill was assaulting Veronica*".¹⁵³ Stephen only witnessed a brief portion of the assault, as he left to find his father, Ronald. Ronald attended the kitchen and stopped the fight, telling Bill "*You don't raise your hand to a lady*".¹⁵⁴

Childhood friend – Deane Hibbs

109. Veronica's childhood friend and former coworker, Deane Hibbs, recalled that the pair used to socialise regularly and play netball two or three nights per week, however Bill stopped her from doing so. Ms Hibbs opined that Bill was a "*control freak and did not let Veronica have much freedom*".¹⁵⁵
110. Ms Hibbs noted that Veronica's relationship with Bill was "*up and down*" and that Veronica was frightened of him. While Veronica did not say she was frightened of Bill, Ms Hibbs observed that Veronica always appeared to be "*on edge*". Veronica ensured that Ms Hibbs was always gone before Bill returned home from work, as Bill did not like people visiting Veronica at home. Ms Hibbs noted that a mutual friend of theirs told her that Bill used to hit Veronica, however Ms Hibbs never personally witnessed the abuse.¹⁵⁶

Extended family – Brian Nowell

111. Another of Bill's nephews, Brian Nowell (**Mr B Nowell**), also recalled witnessing physical abuse by Bill on at least two occasions when Bill and Veronica were living in Hutchinson Street. On one occasion, Mr B Nowell allegedly witnessed Bill "*give her [Veronica] a slap*" and on another occasion, he gave "*her a foot in the backside, just out of temper*".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² CB, Statement of Stephen Green, 14-1.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 14-2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ CB, Statement of Deane Hibbs, 18-2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Brian Nowell, 7-9.

112. Later, when Bill and Veronica were living at the Ballarat Road property, Mr B Nowell recalled Bill asked to speak to him out the front of the house. Mr B Nowell opined that Bill appeared “*quite shaken*”. Bill reportedly told Mr B Nowell that he had been in a “*relationship*” with a young teenage girl and asked Mr B Nowell for advice. Mr B Nowell replied “*If I was you, I’d go inside and get a toothbrush...Because you’ll do time for this*”.¹⁵⁸ Bill was reportedly unhappy with this response and explained that Veronica threatened to “*shelf [him] to the jacks*” (report him to police).¹⁵⁹ At inquest, D/Sgt Wood confirmed this conversation occurred ‘*within days of Veronica’s subsequent disappearance*’).¹⁶⁰

Extended family - Gary Reid

113. Mr Reid was related to the Greens via marriage. He noted the first time he met Bill and Veronica was at a family function and observed the couple arguing. Mr Reid was unsure what the argument was about, however he reportedly witnessed Bill hit Veronica on the arm and punch Veronica. Mr Reid was shocked by what he witnessed, however another family member said “*Oh, that’s the way they are*”.¹⁶¹ Mr Reid was advised that Bill and Veronica were always fighting and that Bill was “*just that sorta guy, he’s mean, you know*”.¹⁶²

114. Over time, Mr Reid did not socialise much with Bill, however he became friendly with Archie, Bill’s brother, as they shared common interests. After Veronica’s disappearance, Archie and Mr Reid were camping with Archie’s son and some other friends. Mr Reid estimated this to have occurred in June 1977 or 1978, around the Queen’s Birthday long weekend. Mr Reid that the men were chatting around a campfire about their girlfriends or partners, and Archie mentioned how his wife (Ms Lee) left him and disappeared.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 7-10, 7-11.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. This interpretation of the phrase was given by D/Sgt Woods at inquest – T-37 lines 28-31.

¹⁶⁰ T-38 lines 3-8.

¹⁶¹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Gary Reid, 16-6, 16-7.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 16-34, 16-35.

115. Mr Reid reported that Archie was “*big mouthing in front of the young guys*” and said that he told Ms Lee before she left that “*she’d get the same as Vonnie [Veronica] got*”.¹⁶⁴ Mr Reid noted that Archie reportedly pointed his hand, pretending to make a gun. When Mr Reid asked Archie what happened to Veronica, Archie did not respond, however one of the other men said “*Yeah, if that’s what happened. What happened to the gun?*”¹⁶⁵
116. Archie explained that the gun was “*cut up*” in Veronica’s garage and suggested there would never be proof of the weapon as it was thrown away in the bush.¹⁶⁶ Mr Reid was so angry with Archie and vowed to stop socialising with him as a result.

Friend and neighbour – Joy Vassallo

117. Ms Vassallo lived on Hutchinson Street in the 1970s and befriended Veronica in that capacity. Her daughter was of a similar age to Jacqui. During the time they were friends, Veronica disclosed difficulties she was having in her marriage, and Bill’s alleged sexual abuse of underage girls. Ms Vassallo stated that Bill prohibited Veronica from seeing her family or having her family members visit their home. Ms Vassallo overheard Bill making derogatory remarks about Veronica’s family. She opined that Bill was a “*horrible person and he treated Veronica badly*”. He was very controlling of her, what she did, and she did not do anything unless he approved first.¹⁶⁷
118. In about 1975, Ms Vassallo recalled visiting Veronica in hospital after she had a hysterectomy. Veronica developed sepsis after the procedure, and she was taken to the Alfred Hospital for treatment for about a week.¹⁶⁸
119. While Veronica was in hospital, Bill reportedly “*got rid of a dog*” that the family had named Sam. Bill reportedly told Veronica that he sent the dog to a farm, however Ms Vassallo

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ CB, Statement of Joy Vassallo, 19-2, 19-3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 19-4.

believed that Bill had the dog euthanised as it was “*annoying the greyhounds*” that he owned.¹⁶⁹

120. Before she disappeared, Veronica told Ms Vassallo that Bill was going to sell her car. Veronica was upset about Bill selling her car because that was her main form of independence.¹⁷⁰

History of alleged family violence with others

Margaret Teague (Bill’s first wife)

121. Police have been unable to establish contact with Ms Teague. D/Sgt Wood spoke to police in America who spoke to Ms Teague, however she refused to provide a statement or evidence to police.
122. However, other witnesses who knew Ms Teague when she was married to Bill, alleged that there was violence in their marriage. Mr B Nowell stated that it was his understanding that the Ms Teague “*left the matrimonial home because...she was abused*”.¹⁷¹ Bill’s brother, Leonard, recalled that Bill “*used to...blue with her*”.¹⁷²
123. Stephen Green recalled that his mother, Melva, did not like Bill and told Stephen that Bill “*kicked his first wife, when she was pregnant*”.¹⁷³

Nong Xiu Mai (Bill’s third wife)

124. In 1993, Bill met a woman named Nong Xiu Mai (**Ms Mai**) via her cousin, who was Bill’s neighbour.¹⁷⁴ Ms Mai recalled the pair wrote each other letters for about a year, and sometime later Bill visited Ms Mai in China for about a week. During this visit, Bill asked Ms Mai to marry him, and they were married in 1994.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Brian Nowell, 7-5.

