

against the Garda Síochána, as is clear from the transcript, cannot be ruled out. The transcript is referred to at relevant points in this report. However its evidential value is low especially since the Group has been unable to interview the informant.

1.7 The Group had certain questions conveyed and put to the informant by his legal adviser. The informant is now in the Witness Security Programme of the Garda Síochána. The Group understands that these questions were put to him by his legal adviser but, despite repeated attempts to elicit replies, the Group never received any. The Group was told more than once by the informant's legal adviser that his client was not prepared to reply to its questions but that he hoped to be able to do so at some time in the future. It is now nine months since the Group's questions were first conveyed to the informant. The Group also requested through his legal adviser an interview with the informant but this was refused. It is deeply regrettable that the Group should have to report without having had replies to these questions or an opportunity to interview the informant but presentation of its report cannot be delayed indefinitely on the basis of nothing more than a vague prospect that these replies might be forthcoming or an interview agreed to at some unspecified time in the future.

1.8 The Group held its first meeting on 29 April 2002 and subsequently met on 62 other occasions. It met with the Ombudsman and her officials in July 2002. It also interviewed 25 persons involved with the matters raised in the Police Ombudsman's reports, including officers of the Garda Síochána, the PSNI and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Senator Martin Mansergh, former special adviser to the Taoiseach, and Dáil Deputy A. It interviewed some of them more than once and Detective Sergeant White on four occasions over a twelve month period. Although the Group is not a court or a tribunal of inquiry and has no powers of compellability, each person interviewed answered the questions put by the Group and in some instances provided further information, including written submissions. These submissions included copies of police reports and statements. The Group also sought and received reports in writing from some individuals whom it did