

**Mr Jim Wallace QC MSP.
Minister for Justice,
The Scottish Executive,
St Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
EDINBURGH. EH1 DG**

Dear Mr Wallace,

Shirley McKie V The Scottish Criminal Records Office

We, the undersigned, forensic experts in the field of fingerprint identification are writing to express our extreme concern about a matter we consider to have serious implications for our profession.

We have learned about an identification of a latent print in a murder case, allegedly coming from a police officer named Ms Shirley McKie.

We have studied the latent and the comparison print from the left thumb from Ms McKie

On every level of detail investigated the two prints show so many differences that we are convinced that the latent does not originate from her left thumb.

There are so many basic differences of a primary nature both in detail, location and relations between the two compared prints that we are astonished that any qualified expert or even an unqualified trainee could deliver a conclusion of identity

It is clear that Ms McKie should have been definitively excluded as a possible donor at an early stage of the comparison process.

Regardless of the method of identification that is applied there are some basic rules to be respected by any expert.

These include the principle that differences of ridgeflow, differences in location and the absence of minutia cannot exist between prints from the same source.

We acknowledge that where the quality of a latent print is so low that a positive identification cannot be made then expert opinions might differ if an attempt was made to speculate as to the possible donor.

The McKie print does not fall into this category.

The number and quality of the differences we have observed can be easily demonstrated to anyone and can only happen when comparing fingerprints from

completely different sources.

To identify these as from the same source or to deliver an opinion about identity is a gross mistake, nothing else.

We are deeply concerned that fingerprint techniques that have proved dependable for so many years and have served the judicial process so well in finding the truth for over a century have now been badly tainted.

To make such a mistake is critical. Not to recognise it after it comes to light turns it into a disaster for the victims and for everyone else involved.

It can be easily demonstrated and proven that the SCRO experts were clearly wrong in identifying the mark as Shirley McKie's and this makes the SCRO defence that it is a matter of opinion false and untenable.

We are also concerned that the victim was a police officer acting in the line of duty, that her accusers were expert witnesses working for the Crown Office and that such an injustice could happen again.

If not corrected this situation will continue to harm Ms McKie and her family.

If not admitted it will further undermine fingerprint evidence, the Scottish judicial system and the position and credibility of the SCRO.

We do not see this as a "battle of the experts" and are not intent on causing animosity between police organisations or countries.

This statement expresses our personal view as experts.

We are bound to our professional and ethical obligation to expose mistakes and to our professional duty to serve the community using our fingerprint expertise to ascertain the truth without fear or favour.

We appeal to you to use your authority and power to correct this mistake, stop injustice and prevent such a situation ever arising again.

Only this will end the agony and may create a future for all involved.

Yours sincerely,

Signed as per attached list.