¹⁷² CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of Leonard Green, 9-18.

¹⁷³ CB, Statement of Stephen Green, 14-3.

¹⁷⁴ CB, Statement of Nong Xiu Mai, 10-1.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

125. After marrying, Bill returned to Australia and continued to communicate with Ms Mai via letter. Ms Mai received approval to migrate to Australia in 1995.¹⁷⁶ Ms Mai said that her relationship with Bill was initially normal. As she was unfamiliar with Australia, Bill took her anywhere she needed to go.¹⁷⁷
126. Bill told Ms Mai that she was required to stay at home, and look after him, as he was not working at the time. Ms Mai was content to look after Bill; however, she wanted to be able to leave the house and Bill prohibited same.¹⁷⁸
127. Ms Mai fell pregnant to Veronica and gave birth to a daughter Rebecca Green (**Rebecca**), in 1996. After Rebecca was born, Ms Mai noted that Bill always accompanied her whenever she left the house. Ms Mai was only permitted to go to the Milk Bar that was located behind her house on her own.¹⁷⁹ Ms Mai explained that the Milk Bar was visible from her backyard, and she observed Bill watching her from the backyard while she attended the Milk Bar.¹⁸⁰
128. When Ms Mai confronted Bill about why he was watching her, he claimed that he was worried she would be hit by a car. Ms Mai did not believe him and told Bill that he did not trust her.¹⁸¹
129. Ms Mai explained that she was unhappy in her marriage. She had no friends in Australia and wanted to go out and meet people; however, Bill would not permit same. She also wanted to find a job, however Bill forbade it and stated that she had to stay home and look after him.¹⁸²
130. Ms Mai eventually decided she wanted to leave Bill and told him she wanted a divorce. Their divorce was finalised in about 1999. Initially, lived with Rebecca lived with Ms Mai,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 10-2.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 10-3.

¹⁸² Ibid.

however after about a year, Bill told her that it was “*ok if [she] got a job*” as he would care for Rebecca during the day.¹⁸³

131. Ms Mai stated that while Bill was never physically violent towards Ms Mai and never yelled at her, she was not happy in the marriage. Although Ms Mai did not describe Bill’s behaviour as ‘family violence’, and while refraining from opining on whether or not an offence has been committed, I note that preventing a person from making or keeping connections with family or friends meets the current definition of emotional or psychological abuse, pursuant to the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (**FVPA**).¹⁸⁴ Similarly, not permitting Ms Mai to have a job, meets the definition of economic, pursuant to the FVPA.¹⁸⁵

Alleged history of sexual abuse of girls¹⁸⁶

132. One of the overarching themes present throughout the Coronial Brief was Bill’s alleged abuse of girls he was training at Little Athletics in Sunshine. While ordinarily such allegations would not be relevant for the purposes of my investigation, the available evidence suggests that Bill may have caused Veronica’s death, either to be able to pursue his abuse of young girls and/or to prevent Veronica from reporting him to police.

KQ

133. KQ befriended Penny when she moved to Penny’s primary school in Grade 6. They shared many interests including athletics and horses. KQ noted that after becoming friends with Penny, she used to visit the Green’s home regularly.¹⁸⁷ At that time, Susan was already living in Sydney and no longer resided at the family home.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 10-4.

¹⁸⁴ Section 7, *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic).

¹⁸⁵ Section 6, *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic).

¹⁸⁶ In accordance with the Pseudonym Order made on 30 March 2026, all of Bill’s alleged victims, who were under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged incidents, along with their families, are to be referred to by way of pseudonym in my published finding.

¹⁸⁷ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-1.

134. Over time, KQ's family and Penny's family became close friends. KQ referred to Penny's parents as Uncle Bill and Auntie Vonnie, and they often attended each other's houses for barbeques and parties.¹⁸⁸
135. KQ's mother, LR recalled that she first met Bill after her family was involved in a car accident and their car was written off. Bill attended their home, came to the front door and introduced himself to her. He asked LR if there was anything he could do to help the family after the incident. Ms Renyolds noted her husband and other daughter, were injured after the collision and they were unable to afford a new car due to her husband's gambling addiction.¹⁸⁹
136. LR noted that "*Bill seemed very interested in [her] family with [her husband's] alcoholism and the kids missing out on this and that.*"¹⁹⁰ She recalled that Bill also spent time with her husband, supplied him with alcohol and took him gambling.¹⁹¹ As Bill was involved with greyhound racing and training, he gifted a dog to KQ, so that she had a reason to go to his home every day to walk and feed the dog. Bill later purchased a horse for both Penny and KQ.¹⁹²
137. KQ explained that Penny invited her to attend Little Athletics and she was really excited to join her friend, however, did not have anything to wear. The first time KQ attended Little Athletics, she was wearing clothes that were old and too big, as her parents could not afford to purchase new items. After attending training, Bill asked KQ's parents if he could start training KQ as he thought she was good at athletics. Bill purchased KQ a new pair of shoes and shorts, as her parents could not afford same.¹⁹³
138. KQ noted that her friendship with Penny and her family was initially "*really good*".¹⁹⁴ However, she the first incident of inappropriate behaviour occurred when KQ and Penny were going to wash Bill's car. KQ recalled Bill approached her, asked her to lift up her arm

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 20-2.

¹⁸⁹ CB, Statement of LR, 21-1, 21-2.

¹⁹⁰ CB, Statement of LR, 21-1.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-1.

¹⁹⁴ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-1.

and told her that she was getting hairs under her arms. KQ was embarrassed by this incident and thought it was an unusually personal interaction.¹⁹⁵

139. On another occasion, KQ recalled sitting on the couch with Bill when he rubbed her hand with his finger. She believed she was about 10 years old at the time and did not know what it meant, so she reciprocated. When Bill took KQ home that night, he asked her if she knew what it meant, and she replied ‘no’. Bill reportedly told KQ that it meant she wanted to kiss him. KQ reported that she attempted to kiss Bill on the cheek, however he refused and told her that it needed to be “*like a grown up kiss*”. Bill allegedly kissed her on the mouth and told her not to tell anyone.¹⁹⁶
140. KQ alleged that “[t]hings progressed really slowly with Bill saying things like he loved [her] and that [she] was getting [a] nice body.” Bill took KQ and Penny for a trip to the Snowy Mountains. Penny and KQ shared a room and Bill had his own room. He told KQ to wait for Penny to go to sleep, then sneak out and attend his room.¹⁹⁷
141. One night while they were in the Snowy Mountains, Bill went into town and returned to the resort highly intoxicated. He reportedly forced KQ to take her clothes off and told her, “*this is what we were going to do now*”, then allowed KQ to return back to her room with Penny. The next day, Bill told KQ that she had to stay awake and come into his room after Penny fell asleep. KQ did as she was told and recalled that “*this was when the more serious abuse started*”.¹⁹⁸ Bill told KQ that no one could find out about their relationship and that if she told anyone and he went to jail, it would be her fault.¹⁹⁹
142. After the Snowy Mountains trip, KQ alleged the abuse occurred “*whenever he could*”. Bill trained Penny and KQ five days per week, and they had Little Athletics on Saturdays. Additionally, every Sunday, Bill took the pair to the St Kilda Baths to swim. KQ was also at the Green’s house every day.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 20-2.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 20-3.

