

**INQUIRY INTO UNSOLVED MURDERS AND LONG-TERM
MISSING PERSONS CASES IN NEW SOUTH WALES
BETWEEN 1965 AND 2010**

Name: Mrs Sharon Robards

Date Received: 22 June 2026

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Committee: Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance

Re: Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases in New South Wales between 1965 and 2010

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1 Introduction

- The purpose of this submission is not intended to be critical of the current Unsolved Homicide Unit personnel, but to bring to light what I believe are deficiencies in policies, procedures and systems affecting the ability to solve long term unsolved cases.
- I hope this submission assists in finding a way to improve those policies, procedures and systems so more victims and their families can gain a sense of closure by remains being found and/or justice being served.
- My name is Sharon Robards. I am making this submission as the older sister of a long-term missing person, Tracey Leanne Valesini. Tracey's case is unsolved and with the NSW Unsolved Homicide Unit.
- I am the daughter of Sandra McSavaney and Barry Parrish. I am six years older than Tracey is, and we have the same mother. George Valesini is Tracey's father. I also have a brother who was a police officer at the time Tracey was reported missing. My brother was raised with our father. Our mum and George Valesini relationship spanned nineteen years. George Valesini raised me from the age of two. Tracey went missing after our mother left George.
- On the 18th December 1992 the Federal Police removed Tracey's two-year-old daughter from Tracey. That night the child was given to the child's father.
- Tracey attended two family custody hearings at Campbelltown Court, the last being on 8th January 1993. She failed to attend the next hearing scheduled on 12th February. The Court gave the child's father custody.
- Tracey was twenty at the time of her disappearance, and her body has never been recovered.
- In February 2006, the State Coroner returned a finding: *'Tracey died between December 1992 and December 1993 at Wentworth Falls of injuries inflicted upon her by another person'*.
- In 2017, the NSW Government offered a reward in relation to information leading to a conviction.
- In October 2022, Kim Fidden completed a review of Tracey's case.
- In March 2026 myself and Investigating Reporter Ashlea Hansen were given access to some documents from the Coronial Inquest.

- Before newspaper articles and a multimedia video was released titled, *Left in the Cold - Finding Tracey Valesini* the Unsolved Homicide Unit were contacted by Newscorp to see if they wanted to provide any input. They declined and issued the following statement.
- Reported in the *Daily Telegraph* dated 15th April 2026, a NSW Police spokesperson said in regards to Tracey's case it, "*remained an open and monitored investigation. Following the 2022 review, several additional lines of inquiry were identified including potential re-interviews and re-testing of forensic exhibits.*"
- From the day George Valesini reported Tracey missing, there have been many delays, frustrations, and disappointments regarding the investigation of my sister's case and missed opportunities.

2 Summary of Issues in Tracey Valesini's Case

- Sadly, Tracey's own dysfunctional family was the cause for Tracey going unreported for four years, then her mother and father refused to face the reality of the situation for a period of time.
- I feel that contributed to a bias and a rush to judgement within the police force. I feel they failed to consider the context surrounding Tracey's disappearance without having all the facts, evidence, or context when Tracey was reported missing.
- Police officers were not objective and trained to deal with complex family issues, medical conditions, or family members who are in complete denial that their loved one is missing.
- This caused a delay of fifteen months before anyone who should have been considered a person of interest to be interviewed and any other person of interest to be fully identified.
- People contacting Crime Stopper are not being followed up with.
- Informants are not having formal statements taken, at least one now for over eight years.
- The first review after the Coronial Inquest started around fourteen years later, took more than two years to complete, and is still awaiting investigation more than years later.
- The Unsolved Homicide Unit on and off over the years has been un-contactable with the number I was given to contact them, once for a period of around two years.
- Information sharing with family members is scarce and hindered for no logical reason.

3.1(1 a) current and emerging developments in policy, practice and technology in relation to such crimes

On 9 May 2001, during a forensic examination of a bathroom, police located blood splatter consistent with a gunshot, which police secured for further examination.

