

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

Name: Mr Luke Bartley

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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

1. Introduction

I am making this submission as a MISSING PERSON.

2. Summary of Key Points

2.1 Time I was Missing

- In August of 2025, I personally went missing
- Due to ongoing personal struggles with my mental health, I left my family home, with the intentions of ending my life
- Before leaving, I wrote (*and hid*) 3 letters – 1 each for my wife, daughter and son
- I made the decision to travel to QLD, as I knew it would be difficult for my family and friends to locate me
- Within 3 days, I started getting approached by members of the QLD Public, advising me my wife and best friend were trying to locate me
- I continued moving around different locations in QLD in an attempt to find a location where I would not be found
- A couple of days later, I was approached by QLD Police
- They advised me that my wife had reported me missing, and was concerned for my well being
- I advised the Officer that I was fine, and taking a few days to clear my head
- QLD Police advised QLD Health needed to conduct a Mental Health Assessment of me
- QLD Health asked me questions around why I had left, and how I was feeling at that present moment
- I advised them I was fine, and taking a few days to clear my head, just as I had with QLD Police
- They asked me if I was taking my medication
- I opened my medication bag and showed them the contents – *which included my meds*
- Neither QLD Health, nor QLD Police checked whether I had in fact been taking my medication
- QLD Health advised QLD Police that I was in a 'Good Mental State' and was not at risk of 'Self Harm'
- After QLD Health left, QLD Police advised they would be letting me go, but urged me to go home as my family and friends were worried about me
- They further advised me that they would contact my wife and advise her that I had been located, and that I was no longer considered a missing person
- I then moved on to another location – *contemplating whether to go home, or whether I was going to continue with my plan of ending my life*

2.2 Ways I Used the 'System' to my advantage

- 2018 was the first time I had gone missing under similar circumstances detailed above:
 - *Due to ongoing personal struggles with my mental health, I left my family home, with the intentions of ending my life*
- I travelled to a location within NSW that I was familiar with
- I tied a noose, and attached it to a tree
- Upon attempting to end my life, the tree branch broke and I fell to the ground
- I sat under the tree for an unknown period – *contemplating whether I should "try again"*

- I reflected on the last few months and the key reasons that brought me to that exact moment
- *I had financial issues, brought about by an employer who consistently did not pay me correctly; I was owed money in unpaid wages; and I had fallen behind on my bills*
- I decided to confront my previous employer, and demand payment of all wages that were owed to me
- Unbeknownst to me, someone at my previous workplace contacted NSW Police
- NSW police advised them I was registered as a Missing Person, and that they were on their way
- Once they arrived, NSW Police explained that given the circumstances, they needed to take me to the hospital on a mandatory 'Mental Health' hold
- It was during this time, that I was made aware of the rules around a mandatory Mental Health hold, as both the Police and the hospital provided me with this information
- Police do not have the power to override a Mental Health Assessment completed by a Mental Health Professional
- I knew exactly what I needed to say to convince QLD Health that I was "OK", to avoid QLD Police being able to impose a mandatory 'Mental Health' hold on me
- After learning of the issues faced by my family and friends with reporting me missing in 2018, I knew there would be no urgency from NSW Police in taking a formal Missing Person's Report
- Because I am a 6'4 male, Police automatically assume that I can 'take care of myself'
- I am familiar with cross-border and jurisdiction policing issues – *hence why I travelled to QLD*

3. Responding to the Terms of Reference

3.1 Data Fragmentation and Information Silos

- Case information is often spread across different police units, and/or jurisdictions
- Limited data integration, reducing the ability to identify links between cases (*State to State*)

3.2 Resource Constraints and Prioritisation Issues

- Competing operational demands within policing agencies
- A 6'4 male going missing would not be prioritised the same as other cases

3.3 Socioeconomic and Systemic Bias

- Disparities in Media attention and Investigative priority (*male to female missing persons*)
- Disproportionate impact on Indigenous Australians, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals in regional or remote areas, individuals with mental health issues
- Reduced advocacy capacity for some families/genders

3.4 Inter-Agency Coordination Challenges

- Gaps in coordination between Police Jurisdictions (*state vs interstate*) and Law enforcement
- Delays or barriers in information sharing and collaboration

3.9 Legal and Procedural Barriers

- Cross-Border and Multi-Jurisdiction Policing
- Access to Social Media accounts, bank records, phone records, etc

4. Personal Experience

I was able to manipulate the very system meant to protect me, to my advantage – knowing that NSW and QLD Police had absolutely no authority, once I "convinced" QLD Health that I was "OK".

Despite my wife and best friend strenuously advising NSW Police that I was NOT OK, and that they knew what I planned on doing – QLD Police still had NO option but to let me walk away.

Had my wife and best friend not found me, then continued finding me despite my repeated attempts to "not be found", I would not be here today writing this submission.

I would be in QLD somewhere, with no real chance of them ever finding me and bringing me home.

5. Identified Gaps, Challenges, and Systemic Issues

- Police response and coordination
- 'Cross-Border' and 'Multi-Jurisdiction' Policing for both Missing Person and Homicide investigations
- Information sharing between agencies
- Support for families
- Data collection and reporting
- Media engagement; and intimidation of families seeking to engage the media to create a Podcast
- Assumptions towards Missing Persons (*mental health; reason for going missing; physical appearance; socioeconomic factors*)
- Legislative barriers (*presumption of death; accessing financial accounts; accessing social media accounts*)
- Mismanagement of key evidence

6. Recommendations

- Establishment of dedicated cold case review frameworks within policing agencies
- Greater emphasis on victim and family engagement policies, including, but not limited to, regular updates and transparency
- Introduction of inter-agency data sharing protocols across jurisdictions
- Legislative support for post-conviction and historical case reviews
- Moves toward mandatory cold case review timelines
- Increased recognition of missing persons as potential homicide cases earlier in investigations
- Expansion of national databases and cross-border cooperation
- Policy discussions around retention and re-testing of forensic evidence
- Utilise the expertise of Retired, and/or Ex-Serving Law Enforcement Officers, Private Investigators, and Researchers

7. Conclusion

These gaps and systemic issues underscore the need for coordinated reform, sustained resourcing, and the consistent use of modern investigative practices. Addressing these challenges is essential to improving outcomes in Missing, Long-Term Missing, and Unsolved Murder cases, and to ensuring fair and equitable access to justice.

I thank the Committee for examining this critical issue and trust that these insights will assist in improving outcomes for Missing Persons.

8. Permissions and Confidentiality

I consent to the publication of this submission under my name, and welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee.

9. Signature

Luke Bartley