143. About 12 months after KQ started visiting the Green's house, she went to a drive-in cinema with the Green family. Veronica and Jacqui were in the front of the car, while Penny, Bill and KQ were in the backseat. Bill was seated in between KQ and Penny. It was a cold night and KQ recalled there was a blanket over her, Bill and Penny, and Bill allegedly sexually assaulted KQ under the blanket.²⁰¹
144. After the movie, Veronica became enraged at KQ and allegedly assaulted her. Veronica said, "*I know what's going on*" and "*you think you're special, you're not the only one*". KQ recalled this was the first time she had ever seen Veronica behave in that way. After the incident, Bill dropped KQ off at her home, then dropped his family off at their house. Bill returned to KQ's home to tell her parents what had happened. He made up a story about "*Veronica being crazy and that he didn't really know why she had snapped*".²⁰²
145. In 1974, LR and her husband separated. LR moved to Dandenong with her two daughters in September 1974, while her husband and son remained in Albion. When they moved to Dandenong, LR noted that Bill still visited them every day, as he said he had a lot of deliveries in that area. LR recalled that she told Bill that they were "*fine*" and that he did not need to come over as often, however he continued to attend their home.²⁰³ KQ recalled that Bill visited her in Dandenong regularly and told her that it "*wouldn't be long now before [she] could come over and stay with them*".²⁰⁴ Bill told KQ that Veronica missed her and that she had made up a room for her to stay the night.²⁰⁵
146. When KQ started high school, she attended a different school to Penny. Despite being at a different school, KQ alleged that Bill followed her home from school. She reported that if Bill saw her walking home with a male friend, he would "*fling open the car door and tell [her] to get in*".²⁰⁶
147. KQ recalled an incident in Form 1 when she skipped school to attend a party during the day. She consumed alcohol with her friends and returned home late in the day. When she

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ CB, Statement of LR, 21-3.

²⁰⁴ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-3.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

returned home, Bill was there with her mother and knew that she had not attended school. When KQ refused to disclose where she had been that day, Bill allegedly grabbed her and “told [her] to take [her] pants off” in front of KQ’s mother. When KQ refused, Bill accused her of “rooting around”, allegedly tore her pants off in front of her mother and checked her underwear.²⁰⁷

148. On one occasion, believed to be the week that Veronica disappeared, Bill visited KQ at her home in Dandenong. He told her that she could come over that Friday, “*that everything was fine and Veronica was looking forward to [her] coming over there that Friday*”.²⁰⁸ That Friday, 13 February 1976, Bill collected KQ from her home and drove her to the Ballarat Road property. KQ recalled that when she got to the Green’s house, Veronica was not home and was due to arrive in an hour or two.²⁰⁹
149. KQ recalled that they “*waited and waited and it was getting later and later*” and Veronica did not return home. KQ recalled that Bill did not seem concerned about Veronica’s tardiness. She spent the night at the Green’s house and the next morning; Penny and Jacqui were very upset. KQ, Bill, Penny and Jacqui attended a relative’s home to find a photo of Veronica to post in the newspaper.²¹⁰ KQ thought it was unusual that Bill wanted to use a photo of Veronica from when she was 18 years old, and not a more recent photo. She opined that Bill did not appear to genuinely want to find Veronica because the photo he wanted to use did not look like her anymore.²¹¹
150. After Veronica’s disappearance, KQ explained that she was at the Green’s home all the time and spent every weekend at their home. She only returned to Dandenong to go to

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. D/Sgt Wood gave evidence at Inquest that this the interaction between KQ and Bill happened possibly on the day of Veronica’s disappearance, and if not, perhaps a day later – see T-41 lines 18-28. The later occurrence of the interaction is supported by Penny and Jacqui’s recollection of the evening, which is that they were home alone waiting for their parents to return until late at night, and that their father arrived home alone at about 11pm. This is also consistent with KQ’s statement of never having attended the Ardeer property – see CB 20-3.

²¹⁰ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-3.

²¹¹ Ibid, 20-5.

school; however, she hated school because she did not have any friends. By that time, Bill's alleged abuse was normalised as it occurred so regularly.²¹²

151. KQ recalled an incident when she ran away from her home in Dandenong and travelled to Albion, where her father and brother were living. Bill and KQ's mother found her in Albion and drove her to a police station in the city. In the car, KQ was "*getting mouthy*" and Bill told her to shut up. KQ yelled in response and said something like "*Bill wanted to have sex with [her]*". KQ recalled that Bill tried to hit her while he was driving but missed. He stopped the car and leaned over into the back seat, and allegedly started punching her, telling her to "*shut up*". KQ noted that her mother witnessed the entire incident and if she did not know about the alleged sexual abuse before, she "*would have had to know what was going on after that*".²¹³ LR recalled Bill was "*quite vicious*" during this incident. She leaned over into the back seat and pulled Bill off her daughter, stating that KQ would be good and would not run away anymore.²¹⁴
152. KQ opined that Bill was "*quite manipulative*". He often spoke about how he knew how to hurt people and how he could punch people with phone books so that there would be no evidence. When he first started abusing KQ, he told her that if he went to prison, it would be her fault. When she was older, Bill said he had a nephew who was a police officer and no one would believe her allegations as she was "*just a little girl*".²¹⁵
153. KQ also recalled a trip to Sydney that Bill was planning. Bill told KQ's mother that Penny would also be going to Sydney but that was never the actual plan. KQ alleged that Bill sexually abused her for the entire trip, lasting about four days.²¹⁶
154. In early-1975, KQ's parents rekindled their relationship as her father was "*doing really well*". KQ recalled her parents telling her that they were getting back together and that she did not need to worry about Bill any longer as they were moving to a new house. KQ

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ CB, Statement of LR, 21-4.

²¹⁵ CB, Statement of KQ, 20-7.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 20-5.

recalled she was about 13 years old at the time.²¹⁷ She was happy that her parents were back together and did not ask any further questions.

