

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unsolved Murders and Long-Term Missing Persons Cases in New South Wales (1965–2010)

Anonymous Submission

1 April 2026

Committee: Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance

1. Introduction

I make this submission as a person who knew Kylee-Ann Schaffer from early childhood and remained connected with her through adolescence and young adulthood. My observations are based on a combination of personal experience, publicly available information, and information shared with me over time.

My perspective is based on:

- personal knowledge of Kylee, her family, and her peer group, and familiarity with her circumstances
- direct conversations at the time of her disappearance
- attempted interactions with police
- professional experience in community services and crisis response
- long-term observation of the case and its impact over more than 20 years

This submission is provided to assist the Inquiry in understanding systemic issues associated with missing persons investigations in regional New South Wales.

This submission does not make allegations against any individual. It is based on personal knowledge, observed inconsistencies, and long-term community context, and is intended to highlight systemic gaps rather than establish specific factual findings.

2. Summary of Key Points

- The disappearance does not appear to have been treated as a high-risk case despite multiple indicators
- Key locations were not secured as potential crime scenes
- Critical evidence was lost while in police custody
- Witness accounts were reported to be inconsistent and do not appear to have been systematically reconciled or tested against an objective timeline
- There were delays in reporting, search, and response
- An objective, evidence-based timeline does not appear to have been established
- Potentially relevant contextual information, including victim reports, does not appear to have been consistently identified, assessed, and integrated into the broader investigative framework
- These factors collectively may reduce the likelihood of resolution

3. Background and Case Context

At the time of her disappearance, Kylee was 19 years old. She was independent, socially engaged, and had clear short-term and future plans, including future study enrolment, work commitments, and social arrangements the following day.

From my direct knowledge, she was disciplined, responsible, and future-focused, and not someone I would have expected to disengage from her life without explanation.

In the period leading up to her disappearance, she had expressed some concerns about aspects of her living situation, including a sense of reduced control over her environment and who was present, as well as a desire to regain stability.

The broader social environment at the time included overlapping peer groups, limited supervision, and the presence of substance use, all of which may have impacted both events and subsequent recollections.

These factors indicate environmental stress but do not suggest a voluntary disappearance.

4. Timeline and Circumstances of Disappearance

Kylee attended a social gathering on the night prior to her disappearance.

Available information indicates:

- The number of attendees is unclear and accounts vary
- Individuals came and went throughout the night
- Reports suggest interpersonal tensions occurred
- Accounts of events differ significantly between sources

No consistent or reliable reconstruction of the evening exists.

Morning of Disappearance

The commonly reported narrative suggests Kylee left in the morning for a walk. However:

- Reported accounts of this event do not align in detail
- Descriptions of her actions differ across available information
- Accounts vary regarding what she was wearing, what she did prior to leaving, and who last saw her
- There is inconsistency in reported accounts regarding the direction she allegedly travelled
- Some accounts appear to have changed over time or been withdrawn

Based on available reported information, there does not appear to be an independently verified sighting of Kylee after the gathering, with accounts relying on individuals present at the property.

These inconsistencies raise concerns regarding the reliability of the reported sequence of events.

Behavioural Indicators

- Personal belongings, including essential items, were reportedly left behind
- She had confirmed plans for the following day

These factors are inconsistent with a voluntary departure.

Delay in Reporting

- Concern appears to have been raised during the day
- Police were not notified until later in the afternoon

This delay created a window in which potential evidence may have been disturbed, altered, or lost.

5. Search and Initial Response

There was a delay between the time Kylee was last reportedly seen and the commencement of a coordinated search.

Available information indicates:

- A formal search did not begin until the following day
- Multiple individuals, including those present at the gathering, participated in early informal searching and moved through the area prior to the establishment of structured search efforts
- Potential locations were not secured as crime scenes
- Forensic processing of key environments did not occur at the time

Additional concerns include:

- Reports of restricted access for search dogs in some areas
- The absence of early specialist tracking, or uncertainty as to whether such resources were deployed at an early stage, despite environmental conditions that would generally warrant their use
- The likelihood that ground disturbance occurred prior to any structured tracking efforts due to movement of individuals through the area
- No comprehensive forensic examination of relevant locations

The reliability of witness accounts was further impacted by factors including age, intoxication, and overlapping social dynamics, making early independent verification particularly important.

In a remote and environmentally complex location, early deployment of tracking resources is critical, and any delay or uncertainty in their use may significantly reduce effectiveness.

Early informal searching does not substitute for controlled investigative management and may compromise later forensic and tracking opportunities.

