

Formal Written Statement

1. Johanna Suze Veth states:
2. My full name is Johanna Suze Veth. I am a forensic scientist employed by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited, known as ESR, at Mt Albert, Auckland.
3. I have completed a Master of Science Degree with First Class Honours in Forensic Science in 2004 and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Pharmacology in 2001, both awarded by the University of Auckland. Since joining the Forensic Biology group of ESR in May 2002, I have worked as a technician and then as a scientist since June 2004, specialising in the area of forensic biology including DNA analysis. I have provided expert witness testimony on many occasions.
4. ESR is a Crown Research Institute and its functions include the provision of independent forensic testing and advice. The ESR forensic laboratories are accredited to an international standard in the field of Forensic Science Testing.¹
5. This statement supplements the statement I prepared on 29 October 2023 for the Commission of Inquiry into DNA Project 13.
6. I have been asked to read the 27 October 2023 statement prepared by Ms Susan Hedge, Counsel Assisting to the Sofronoff Inquiry. Specifically, I have been asked to review paragraphs 29 to 38, as they relate to my own involvement in the Sofronoff Inquiry, and state whether or not the account of the events recorded in those paragraphs align with my own recollections.
7. In order to aid my recollections, I have relied on emails sent and received during the relevant timeframe. Where I refer to specific times of the day, these are Aotearoa/New Zealand time.

Statement of Ms Hedge

8. I have read Ms Hedge's statement dated 27 October 2023.
9. Paragraphs 29 to 38 generally align with my own recollections. However, I can provide further details of the events that Ms Hedge refers to.
10. At paragraph 30, Ms Hedge states: *"In November 2022 Laura Reece raised a yield issue with me that I understood Ms Veth had raised with her."* I believe that this likely occurred on or around 14 November. Ms Reece and I had met that day to discuss, among other things, an email from Dr Wright which noted unusually low quantitation concentrations from two extraction positive controls from batches containing samples from the Blackburn case. Dr Wright was concerned that the low yields were related to a faulty batch of Proteinase K (Pro K), a critical reagent in the DNA extraction process.
11. Later that day Ms Reece forwarded an email that she had received from Ms Hedge on 22 September 2022. There was a document attached that outlined a quality incident where partial DNA profiling results were obtained from an amplification positive control and three extraction positive controls in the same

¹ ANAB, the ANSI National Accreditation Board provides accreditation services to the forensic laboratories of ESR to the international standard of ISO/IEC 17025. ANAB provides accreditation services to public and private sector organisations and is a subsidiary of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI.)

batch. It had been suggested that this issue may have been related to the faulty Pro K reagent. I refer to these events in my 29 October 2023 statement at paragraphs 14-16.

12. At paragraph 31 Ms Hedge states:

My best memory is that the issue raised concerned the fact that amongst positive extraction controls processed at the same time as samples related to the Blackburn case, those which had been processed using an automated extraction method had generally had a lower quantitation value than those that had been processed using the manual extraction method, suggesting a difference in yield between those two methods. Ms Veth was interested in ascertaining whether this was a wider issue, or just related to the Blackburn samples' associated positive controls.

13. To clarify, as at 14 November I was still unaware that there may have been an issue with a particular extraction method. I was primarily focussed on determining whether or not any samples had been affected by that faulty batch of Pro K. I did not realise that there may have been an issue with one of the extraction methods until the morning of 16 November 2022.

14. At paragraph 32 Ms Hedge discusses the request to Queensland Health to provide the quantitation values of all positive controls processed by the laboratory in 2012 and 2013. She further states:

I believe the data required was the quantitation values of all positive controls processed by the laboratory in 2012 and 2013. This led to the commentary in Ms Veth & Dr Budowle's report in paragraph [41] to [45] (Exhibit 218).

15. In actuality, it was these data in conjunction with another set of data contained in the spreadsheet "QP1300165446_all_samples Ext_Pos_Quant" that led me to believe that one of the extraction methods employed by the laboratory was producing lower than expected DNA yields. I refer to this discovery in my 29 October 2023 statement at paragraphs 23-27.

16. At paragraphs 34-35 Ms Hedge discusses being present at a meeting on with Mr McNevin and myself. I can confirm this meeting took place on 22 November 2022. I agree with her recollection of events and can confirm that Dr Wright was not present. I discuss this meeting in my 29 October 2023 statement at paragraphs 38-41.

17. At paragraph 36 Ms Hedge refers to another meeting that she attended with Ms Reece and myself. I can confirm that this meeting occurred on 22 November 2022 and that it preceded the meeting with Mr McNevin. I discuss this meeting at paragraph 37 of my 29 October 2023 statement.

18. Paragraph 38 of Ms Hedge's statement is correct.

I confirm the truth and accuracy of this statement. I make this statement with the knowledge that it is to be used in court proceedings. I am aware that it is an offence to make a statement that is known by me to be false or intended by me to mislead.



30 October 2023