155. KQ obtained a casual job at Sussan in Dandenong when she was 14 years old. Just under a year later, she was on the street near her workplace when she observed Bill in a truck, stopped at the traffic lights. KQ ran into the store and hid out the back. Her manager told her to take the rubbish out; however, she was too afraid to walk out into the shop and was unable to explain to her manager that she did not want to see a man. When KQ entered the shop floor, she saw Bill also inside the store. He asked her to get something off a shelf and talk to her about it, so that it would look like he was a customer. KQ could not recall what Bill said to her, however after he left, she fled to the storeroom and cried. KQ's manager called her mother, who worked nearby. KQ did not attend work for a few days after that incident.²¹⁸
156. Bill sent KQ a bouquet of flowers the next month, on 29 March (noting her birthday was actually in April). She did not see or hear from Bill again until she was about 17 years old. KQ was still working at Sussan at the time and Bill called her at work. He reportedly told her that he still loved her and wanted to marry her. He explained that she was older and therefore it would "*be alright*" for them to get married. KQ told Bill that she never loved him and had a boyfriend; however, Bill reportedly promised her money. Bill reportedly told KQ how much his house was worth and promised that she would get half of that amount.²¹⁹
157. When KQ asked "*what about Aunty Von*", Bill told her that "*she was gone and that she won't be back*". KQ recalled feeling shocked that Veronica had not returned and had assumed that Veronica would have returned by that time. KQ refused to marry Bill and she never heard from him again.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid, 20-7.

KF

158. KF met the Green family as a young child through the Little Athletics Club where Bill coached. She was one year older than Jacqui and was close friends with her as a child, although attended a different primary school.²²¹
159. KF recalled that she used to stay at the Green's house regularly, up to five times per week. This occurred both at one of the Albion houses and at the Ballarat Road Property. KF noted her mother was a cleaner and after school she would attend the Green's home and wait for her mother to pick her up after work.²²²
160. KF noted that from the age of about nine, Bill started coaching her personally at Little Athletics. She also used to train with Bill's greyhounds at a nearby field, Moore Park. After training, KF would return to the Green's home in Ballarat Road where Bill would do what he called a "*cool down*" in the lounge room. KF alleged that this involved Bill massaging her and touching her inappropriately on her genitals and breasts. When this happened, KF recalled that Bill would send Jacqui to her bedroom. The alleged abuse continued for several years.²²³
161. KF explained that there was a barbeque at her family's home and Bill was in attendance. Bill and KF were alone at the barbeque at one point, and he asked KF to sit on her knee. KF complied and Bill allegedly touched her breasts. KF's aunt walked into the room and caught Bill. Following this incident, KF never returned to Bill's home.²²⁴

KK

162. KK is the older sister of KF. KK was involved in the Little Athletics Club and Bill was also her coach. She was a year younger than Penny.²²⁵

²²¹ CB, Statement of KF, 17-1.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid, 17-3.

²²⁴ Ibid, 17-4.

²²⁵ CB, Statement of D/Sgt Wood, 26-6, 26-7.

163. KK alleged that Bill made sexual advances towards her. She reported that Bill regularly took her and the other girls he coached to the St Kilda Baths and walked in on the girls while they were showering.²²⁶
164. KK recalled that she was at a park in Altona with Bill and he allegedly became physically aggressive towards her and sexually assaulted her. She also reported witnessing Bill touching Penny inappropriately at their home.²²⁷
165. KK reported observing Bill “*physically push Veronica around and threaten to kill her*”. KK noted the trip Bill took to Sydney, and reported that he wanted her to come, but she refused.²²⁸
166. After Veronica’s disappearance, Bill and two adults took KK to the You Yangs. Bill reportedly told KK, “*This is where Veronica is and if you tell your mum it will happen to you*”.²²⁹

MD

167. In the early 1990s, MD was a member of the Little Athletics Club and Bill was her coach. She reported that when Bill consumed alcohol, he was very abusive and violent. She explained that this included verbal abuse and “*things smashing and stuff*”.²³⁰
168. MD recalled seeing Bill driving past her school at lunchtime very slowly. He accused MD of “*fluting [flitting] around and seeing some boys*” and called her “*a tart*”, despite MD being young and not being interested in boys at that time. Bill regularly said “*oh, I’ll get you ready...for that [sex]*”. With the benefit of hindsight, MD understood what he was saying.²³¹
169. MD alleged Bill’s sexual abuse commenced shortly after meeting him, when she was aged about 11 or 12 years old. She noted that he was often intoxicated when the abuse occurred,

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ CB, Transcript of video-recorded statement of MD, 22-3, 22-4.

²³¹ Ibid.

and it happened about once a week. Bill collected MD from her home and took her back to his house, in order to get them alone together.²³²

170. MD reported that the abuse continued until she was able to stand up for herself and threatened to tell the police.

AK

171. AK reported that in 1979 or 1980, she lived in West Sunshine and became involved in local Little Athletics Club. When she started to show some talent, she was moved into Bill's group with some other girls. Within a month of joining Bill's group, he started AK coaching her one-on-one. Shortly after starting individual coaching, Bill began giving AK massages on her legs, which he claimed was part of the training. The massages included touching her buttocks and the tops of her legs. He also gave her gifts including jewellery, a camera and lingerie.²³³
172. AK recalled the first incident when Bill allegedly raped her. She was about 11 years old at the time and Bill drove her to Williamstown Beach after finishing training. AK reported that Bill showed her a pornographic cartoon and told her "*this is something that you want*", "*I know you enjoy it*" and "*you are lucky I am doing this to you because I love you and you don't want some young guy doing it to you*".²³⁴ AK reported that the abuse became regular after this incident.
173. By the time AK was about 13 years old, she was able to defend herself against Bill and threatened to tell her father if Bill continued abuse her. Despite not attending Little Athletics any longer, AK recalled that Bill "*seemed to always be around*". When AK was a bridesmaid at her sister's wedding, she reported that Bill somehow convinced his way into the wedding.²³⁵

²³² Ibid, 22-6.

²³³ CB, Statement of AK, 23-1.

²³⁴ Ibid, 23-2.

²³⁵ Ibid, 23-3.

174. In 2004, AK attempted to report the alleged abuse to police. She thought that Bill was deceased at that time, and the police reportedly told her that they could not do anything if he was dead.²³⁶ In 2007, AK saw the television show about Veronica and noted that Bill was mentioned in the show. When she realised that Bill was still alive, she decided to contact the police again to report the alleged abuse, however Bill had since passed away.²³⁷

VICTORIA POLICE MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATIONS

Former process for investigating missing persons

175. At my direction, the Court obtained a statement from Inspector Anthony Combridge (**Insp Combridge**), who was one of the founding members of Op Belier, (later named the Belier Task Force), which reviewed Victoria's long-term missing and unidentified persons from 1960 to 2005. The review arose from the coronial inquest into the death of Matthew Bibby, and the subsequent Office of Police Integrity report arising from same.²³⁸ The remit of Op Belier was to examine reported long-term missing persons (**LTMP**) against known unidentified human remains (**UHR**) on hand in Victoria and where possible, provide assurance that all reconciliation of these matters had been undertaken.²³⁹

176. Insp Combridge also gave *viva voce* evidence at inquest and was an impressive witness.

177. The initial scope of Op Belier included 420 LTMP and 44 UHR investigations reported between 1 January 1960 and 31 December 2005. These dates were selected as follows:

- a) In 1993, the then Assistant Commissioner, Crime at Victoria Police directed that all records of people reported missing prior to 1960 be expunged from the Victoria Police LEAP database.