On 5th July 2017, when the reward was offered, Det Insp Leggat said, "A DNA analysis of the blood was unsuccessful but the sample is being reanalysed with improved technology."

I recently asked if the blood could be retested and was told, being found in the bathroom could mean it came from shaving or something. I have since seen crime scene photos. I don't believe shaving would result in blood found where it was found.

It is unclear if the blood has been retested at any time after the Coroner's Inquest. Why is the answer to my question hidden behind a vague comment that doesn't make sense?

It has been reported the past few years that minute traces of blood can now be tested in a non-destructive way. The statement provided by police in April stated, "... *several additional lines of inquiry were identified including potential re-interviews and **re-testing of forensic exhibits.***"

If that re-testing established what they couldn't when it was tested prior to the Coroner's Inquest, in conjunction with other evidence I know is available to the police, it would be strong circumstantial evidence. I wonder why if it was identified there was the potential to re-test after all these years that is delayed?

When the reward was offered Det Insp Leggat also said, "*They were going to throw everything at the investigation.*"

One informant called Crime Stoppers that July in 2017. They contacted me three months later after the police did not follow up the call. This person's information collaborates previous and recent information the police have received. The police have never formally interviewed this person. To date, all they did with that witness was bury them in a system waiting for a review and maybe a later investigation.

During the Coronal Inquest in 2006 the Coroner said if they could get information from a particular person, "*it would be quite an event.*" That information has now been offered by a different person in 2017.

Current policy in regards to collecting and gathering information, appears to be to note the information police gained in a database, and not conducting formal interviews with people who would be critical witnesses. I am aware of at least two other people who have contacted the police recently and also have collaborating information have also not had statements taken. This is clearly a failure to act on securing evidence.

At the time my sister's review happened there was a policy of not reviewing cases after they are returned from the Coroner's Office until around five years, and procedures to determine what witnesses should be followed up.

I understand there is apparently now a protocol that commenced in November last year, where they will 'attempt' to review every case every two years. I don't understand how this can possibly be true or practically put in practice with so many more cases now, because of what I have seen with my sister's case and the staffing level in the Unsolved Homicide Unit.

I think it is also important to note, at least in Tracey's case, a review is not a reinvestigation, but a compilation of potential investigative work since a Coronial Inquest or a previous review. Once completed because of a lack of resources, they appear to simply become a monitored case, and someday someone might act on evidence collected by telephone or Crime Stoppers.

It is noted in the *STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES Unsolved Homicide Team 2022*. *"One of the key factors in triggering an open inactive unsolved case to an open active case, is advances in forensic technology, witness coming forward, investigative opportunities develop with persons of interests."*

If the above procedure is 'one' of the key factors of triggering an inactive unsolved case to an open active case, what other factors are needed?

The NSW Police have stated in April my sister's case, *"remained an open and monitored investigation. Following the 2022 review, several additional lines of inquiry were identified including potential re-interviews and re-testing of forensic exhibits."*

What is the difference if any between, *"an open inactive unsolved case to an open active case,"* to what they called Tracey's case this year that had the same key triggering factors, *"an open and monitored investigation."*?

It appears in Tracey's case 'monitored' means waiting to be prioritised to be investigated. To use the word 'investigation' appears to contradict the meaning of the word. Tracey's case is not being investigated. No evidence is being gathered, but leads where evidence is yet to be collected.

The police response clearly states *"several additional lines of inquiry were identified."* They have recently been given many more lines of inquiries that I know of. What do they need to act on what they have identified? Resources? Funding?

I think an important question should be how many cases have investigating opportunities and when will those cases be investigated?

I understand 'prioritising' to mean, those cases who have the highest chance of being solved. These cases can't be solved without witnesses' statements, except possibly by someone directly confessing.

Why would police not collect witnesses' statements when they hold a confession or admission of guilt from a person of interest? I am aware of three.

It appears that the credibility of some witnesses are questioned, without testing the truth of a statement by securing that statement and comparing it to known facts or other witness statements and determining if it is credible. It is also possible that police are not acting on information due to bias because previous information pointed to different persons of interest or motive.