Evidence Management

Items including personal belongings were reportedly taken into police custody. It is understood that at least one key item was later unaccounted for while in custody. This represents a significant limitation to evidentiary continuity and potential forensic value.

It is also noted that the property where Kylee was last reportedly seen was subsequently destroyed in a bushfire. As a result, any opportunity for future forensic re-examination of the location has been permanently lost. This underscores the importance of thorough evidence collection and scene preservation at the earliest stage, as deficiencies at that time cannot be remedied once the physical environment is no longer available.

Collectively, these factors significantly compromised the ability to conduct meaningful forensic reconstruction.

6. Response to Terms of Reference

(a) Policy, Practice and Technology

Modern investigative methods rely heavily on early evidence preservation. Where scenes are not secured and evidence is not retained, the effectiveness of later technological advances is significantly reduced.

This case demonstrates how early procedural gaps can negate the benefits of later forensic capability.

(b) Impediments in the Criminal Justice System

This case highlights several systemic impediments:

- Absence of structured early risk assessment
- Failure to treat the case as a high-risk disappearance despite multiple indicators
- Failure to secure potential crime scenes
- Limitations in evidence handling and retention
- Exclusion or undervaluing of contextual witnesses
- Failure to establish an objective, evidence-based timeline
- Lack of reconciliation of conflicting accounts
- Potential deficiencies in how statements from underage individuals were obtained, including whether appropriate safeguards were present
- Early investigative framing may have influenced subsequent actions
- Failure to maintain an open investigative posture and adequately reassess the case in light of new or incoming information

Failures in these areas may compromise the reliability and admissibility of evidence in any future investigative or judicial process. These represent material investigative gaps impacting outcomes.

There also appears to be a systemic issue in the integration and reassessment of new information over time. Despite the passage of many years and the likelihood that additional information has been reported, there does not appear to be a consistent or transparent process ensuring that new material is actively reviewed, contextualised, and incorporated into the broader investigative framework.

From my own experience in attempting to provide follow-up information, there was a perception that new material was not being meaningfully engaged with or progressed. This raises concerns regarding how ongoing information is triaged and whether opportunities for re-evaluation are being fully utilised.

(c) Clusters and Possible Links (North Coast)

This case falls within the North Coast region identified in the Terms of Reference.

It is also noted that there are other cases within the broader region involving young women of similar age and general profile, including individuals who may have moved within overlapping or connected social environments. While no conclusion is drawn regarding any direct linkage, the proximity in geography, age, and social context highlights the importance of ensuring that potential patterns or connections between cases are actively considered and periodically reviewed.

This is particularly relevant in regional settings where social networks may intersect and where separate cases may share environmental or contextual similarities.

(d) Progress of Investigation

The progress of the investigation appears to have been significantly constrained by early-stage decisions. Delays, missed opportunities, and evidentiary limitations may have reduced the ability to later reconstruct events or pursue alternative lines of inquiry.

It is publicly understood, including through statements made by a family member in recent years, that the disappearance is now being treated by NSW Police as a suspected homicide. While the operational details of this classification are not publicly available, this development reinforces the need to examine whether early investigative assumptions and responses were appropriate.

The observations and concerns outlined in this submission are informed in part by the subsequent progression and reclassification of the case, and reflect consideration of how earlier investigative approaches may be understood in light of that development.

(e) Other Related Matters

There has likely been a long-term impact on community trust and reporting behaviour. Perceptions of dismissiveness, lack of follow-up, and limited transparency may have contributed to reluctance among community members to provide information.

More broadly, these experiences may have had, or could reasonably be perceived to have had, a lasting effect on trust in law enforcement within the community, particularly among those connected to the case, and may influence willingness to engage with authorities in subsequent matters.

7. Personal Experience

I attempted to provide information shortly after Kylee's disappearance but was unable to do so at that time. This reflects a limitation in how information from individuals not directly present at an event may be assessed.

Later attempts to provide information through reporting channels do not appear to have resulted in follow-up. These experiences indicate gaps in information triage, communication pathways, and follow-up processes, and raise concerns that potentially relevant information was not integrated or assessed in a coordinated manner. The inability to contribute information at the time, combined with the absence of follow-up, contributed to an ongoing concern that opportunities to assist the investigation may have been missed.

In addition to my own experience, I have spoken with other community members over time who expressed doubt that further engagement with investigators would result in meaningful action. These individuals described interactions that did not support continued confidence that their information would be meaningfully considered.