²³⁶ Ibid, 23-4.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ CB, Statement of Insp Anthony Combridge (**Insp Combridge**), 27-1. *See also* evidence of Insp Combridge at inquest, T-53 lines 5-16.

²³⁹ CB, Statement of Insp Combridge, 27-3.

- b) The Crime Command – Missing Persons Crime Theme Desk took over responsibility for all LTMP reports post 31 December 2005.²⁴⁰
178. A full audit of all Victoria Police and Coroners Court of Victoria records revealed the true scope of Op Belier to be 590 LTMP and 220 UHR investigations within that timeframe.²⁴¹ During the operation of Op Belier, investigators resolved 143 LTMP and 111 UHR investigations.

Changes to missing persons investigations

179. Insp Combridge explained that there have been significant changes in MP response, investigative structures and policies since Veronica disappeared in 1976. The first change occurred in 2006, when Crime Command implemented the Crime Theme Desk model. This provided investigator oversight to all missing persons reported in Victoria at the time. Investigations were administered under the Accountability and Resourcing Model (ARM) from that time, which delineated some investigations as Category 1 (Crime Command primacy) and Category 2 (Regional Investigator CIU primacy), providing a local level of oversight.²⁴²
180. Insp Combridge explained that the Crime Theme Desk model was later abandoned, and the investigative model reverted to the ARM to determine investigative primacy. Of note, the quality assurance of missing persons investigations also reverted to the regional level, which removed the specialist support.²⁴³
181. In 2014, the Crime Command reinstated a dedicated Missing Persons Squad to investigate LTMP/UHR investigations where homicide was identified as the most likely causal factor. All other LTMP/UHR investigations remained with regional investigators. This remains the current model, some 12 years later in 2026.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, 27-4.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

182. Insp Combridge explained that the policy behind missing persons investigations has also evolved over time. This has occurred as a result of coronial recommendations, findings from internal reviews and contributions from innovative practice and impact of other policies. Recent policy inclusions to improve missing persons investigations (particularly LTMP investigations) include:

- a) Designation of a LTMP at 30 days, which is the ceiling point for transfer of investigative primacy from frontline members to the relevant investigation and response unit (**I&R**), who holds the geographical responsibility for the missing person. This transition of primacy can occur at any time prior to the expiration of 30 days, but if not, it must occur on day 30.²⁴⁵
- b) At day 60, the investigator must identify and collect relevant ante-mortem reference samples (fingerprints, DNA, dental records, etc), if this has not already occurred.²⁴⁶
- c) At day 120, the investigator must commence compiling a coronial brief, if this has not already commenced. This not only ensures that there is an accurate record of the investigation to date that can be provided to the coroner but also serves as a timely review of the investigation and inquiries undertaken to that point.²⁴⁷
- d) At 180 days, the investigator must make a mandatory notification to the coroner, which requires the investigator to initiate coronial proceedings via submission of a report of presumed death (VP Form 83A) in consultation with the Police Coronial Support Unit²⁴⁸ (now referred to simply as ‘Coronial Support Unit’).

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 27-4. Insp Combridge emphasised at inquest that this was a ‘ceiling point’, and that “*if there’s a matter that is determined to require investigator input, they don’t have to wait days for that to happen, that can happen on day 1*” – T-56 lines 14-17.

²⁴⁶ 27-4. Insp Combridge noted at Inquest that this timeframe was arrived upon as around 70% of people who transition to LTMPs at 30 days are in fact located inside of a 60-day period – see T- 55 lines 19-25.

²⁴⁷ CB, Statement of Insp Combridge, 27-5.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

- e) The missing persons response has been aligned with standard Emergency Management practice, which provides an incident command and control structure (ICCS) around the response, to ensure best practice.²⁴⁹
183. Insp Combridge noted that in 2007, new entries were included in the Victoria Police Manual (VPM) about missing persons investigations and policy. Since then, these VPMs have been enhanced with updated investigative specific material to support local investigators with decision-making, structure and development of investigation plans.²⁵⁰
184. Insp Combridge explained that Op Belier ceased operation in 2011, and all outstanding non-suspicious LTMP/UHR investigations were transferred to regional I&R unit that held geographic responsibility, for ongoing investigation.²⁵¹ He noted the key outputs of Op Belier included:
- a) A fulsome understanding of the totality of investigative liability for LTMP/UHR in Victoria, through a review of archived LEAP and physical Victoria Police files, physical Coroners Court of Victoria files and records at the Public Records Office of Victoria.
 - b) The development of a risk assessment process for missing persons reports, identifying through experiential learning key factors that were consistently observed in LTMP investigations as high-risk indicators that the person may not be readily recoverable.
 - c) The inclusion of ante-mortem collection samples through a partnership with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM).
 - d) Acquisition of an instance of the Data Victim Identification system, PlassData, to store, search and match dental records of missing persons against UHR records.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 27-8.

This system has since moved to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and is administered nationally.²⁵²

185. Insp Combridge also noted that Victoria Police has continued to innovate and improve their capability in this area. The Missing Persons Squad has entered into research partnerships with the Australian Facility for Taphonomic Experimental Research and Deakin University. This partnership aims to improve investigators' ability to leverage technology and skills to investigate, locate and identify missing persons and UHRs, with particular focus on homicide investigations. This partnership has also led to engagement with VIFM and other professionals to use Light Detection and Ranging (**LiDAR**) scanning to identify clandestine graves, amongst other technologies.²⁵³

How the investigation would differ in 2026

186. Insp Combridge opined that if Veronica were to be reported missing today, in the circumstances known from 1976, he would expect that local investigators would identify the risk (history of family violence, delay in report, failure to attend pre-organised appointments, vehicle located with personal effects, plausible person of interest with no alibi) early. He would expect that the investigators would also be involved and engaged with the Missing Persons Squad.²⁵⁴
187. In respect of Veronica's case, Insp Combridge would expect that that in the first 1-2 days, police would have spoken with Bill and taken a statement from him, committing him to a version of events they could validate and corroborate '*to assure ourselves he wasn't involved in the disappearance*'.²⁵⁵ There would have been a significant presence at the site where the vehicle was located. He also notes that where there are allegations of the missing person being a victim of family violence, this would be considered relevant to the task of risk assessment, insofar as '*it absolutely escalates the risk*'.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 27-5.

²⁵⁵ Evidence at inquest of Insp Combridge, T-60 lines 19-24.

²⁵⁶ Evidence at inquest of Insp Combridge, T-61 lines 5-7.