How many cases will really go cold because previously available leads no longer exist because they were never secured? How many families of missing persons have or might pass away and never knew there was potential to solve their case?

I think another question should be what happens to cases that are reviewed and are considered not to be solvable or a priority? What happens to those families? Are they advised when the review has been undertaken and the findings of the review?

Taking a look at the triage and review process might find a way to streamline what appears to be a convoluted system lacking funding or resources to move through the processes: From deciding what cases should be prioritised to be reviewed, being reviewed, prioritised by given a rating to determine what cases will be investigated first, then one day being reinvestigated.

There also appears to be a lack of staffing to support the current system, which appears to make the entire review process like playing Russian roulette with case files.

The current system also clearly impedes real time investigating into leads. It appears on paper to be an orderly system, but comparing it to things that have happened in Tracey's investigation since the reward was offered, it seems it has placed hindering restrictions on how police operate and undermines and jeopardises the potential to solve a case.

Investigations appear confined to what is put directly in front of them, possibly a call to a potential witness sometimes, and then noted in their database. Available leads, but not yet facts. There doesn't appear to be the ability for police to think outside the boundaries of the current system. Although orderly, procedural it seems to be limiting, and doesn't allow for investigators to search for what else there could be, not explicitly already on record.

It is also noted in the *STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES 2022* that family members should not be contacted prior to a review. It appears the only purpose this serves, when it comes to family members who are not suspects, is to avoid transparency and hinder accountability.

Tracey's last review took two years to complete, and three years later investigating opportunities have not been acted on to secure evidence such as witnesses statements or exhaust leads given that I know of. One can only imagine how many have come through Crime Stoppers in all these years and were either lost in the system or failed to be acted on.

Although, I was given the courtesy to some degree that a review had started, which was around 14 years years after the Coroner's Inquest, to deny family that opportunity is cruel. It is also a failure of the system that a case had to wait that long for a review.

The current review system is clearly not reinvestigating a case, but a paper gathering exercise with no certain path to investigating despite evidence or witnesses coming forward with either new information or collaborating information.

The current system doesn't appear to allow all cases to be treated fairly, with every new reviewed case, potentially delaying previous reviewed cases.

I know my sister's case is not the only one waiting for three years after it has been determined there are investigation opportunities. In 2018 SBS reported, *"About 500 cold case homicides in NSW from the past four decades will be reopened and looked at with the benefit of fresh eyes and cutting edge technology as police attempt to catch the killers."*

During the King's Birthday Honours List this year, Detective Inspector Warren was one of the officers who gained an honour. In a NSW Police statement outlining his long career it stated in part: *"Detective Inspector Warren is responsible for overseeing and directing the NSWPF response to unsolved homicides, including unsolved suspicious deaths and missing persons cases. This involves the difficult and complicated task of managing, monitoring, assessing and prioritising **more than eight hundred unsolved homicide cases across NSW.**"*

It is clearly a difficult and complicated task. And looking at the increase in numbers reported over the years, a system that seems to be buckling with each new case entering the system.

Cases are shuffled around as if they are a deck of cards, competing with each other to be prioritised.

There also appears to be a policy of not answering phones of other detectives if they are on leave or have been moved to another department. The telephone number I have for the cold case detectives was only answered once or twice in a two year period when Kim Fidden was moved to another department and rarely if Kim Fidden was on leave. Calls are often not returned. This has been an ongoing issue since I first started contacting the cold case team in 2009.

Also knowing what I know about what happens when someone calls Crime Stoppers I think the system needs to be looked at. How does an informant give vital information, such as what happened with Tracey's case, not get a follow up in three months? And a recent one hasn't been contacted in over a month?

Why isn't admissible information collected in a timely manner?

I recently gave information to the Unsolved Homicide Unit twice about persons who had contacted Crime Stoppers regarding information to do with Tracey's case and the officer didn't seem to be able to find the reports.

With the Crime Stopper system and any other system used by police I am wondering if the system funnelling Crime Stopper reports, if there is the ability to search for a missing person using phonetic spellings? Or if police would even consider doing so?

