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Slug-gate review

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Shane Patton has ordered a review into a police investigation that dismissed allegations of a corrupt forced shutdown of I Cook Foods.

Mr Patton launched the review on Friday 23 April after being urged to “personally intervene” in a letter-of-complaint from ICF director Ian Cook.

Mr Cook claimed the criminal investigation into Greater Dandenong Council and the Department of Health had been “derailed by

political interference”.

The review will be conducted by a police detective superintendent and overseen by an assistant commissioner.

The matter has been referred to the police’s Professional Standards Command.

“We take any claim of this nature extremely seriously and are looking further into the matter,” a Victoria Police spokesperson said.

ICF is pursuing a \$50 million civil lawsuit against the council and the Department of Health over the shutdown in February 2019.

The 30-year-old commercial catering busi-

ness alleges it was improperly closed as part of a health department investigation into a hospital patient’s death.

As a result the business was destroyed and 41 employees lost their jobs.

The saga has been popularly branded as ‘slug gate’ – since ICF alleged that a Greater Dandenong food inspector planted a live slug on the factory floor prior to the closure.

Victoria Police had investigated the allegations against council and health department officials of misconduct, perjury and perverting the course of justice.

On 7 April, it announced the case was closed, with no criminal charges laid.

However, a police briefing note has revealed that the initial police investigator stated it was evident to him “a level of corruption, misuse of office and a malicious prosecution” were involved in the case.

In June 2020, Detective Sergeant Ash Penry, of Greater Dandenong CIU, stated that he’d formed the view that the “prosecution of I Cook Foods was malicious” and its shutdown was “unlawful”.

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