188. Insp Combridge further expected that investigators would now have regard to Veronica and Bill's digital footprint including CCTV footage, phone records and bank records, which were obviously unavailable in 1976.²⁵⁷
189. At inquest, Counsel for the Chief Commissioner of Police, for the Court's benefit, helpfully took Insp Combridge through the guidance currently available to police members undertaking missing persons investigations in 2026, being: (a) the Victoria Police Manual on Missing Persons; (b) the Victoria Police Missing Persons Squad Initial Action Guide; and (c) the Victoria Police Crime Investigative Guide for Missing Persons, along with the changes made to missing persons investigations since the time Veronica disappeared.
190. A further document, the Australia New Zealand Policy for Missing Persons Investigations (which Victoria Police policy is compliant with) is also available as guidance for all jurisdictions.

Centralised Missing Persons Registry

191. Insp Combridge was also asked about the utility of a Centralised Missing Persons Registry. He noted that through his previous work on the Police Consultative Group on Missing Persons, he was able to assess the Victoria Police model against other operating models across Australasia for both efficacy and community accountability.²⁵⁸
192. Insp Combridge opined that the Missing Persons Registry that exists in NSW provides opportunities for its members to be guided in the execution of best practice response. He was unable to comment on the level of training or expertise delivered within the NSW Police Service; however, he noted the role of the missing persons coordinator in each police area command or police department in NSW. He explained that this role provides an additional knowledge base for members to draw upon during the response, as an adjunct to the Missing Persons Registry.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ CB, Statement of Insp Combridge, 27-5.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 27-6.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

193. When assessed against all other investigative models in Australasia, Insp Combridge opined that NSW model is ‘best practice’ amongst all jurisdictions. He noted that Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australasia that does not have a centralised area of expertise to support frontline investigators with LTMP/UHR investigations,²⁶⁰ stating at inquest – quite significantly, in my view – that all other jurisdictions in Australasia have ‘*at least some level of centralisation... we’re probably the only jurisdiction that doesn’t*’.²⁶¹
194. Insp Combridge noted that such a model was previously explored by Victoria Police in 2021, although was not supported due to organisational resourcing priorities. At the time, Victoria Police had diverted significant resources to the COVID-19 pandemic response and the Commonwealth Games.²⁶²
195. The proposal suggested housing the central registry within the Crime Command, with a proposed remit of:
- a) Review of missing persons daily through LEAP (within 72 hours of the report).
 - b) Escalation of high risk and suspicious disappearance reports.
 - c) Advice on investigation processes.
 - d) Coordination of data collection for the National Missing Persons and Victim System (absorbed from the Intelligence Collection and Liaison Unit).
 - e) Facilitate quality control over missing persons reports.
 - f) Oversee milestone events for LTMP and UHR cases.
 - g) Governance via State Tasking and Coordination on the contingent risk posed by LTMP/UHR investigations.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Evidence at inquest of Insp Combridge, T-61 line 22 to T-62 line 1. He stated that, notwithstanding that he is of the view that a centralised model is best practice, the current model is by no means unfit for purpose, though “*the absence of a centralised model presents opportunity for a disparate appreciation of risk, and therefore a differential in the level and type of response that might be initiated*” – see T-73 lines 4-14.

²⁶² CB, Statement of Insp Combridge, 27-6.

- h) Review and triage existing/legacy LTMP/UHR cases.²⁶³
196. As noted above, investigative primacy, quality control, assurance and governance all sit at the regional level. While recent policy updates have sought to bring consistency to the investigations, Insp Combridge noted the specific skillsets that are required to effectively investigate LTMP/UHRs. He opined that a central registry like the model that exists in NSW would be beneficial in the quality assurance space, in particular, during the initial phases of the investigation and when considering next steps in older investigations.²⁶⁴
197. Insp Combridge noted that it may be argued that augmenting the resources of Victoria Police's family violence response, or a more coordinated multi-agency approach to mental health may be a better resource investment to affect missing persons outcomes. He opined that these are ultimately operational decisions for Victoria Police. While the risk associated with missing persons investigations is demonstrable, arguably this is true of other areas of risk such as family and intimate partner violence, serious and organised crime, youth offending and responses to mental ill health.²⁶⁵ I concur with Insp Combridge and note that it is not my role to determine how or where Victoria Police invests its funds. Nevertheless, I intend to recommend that Victoria Police implement a central Missing Persons Registry and use the NSW model to inform the design and implementation of their model.

I-Familia

198. Finally, I note that since Veronica going missing in the 1970s, there have also been numerous scientific advancements, including as to our understanding of DNA, and how it can form a critical pillar in investigations into missing persons and unidentified human remains. To this end, while there are now robust processes in place in Victoria and nationally to ensure that DNA reference samples in missing persons cases are appropriately sought and uploaded to relevant state and federal databases, a further opportunity exists in the form of Interpol's I-Familia,²⁶⁶ which is a global database for identifying missing persons based on international DNA kinship matching. This is achieved by placing on a

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ See <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Forensics/I-Familia>.

database the DNA profiles of unidentified human remains, antemortem DNA profiles of missing persons, and family reference samples. While I-Familia remains in its infancy, it provides a further investigative avenue for the family members of missing persons to provide reference samples of their own DNA for familial matching on an international scale where a DNA sample from the missing person cannot be obtained for direct matching.²⁶⁷

FAMILY'S RESPONSE

199. Following the Inquest, Penny submitted an impact statement on behalf of herself, Jacqui and their families. The family noted their disappointment and frustration with the Victoria Police investigation and the Inquest and felt they left the hearing with more questions than answers. The family questioned why no investigation had occurred in the days, weeks and months after Veronica went missing. Penny recalled being visited by police officers not long after Veronica disappeared but noted there did not appear to be any record or documentation of this visit. Veronica's family noted with frustration that Bill was never interviewed or spoken to by police in relation to Veronica's disappearance. I echo those frustrations and note that such an interview could have occurred in the decades that followed Veronica's disappearance, prior to Bill's passing. Indeed, this concern was acknowledged and shared by both D/Sgt Wood and Insp Combridge.
200. The family stated that there were numerous inconsistencies with the evidence on the Coronial Brief, including in the statements of some of Bill's alleged victims. The family stated that some of the statements of the alleged victims were incorrect. For example, KF alleged that Bill had a tattoo, however the family reported that this was incorrect. Similarly, KF reportedly did not sleep over when the family lived in Albion, as there was nowhere for her to stay at that time.
201. I accept that there are inconsistencies and differences in some of the evidence on the Coronial Brief. However, I do not believe that the witnesses were deliberately misleading. The events in question happened some 50 years ago, when many of the witnesses were themselves young children, and were not interviewed until decades after the events in

²⁶⁷ See evidence of Insp Combridge at inquest on I-Familia at inquest at T-73 to T-74.

question.²⁶⁸ Memories fade and change over time, and while understandably frustrating, the inconsistencies do not automatically negate the allegations of abuse.