Back in the late 1990s the first informant contacted police twice but had phonetic spelling of Tracey's surname. It wasn't until they saw a media report a year later they realised the correct spelling.

Dealing with the Coroner's Court

I applied around November 2025 with Ashlea Hansen for the Coronial Documents and was granted access much quicker than I thought in February this year. But it wasn't an easy process to access the documents. I understand they have a policy to provide support to families. I was contacted on Friday night via email before I was due to attend the following week by the Coordinator from the (CIST) Coronial Information and Support Team.

She advised me, *"at this stage the team cannot allocate an officer to assist you on Wednesday due to our limited capacity."* She also said, *"Based off the nature and volume of the content, I would recommend we allocate an hour or two, over two separate days, rather than viewing it all at once."*

I tried to call back but she had finished for the evening. Monday she was not working and I kept going back and forth with a person at the Coronial office and was told there was no-one available or guaranteed for any day I had previously said I was going to attend after I was told the days I gave I would be accommodated.

I eventually got a hold of the CIST coordinator and explained I couldn't cancel accommodation without losing funds, and I am due to leave Tuesday morning because of the distance I need to travel. I also advised her I didn't feel the need for any support and that my husband would be there with me.

The CISP coordinator emailed later that day, told me a room had been booked for me and gave me of the Court Officer would give me the brief. and said, ***"The Coronial information and Support Program is not a mandatory service and I acknowledge your worries about staffing impacting on your ability to view. I am guided by you in terms of whether you would like our assistance and how involved you would like us to be. Some families prefer to view the files independently, whilst others find it helpful to have support present and navigate the content."***

On arriving at lunchtime I was taken into the room and given a folder and advised I could set up my computer. After about 45 minutes doing that and having a brief look at the brief, the Acting Registrar abruptly came in and said I had to be supervised and had to sit in the reception area.

This area is only about 3x3 metres. The spot they allocated me was part of the reception desk only large enough to hold a vanilla folder (about the size of the brief) or my laptop. In the end I had to put the brief on the tiny spot on the counter, a note pad on my lap, and tried to take notes. It was an impossible situation, embarrassing, and ultimately very upsetting.

It wasn't what was in the brief that was upsetting. I had already been told what happened to Tracey, it was being put in a situation that made the task I had intended impossible to do and a total lack of empathy from the person who put me there. When I left that afternoon I was told I could sit in the same spot the next day.

The following day I arrived and was given the brief and sat down at the same spot for about ten minutes when the Senior Project Manager apologised for what had happened, told me he was taking me to a room, and I burst out crying. I had a wonderful CISP employee sit with me that day in case I wanted any assistance with the information I was going through.

By my understanding there are or were only three CISP people available for NSW. Not sure who got it so wrong that day but what happened to me should not have happened. And should not happen to anyone else. If families must be supervised they clearly need more staff or maybe if they feel victims' families can't follow the law, put cameras in the viewing rooms.

Fortunately, I gained most of the brief because Ashlea Hansen was afforded the luxury of sitting in their office to take notes when she went over a few days prior to me arriving.

The other issue that makes no sense was we were only granted the ability to view the documents and take notes. Was it to hinder full transparency? I can't understand why we couldn't be given copies, if we were allowed to take notes and be able to transcribe what the folder contained. All it did was make it time consuming and costly on my behalf due to accommodation costs and because I live eight hours away in country NSW. Letting me have a copy of that brief doesn't put any monitored investigation at risk anymore than me being able to take notes.

I have since told a couple of people that I accessed the files and they asked me if I was given boxes to go through. If there are boxes, I don't understand why we were not given access to information holding the information compiled in the Brief of Evidence and other evidence not used. It doesn't seem a very transparent exercise to say this is what we believed needed to be given to the coroner and more than twenty years down the track you can't see everything, which was collected from 1997 to 2006.

I understand those boxes are likely held with the NSW Unsolved Homicide Unit.

Giving family members or the media partial information that led to the Coroners Inquest, is denying family members and the media full scrutiny of any investigation. The Grimmer case is the perfect example of a statement, a confession, being found decades after it was taken, and after the Coroner's Inquest.