202. Veronica's family similarly noted their concerns that the Coronial Brief appeared to heavily focus on the allegations of sexual abuse, rather than the missing persons investigation. It is correct that the brief does contain significant allegations of sexual abuse from numerous witnesses. Veronica's family acknowledged that while Bill's alleged offending may have provided a motive for murder, such offending does not automatically mean that he murdered Veronica. I agree, however also note that the allegations are relevant as they *may* have provided a motive for murdering Veronica. Equally, the allegations might explain a decision by Veronica to voluntarily relocate or take her own life.
203. Finally, Veronica's family stated that the various sightings of Veronica that had been reported over the years were not adequately investigated by police. At my direction, D/Sgt Wood provided a supplementary statement to the Court dated 8 July 2026 outlining the significant sightings of Veronica that were reported to police since her disappearance. D/Sgt Wood provided a summary of the sightings that he personally investigated, as well as the sightings that were investigated by other members.
204. D/Sgt Wood's supplementary statement was provided to Veronica's family and all interested parties, for the opportunity to respond prior to provision of these findings. Veronica's family acknowledged the statement and were grateful for same, however maintained their concerns and questions about the efforts expended by Victoria Police to pursue these reports.
205. Veronica's family noted that some of the people who reported seeing Veronica were not spoken to and have since passed away. These leads are therefore unable to be pursued now, leading to understandable unanswered questions from Veronica's family. The family also queried why police dismissed some of the sightings as mistaken identity. In particular, the family noted the two women who reported seeing Veronica in truck stops in Western

²⁶⁸ See Evidence of D/Sgt Wood at inquest - T-50, lines 12-19 – “*When I subsequently investigated [Veronica's disappearance]...the challenges of trying to speak to witnesses and accurately recall um things such as timelines that were referred to, you know, trying to put um exact dates to things, is very difficult. So essentially, this brief had to rely on peoples' best memories of something that occurred 30, 40, 50 years ago. So that's difficult.*”

Australia. The family queried why police did not attempt to speak to the owners of those truck stops.

206. I acknowledge the frustration of Veronica's family and note that this finding will not provide the definitive answers that they are seeking. The family's concerns about the lack of investigation into the reported sightings of Veronica is, in my view, reflective of the broader lack of initial investigation in the days, weeks and months after the disappearance. Put simply, as Insp Combridge noted, "*the absence of investigative effort in the initial action phase is a primary indicator for the investigative goals not being achieved*".²⁶⁹
207. I also note that a missing persons investigation should rely on significantly more than eyewitness reports and CrimeStoppers reports. In the 1970s and 1980s, our digital footprint was virtually non-existent. Investigators today now have a range of tools, avenues and data that can be used to locate a missing person. Eyewitness reports and Crimestoppers reports would form one part of a larger investigation. As noted above, the approach to missing persons investigations is now significantly different. Victoria Police advised that a similar report today would generate a very different response. I acknowledge, as Insp Combridge and D/St Wood have, that this will provide no comfort to Veronica's family. However, it is a positive change that will help guard against the wholesale investigative deficiencies seen in the early stages of Veronica's missing persons investigation.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

208. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008* I make the following findings:
- a) the identity of the deceased is Veronica Catherine Green, born 10 April 1937;
 - b) the death occurred on or after 13 February 1976 at an unknown location from unascertainable causes; and
 - c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

²⁶⁹ Evidence at inquest of Insp Combridge, T-72, lines 17-20.

209. Having considered all of the circumstances, I am satisfied to the requisite standard that Veronica is deceased. I make this finding noting that there is no proof of Veronica being alive in Australia after 13 February 1976. Despite the reported sightings of her, there have been no confirmed or verified sightings of Veronica since that time. I acknowledge the gravity of such a finding for Veronica's family and loved ones, more than 50 years after her disappearance, noting that they held out hope that she might return one day.
210. While it is possible that Veronica voluntarily left Bill and her children, the likelihood of same is low in my view. There are numerous witnesses who attested to Veronica's love and devotion to her children and opined that she was unlikely to have left them behind, unless she was forced to do so. I further note that Bill has been deceased for nearly 20 years, and even if Veronica were alive and living elsewhere, she has had ample time to return to her daughters.
211. I also note that it is possible that Veronica may have taken her own life, as she had a reported history of one or two suicide attempts. However, I note that on both occasions, she was either found by others or actively sought medical attention. In this case, her remains have never been found. Although not impossible, in my view it is unlikely that she took her own life and concealed her body in such a manner that she has evaded discovery to this day.
212. While I cannot make a definitive finding to the requisite standard, and cannot make a finding as to criminal liability, I consider that there is a **distinct possibility** that Veronica's death was due to homicide and that the person responsible was Veronica's husband, Bill Green. I am unable to determine the mechanism or precise timing of same. I make this finding, noting the significant and horrific history of family violence that Veronica reportedly endured from Bill, and Bill's alleged abuse of girls that was co-occurring. I note KQ was one of Bill's most enduring alleged victims, which continued for many years after Veronica's disappearance. I find KQ's conversation with Bill in February 1976 in which he stated that she could come and live with him to be very compelling. I also note Veronica's knowledge of Bill's alleged sexual abuse, and her apparent threat to "*shelf [him] to the jacks*" as a possible motive for Bill to kill her.

COMMENTS

Pursuant to section 67(3) of the Act, I make the following comments:

213. Unfortunately, and tragically for Veronica's family, the initial investigation of her disappearance by Victoria Police was entirely deficient. It does not appear that any genuine attempts were made to locate Veronica in 1976 or 1977, and it was only in 1978, upon the contact from Bill's lawyer, that a cursory review of the file occurred. While I must be careful not to hold the investigation commencing in the 1970s to modern-day standards, it must be noted that despite the file being with the Missing Persons Unit for several years, there were no attempts to interview Bill about his wife's disappearance. At this time, the majority of missing persons cases sat with former LSC Helen Nugent. I acknowledge the role of Tactical Intelligence Operative differs from the role of a Detective, and therefore the remit of LSC Nugent's position differed accordingly, and I make no adverse finding against former LSC Nugent, noting she was not tasked to Veronica's case as an investigator. However, it is deeply unfortunate that Victoria Police did not assign a Detective to this case, nor were any attempts made to interview Bill in the 30 years between Veronica going missing and his own death.
214. There existed multiple accounts of Bill being violent towards Veronica (and abusing young girls) and thus raising the possibility of suspicious circumstances underpinning Veronica's disappearance, but these lines of enquiry do not appear to have been pursued. It is also unfortunate, perhaps regarded so with the benefit of hindsight, that police supported the appearance of Veronica's daughters on a publicly aired television program pleading for Veronica's safe return to the family when the initial investigation into her disappearance had been so wholly lacking, and may instead have yielded information about the possibility of suspicious circumstances.
215. However, I accept this was done in good faith and that at that stage of the investigation, police members truly believed she could still be alive.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ See in this regard the evidence of Insp Combridge at inquest, T-60 lines 15-20 - Insp Combridge explained, in speaking of historic missing persons investigations, that "*missing persons investigations per se do suffer from a*

216. D/Sgt Wood's assumption of the case in 2007 was the turning point in the investigation. While he was directed to cease his investigations as part of Operation Belier, his appointment as Coronial Investigator in 2020 resulted in a highly detailed and comprehensive brief, which was of great assistance in my investigation. Unfortunately, by the time D/Sgt Wood commenced his review of the file, Bill was deceased and as such, he was unable to investigate the possibility that he murdered his wife beyond the accounts provided by friends and neighbours. This is a significant failure on the part of Victoria Police; a failure inherited by D/Sgt Wood, who was hampered from the start despite his own diligent investigative efforts over almost 20 years.
217. For completeness, I note that it is curious and deeply untimely that Veronica's death was only reported to the Coroner as a suspected death in June 2020, some 44 years after her initial disappearance. It is now over 50 years since Veronica went missing. The toll this has taken on Veronica's family – particularly her daughters – is incalculable. They have lived with the uncertainty of their mother's fate for decades, and the ambiguous grief and loss that they have faced, at times publicly, and at times in the quiet of their own private reflections, has undoubtedly been amplified by the astonishing length of the investigation. Referring to the work of Emeritus Professor Dr Pauline Boss, **The Missed Foundation** describes that for loved ones of the long-term missing, the lack of clarity complicates and delays the grieving process, resulting in an unresolved, continual grief commonly referred to as '*unending not-knowing*.' This enduring pain should not be compounded by delays of police, nor of Courts.
218. It is clear that, for Veronica's family, it has been. They describe the process as entailing "*clearly a dreadful investigation*". The trauma and grief that flowed from Veronica's disappearance has reverberated throughout three generations, and further, a whole community. The anguish of Veronica's loved ones cannot be understated.
219. Having so reflected, I must take pause and look to how such events can be prevented from ever happening again. In this regard, I am confident that changes to the Victoria Police

positive confirmation bias that of about 20,000 missing persons reports per annum in the recent past, 19,970 of them usually turn up. So we do suffer from a positive confirmation bias with these sort of things".

Manual processes underpinning long-term missing persons investigations, which now require a report to the Coroner at the 120-day mark, mean that fewer families will be waiting for answers for such a long period after their loved ones go missing. I consider the work over decades of Insp Combridge to have been invaluable in this respect, noting that he has worked tirelessly with his colleagues within Victoria Police and with other agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, as well as the Coroners Court itself, to ensure that there are robust processes and transparent milestones in place to support long-term missing persons (LTMPs) being reported to the Coroner as suspected deaths, where proof of life checks have yielded no evidence that a LTMP remains alive.

220. I am also heartened to hear that Victoria Police has made sweeping reforms to the way in which it approaches missing persons investigations in which a LTMP has faced sexual or family violence. I heard evidence at Inquest that police are better equipped to robustly investigate a LTMP's history of family violence in assessing risk, as well as in ensuring that any experience of family violence factors into ensuing investigations (including interviewing and investigating persons of interest in connection with the disappearance). While the present rates of violence against girls and women and ability of systems to respond appropriately remain an issue of deep concern to communities across Australia – and ought indeed to be treated as a national crisis – modern-day police investigations into LTMPs are far better placed to address the risk posed by a missing person's history of family violence and to better call into view the existence of any suspicious circumstances flowing from the actions of a violent partner or family member.
221. Despite these improvements, I have noted Insp Combridge's remarks at Inquest that there likely remain a number of outstanding historical LTMP cases that require report to the Coroner, that family violence investigations can be deeply complex, and that busy police members, who are often required to prioritise urgent frontline duties, would benefit from a centralised LTMP registry within police to provide guidance and oversight of the same. While I understand that Victoria Police has not been well-positioned to consider this step in the past due to other resourcing demands, it ought to be the case that, post-COVID-19, this important proposal can be revisited to ensure that those whose loved ones go missing have the best possible chance at a timely, robust and appropriately resourced investigation.

222. Remarkably, Victoria is the only jurisdiction without some kind of centralised missing persons registry. To this end, a pertinent recommendation will follow.

223. Finally, I have noted that there is no evidence before me of specific guidance for Victoria Police members on steps to take in following up purported sightings of LTMPs in the context of a missing person investigation. This issue, which was of great importance to Veronica's family and to a case of this nature, should be considered as a key aspect of the specialised guidance and advice provided to members by a centralised Missing Persons Registry.

RECOMMENDATION

Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act, I make the following recommendation:

- (i) That **Victoria Police** implement a centralised Missing Persons Registry and use the NSW model to inform the design and implementation of its model.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I convey my sincere condolences to Veronica's family and loved ones for their immeasurable pain in the face of these proceedings. I acknowledge the passage of time, now more than 50 years since Veronica's disappearance, and the ongoing grief and anguish her family have felt and continue to feel to this day. I thank them for actively participating in this process, providing information to D/Sgt Wood and for attending the inquest despite their deep concerns about the duration, nature and outcomes of the investigation. I also acknowledge the bravery of the victims of reported sexual abuse whose sad and troubling statements have formed part of the coronial investigation.

I thank D/Sgt Wood for his dedication and commitment to interviewing so many witnesses and exploring all investigative avenues, in an attempt to bring the investigation to a resolution. It is clear that, despite the failings of the initial investigation, D/Sgt Wood maintained a dedication to obtaining answers and to ensuring that, in its later stages, Veronica's missing person investigation was dealt with as thoroughly as it could be.

I also thank Counsel Assisting, Jess Syrjanen, Senior Coroner's Solicitor, for her exceptional assistance throughout the inquest, as well as the counsel and solicitors who represented the

interested parties, and witnesses. I also acknowledge and thank the Court's Legal Services staff and Registry for the invaluable assistance and support provided throughout the inquest.

ORDERS AND DIRECTIONS

Pursuant to section 49(2) of the Act, I direct the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to register Veronica Green's death, with her cause of death listed as '1(a) *Unascertained*'.

Pursuant to section 73(1B) of the Act, I order that this finding be published on the Coroners Court of Victoria website in accordance with the rules.

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Penny Green and Jacqui Wright, Senior Next of Kin

Stephen Sliwinski

Chief Commissioner of Police (C/- Victorian Government Solicitors Office)

Leading Senior Constable Helen Nugent (C/- Hall & Wilcox)

Inspector Anthony Combridge

National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, Australian Federal Police

Interpol DNA Unit

The Missed Foundation

Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine

Detective Sergeant Peter Folkes, NSW Police Missing Persons Registry

Detective Sergeant Allan Wood, Coronial Investigator

Signature:



**INGRID GILES
CORONER**

Date: 9 September 2026



NOTE: Under section 83 of the *Coroners Act 2008* ('the Act'), a person with sufficient interest in an investigation may appeal to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court against the findings of a coroner in respect of a death after an inquest. An appeal must be made within 6 months after the day on which the determination is made, unless the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal out of time under section 86 of the Act.