I had been aware of the first informant in Tracey's case since the inquest and information they had told Tracey's father. On reading the person's statement, it was clear there were omissions in the statement, which would further collaborate the second informant's testimony. The only explanation there can be for this is that the detective who filed the brief never went back to the first informant who made the statement in 1999 prior to submitting the Brief of Evidence in 2006.

It was also submitted via the same detective they believed Tracey's body was transported to Queensland. That informant does not say that is the location, but provided a name of a place that doesn't appear to exist anywhere in Australia as a location but as entities now, which did not exist back then.

4 The progress of police investigations into the unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases including but not limited to Task Force

- 18th December the Federal Police removed Tracey Valesini's two-year-old daughter from Tracey's care. The child was given to the father that night.
- Tracey attended two family custody hearings at Campbelltown Court, the last being a hearing on 8th January 1993. Tracey failed to attend the next hearing scheduled on 12th February. The father of the child was given custody.
- George Valesini reported Tracey missing on 4th June 1997. Our brother took the initial report off George Valesini.
- George Valesini contacted me a week later to tell me he reported Tracey missing.
- A couple of months later I went into Westmead Police to check if George had really reported Tracey missing. I was given the date George reported her missing and told the police I thought George might be involved and was told they would contact Macquarie Fields Police and have them call me back.
- After a couple of months after not hearing back I contacted Macquarie Fields Police and was told to call the Missing Persons Unit.
- I then contacted, Salvation Army Missing Person Unit, and the Department of Community Services, and people who had contact with George the prior four years. It became very clear George Valesini had told me, other people, and the missing person units different reasons for taking so long to report Tracey missing.
- Tracey's file with the Department of Community Services contained references that Tracey had been subjected to domestic violence.
- From the moment I contacted Macquarie Fields Police in 1997 with concerns about them not investigating, I was being shunted from the Missing Persons Unit to

detectives, then back to the Missing Persons Unit, then back to the detectives, and back again to Missing Person's Unit for more than a year.

- In August 1998 a young constable at Macquarie Fields Police was given Tracey's file.
- On the 7th September, the night before I met the constable I told him beyond many discrepancies in George Valesini's stories, I told him why I thought my stepfather might have hurt my sister. He said, "I don't want to make a statement like that, when your sister's case has been through three police officers' hands, including your brother's, and they did nothing."
- The police interviewed Tracey's daughter's father and George Valesini the next week, around fifteen months after George Valesini reported Tracey missing
- Arthur James Mackenzie, known as Jock Mackenzie's name as well as another person of interest name was given to police. Tracey was believed to be living with Jock and his wife, and the wife's brother.
- The first police plea for information occurred around 30th September 1998 in a local newspaper. Police believed due to George and my mum that Tracey may have moved interstate and they had no concerns for her welfare.
- Sometime in 1998 the first informant contacted the police twice and gave the phonetic spelling surname of Tracey Valesini as, "VALACINI." The detective could not locate Tracey's file.
- In October 1998 Campbelltown police tried to locate two persons of interest.
- August 1999 a statement was given from the first informant after they saw an article about Tracey and realised the spelling of her surname. It included current persons of interest.
- On May 9 2001, police executed a search warrant at Tracey's former home. A forensic examination uncovered blood spatter in the bathroom.
- In June 2005 a person of interest was interviewed.
- A closed Coronial Inquest was held in February 2006.
- In 2009, I started to call the Cold Case Detectives. I was constantly told someone would call me back, and they never did. One Police officer said one day, "It's been to a Coroner's Court. Why should we do anything? It took you guys four years to report her missing."
- Shortly after that comment, either in 2009 or 2010, Kim Fidden became our contact.
- In October 2010, I put a post on Tracey's Facebook page, to try to find Tracey's daughter, to give what belongings I had of her mother's. A family member of Tracey's daughter's father wrote on Tracey's page naming Jock Mackenzie and wrote a cryptic message regarding where they believed information could be found regarding Tracey.
- A day or two after, the posts were removed. Another person claimed to know why the Federal Police were involved in the removal of Tracey's daughter from her custody. Around the same time I put a picture of a woman and Tracey taken a few months before Tracey was last seen, on the page and someone had facebook remove it. This woman was someone the police could not find prior to the Coroner's Inquest.

- When I told Kim Fidden about the Facebook posts, she had me email copies of all the posts and said she was going to follow up on them.
- I have been told that the report made to the Federal Police was a false and deceptive report and whoever made the report could be prosecuted.
- On the 5th July 2017, the NSW Government announced a \$100,000 reward for information..
- They also named for the first time four persons of interest, including Jock Mackenzie.
- I recently discovered that the woman in the photo removed from facebook was only questioned in July 2017.
- In September 2017, I was contacted by a person who contacted Crime Stoppers back in July when the reward was offered.
- Three years after the second informant contacted me a review of Tracey's case began by Kim Fidden. This review commenced after 14th December 2020.
- In July 2022 someone contacted me and told me they had heard how Tracey was killed and why she was killed.
- The review was finished in October 2022
- Then it took another four months for supervisors to review the review in March 2023.
- I spoke to Kim Fidden on and off until October 2023. I was told then there wasn't a plan yet in regards to investigating the new leads. She told me she was told to tell me I might not be told when they start their investigation.
- On 21st January 2024, Jock Mackenzie died aged 73.
- I never spoke again to Kim Fidden after I did in October 2023, until around two years later in October 2025. In that two year period, I could not get a hold of Kim Fidden or anyone in the Cold Case Department to tell them new information I had gained.
- No one answered her phone in that time apart from once or twice. And when asked to speak to Kim they said she was out of the office. When Kim Fidden returned, she told me she had been in another department since I last spoke to her. She told me she would speak to her Sergeant about Tracey's case.
- On the 30th of January 2026, I was told there are currently no plans to investigate.
- Since recent media coverage in April this year, other people have come forward with collaborating evidence and as of this date one has not had a call back from Crime Stoppers and none have had formal statements taken including the second informant.

5. Personal Experience

When Tracey's dad told me Tracey had never gained her daughter back after she was taken by the Federal Police, I did not believe Tracey was still alive. I did not believe she would willingly give the custody of her daughter to the father.

When I first contacted the police in regards to my concerns over Tracey's father and the father of her daughter, I found the police not objective when dealing with what was a complex family situation.

A year after Tracey was reported missing, before I met with police, I had a fallout with our mother over Tracey. Mum refused to believe Tracey was missing and believed George knew where Tracey was. I became estranged for nine years from my mother and never spoke to George again from the night he told me he had reported Tracey missing.

The police were very reluctant to investigate Tracey as a missing person, firstly, due to our brother taking the initial report off Tracey's father. That same lack of objectivity increased after they eventually spoke to George Valesini, Tracey's ex-partner, and our mother.

When the police interviewed me, I gave them a ten page document about George's past and why I thought he may have hurt Tracey. I also told them that our mother had been with George nineteen years before leaving him. Over these years, mum and George had a volatile relationship, and that when mum often threatened to leave George, he would tell her, "I will take Tracey and you will never see her again."

Tracey went missing after mum left George. And for many reasons, beyond the scope of this Inquiry, I was convinced either George or Tracey's ex-partner had killed her.

The last time I spoke to George he told me he spoke to Tracey the night before she was due to go to court and she expressed fear of something or someone and that she never turned up to court.

When I mentioned that to the officer who did the interview, he said, "Well, that's not what," the ex-partner said. Ex-partner said, "Tracey never turned up to any court hearings, except the last one and he was given custody."

That wasn't objective, nor was what the ex-partner said were facts. I now know the same officer discovered the following month that Tracey's ex-partner had not stated facts around her attending custody hearings. Yet, no one ever went back to Tracey's ex-partner to question his version of events.

George told the police he didn't think anything had happened to Tracey. Maybe she was interstate. Mum, a few days later, said the same thing.

I told the officer that didn't make any sense.

The officer responded with, "Both George and your mother think it's a possibility."

I also now know that George did tell them Tracey had expressed a fear that he might be hurt.

The officer's manner of speaking, his tone, told me he completely discounted the possibility that something had happened to Tracey because of the statements of two men who at that stage should have been considered persons of interest. He also didn't consider the possibility mum was in complete denial that something had happened to her youngest daughter. Our mother would remain in denial for a period of time.

I will forever feel guilty that after Tracey told me the Federal Police took her daughter, I wrongly assumed she gained back custody of her daughter and was just moving on with her life. I had gone to live with my dad aged sixteen and never seen a great deal of Tracey over the next few years, due to living in different states. It was only really a year or so prior, that she would contact me or I would see her occasionally.

I had been speaking to George over those years before he reported Tracey missing, and thought he was just trying to find out where mum was. He never once expressed any concern for Tracey's welfare or mentioned Tracey was attending custody hearings and failed to turn up to the last one.

Lack of empathy from an officer in the Cold Case Division was still on display in 2009, seventeen years after Tracey was last seen, when I asked them if there was any progress with Tracey's case. They said, "There's been an investigation, and it's been to the Coroner. It took four years for you guys to report her missing. Why should we do anything?"

The Coronial Inquest in 2006 was a closed inquest, no witnesses were questioned and an open finding to her death. There was no resolution beyond which Tracey was determined to have been killed. No one had been held accountable. Tracey's body had not been recovered.

Hopefully, the current culture of the police has altered somewhat to be more objective in the information they receive and empathic to all family members and especially towards who might actually be a victim of a crime: The person who has been reported missing.

George was showing cognitive decline in the years prior to our mum leaving him. Hindsight tells me it was that decline, which caused the delay in telling me about Tracey not turning up to court and him taking so long to report Tracey missing. The conflicting information he would tell everybody, I believe, was the result of his progressing dementia. Within a decade of reporting Tracey missing, he had no memory of anybody including Tracey. He ultimately died of the disease.

It is impossible to explain all the emotions you go through over thirty years. But as each year passes a form of a different desperation grows each year. The current system is touted adequate and it certainly is not for all families of long term missing persons. There have been a handful of high moments, such as when the reward was offered, and when I have heard from people who do have information. Only, for those high moments to come crashing down simply because the system is broken. Justice seems possible in Tracey's case

but not much is happening, which will help hold someone responsible for what happened to her.

After the second informant gave information our mum kept pushing for a review. It was also the first time I truly believed George was not involved in what happened to Tracey. The second informant story was too similar to the first for it not to be true.

Our mother and Tracey's father both passed away in 2019 not knowing what happened to their youngest daughter.

I could understand inaction by the police if they didn't have good leads to follow. But knowing what was and is available to them from witnesses is maddening. I imagine if I had never been contacted or given some information, the review I had to plead and begged for likely still wouldn't have happened. I wonder how many families think the police have no leads when they exist and don't know the potential closure of their loved ones' cases may never be given any priority?

When I found out that the review had been completed and police believed they had investigating opportunities I was excited that finally after all these years there was the possibility they would be able to hold someone responsible.

It is a system I have become disillusioned with knowing unless police are able to reinvestigate my sister's case it can never go anywhere. A review under the current system for cases that are not truly cold is meaningless when undertaken without the full intention of reinvestigating when leads have been discovered or gathered.

When I was told I could access those coronial documents I went from excitement to extreme sadness. I didn't think I would be given access because trying to gain information from the police is like pulling teeth. I also thought I gained access because they had given up on Tracey's case. I hope that isn't the case, because I won't ever give up trying to find her.

I was thirty-three when I was told Tracey never turned up to that court hearing. I turned sixty this year and because of the current system my sister's case is locked in and the slow progress of investigating, I fear myself and Tracey's daughter may never see justice; let alone recover her body.

5. Conclusion

I thank the Committee for holding this Inquiry into the long term unsolved cold cases. I hope the submissions supplied to the Committee identifies ways to improve the review process and future investigations.

6. Permissions and Confidentiality

I consent to this submission being published with my name only (without my street address, suburb, or telephone number) as persons of interest may feel an incentive to locate me.

Signature

Sharon Robards