In some instances, individuals reported providing information through formal reporting channels, including Crime Stoppers, with contact details supplied, but did not receive any apparent follow-up.

While these accounts are personal in nature, the consistency across multiple individuals suggests a potential systemic issue in how community-provided information is received, triaged, and acted upon.

8. Community and Family Impact

Over time, the absence of clear outcomes and investigative resolution has contributed to:

- significant and ongoing trauma for the family
- long-term emotional and psychological burden
- increased reliance on self-driven investigation by family or community members

At a community level, the case has contributed to:

- persistent rumours and speculation
- division within social networks
- erosion of trust in investigative processes

These impacts illustrate the broader consequences of unresolved cases where early investigative opportunities are not fully utilised. In the absence of clear information or visible investigative progress, families and communities may feel compelled to seek answers independently. While this reflects a desire for resolution, it can introduce additional risks and

complexities that would be better mitigated through structured, transparent, and ongoing engagement from investigative agencies.

The absence of clear and consistent information over time has also contributed to the development and persistence of community speculation and unverified accounts. This has had a significant and ongoing impact on the family, who have had to navigate not only the uncertainty of the case but also the circulation of informal narratives that may be inaccurate, harmful, or distressing. These dynamics can contribute to community division, place additional emotional burden on those closest to the case, and may discourage individuals from engaging with formal reporting pathways.

Observing the impact on the family over time has been significant. The prolonged absence of answers has had visible effects on both physical and mental wellbeing and has placed an ongoing emotional burden on those closest to the case. The broader community has also been affected, with relationships strained and, in some cases, fractured. The uncertainty surrounding the circumstances has contributed to division, distress, and long-term disruption to people's lives.

On a personal level, witnessing these impacts has influenced my own decisions and perspectives, including in relation to parenting and risk awareness. This reflects the broader and lasting reach that unresolved cases can have beyond the immediate family.

9. Identified Systemic Issues

The following issues have been identified based on my observations, experience, and review of available information. They are presented as systemic concerns rather than definitive findings:

- Deficiencies in the identification and escalation of risk at initial stages
- Insufficient preservation and securing of key environments
- Gaps in evidence management and continuity
- Shortcomings in witness intake, triage, and follow-up
- Lack of structured reconciliation of conflicting accounts
- Absence of an objective, evidence-based timeline
- Breakdowns in maintaining investigative control where early informal search activity occurred
- Loss of future reviewability due to inadequate early forensic capture, for example: destruction of the property in bushfire
- Deficiencies in the integration of potentially relevant contextual information, including victim reports, into the broader investigative framework
- Communication gaps between reporting systems and investigators
- Lack of consistent communication with families, including changes in investigating officers and points of contact without clear notification
- Lack of transparency and consistency in reward offerings and public awareness efforts across cases
- Limitations in the effective integration, reassessment, and progression of new information reported over time

These issues appear consistent with systemic gaps rather than isolated procedural errors.

10. Recommendations

- Establish mandatory criteria for high-risk classification of missing persons
- Require preservation of last-known locations as potential crime scenes
- Strengthen evidence management systems with clear accountability mechanisms
- Implement structured review processes for statement intake decisions
- Establish clear time-based triggers for escalation of search operations
- Require formal timeline reconstruction in high-risk missing persons cases, including testing of contradictory witness accounts
- Develop protocols for managing spontaneous community search activity to prevent compromise of forensic evidence
- Require automatic escalation where essential belongings are left behind and no independently verified movement is established
- Require strict adherence to protocols for obtaining statements from minors, including appropriate safeguards to preserve evidentiary integrity
- Improve communication pathways between reporting systems and investigators
- Provide consistent and transparent communication protocols with families, including formal notification of changes in investigating officers and clear points of contact
- Establish clear and transparent criteria for reward offerings and public awareness campaigns
- Explore the development of secure digital reporting platforms for structured public information sharing
- Establish formal processes to assess and integrate related reports, including victim reports, into ongoing investigations
- Establish formal review mechanisms for early-stage investigative decision-making
- Establish formal protocols for the ongoing assessment and integration of new information in long-term missing persons cases, including periodic review requirements and clear accountability for follow-up actions
- Establish formal review triggers in cases where the later loss or degradation of relevant locations, materials, or evidence prevents re-examination, requiring structured reassessment of early investigative decisions
- Establish clear protocols for media engagement in missing persons cases, including standards for accuracy, responsible reporting, and sensitivity to victims and their families
- Develop guidelines and public education initiatives to encourage responsible information sharing by community members and informal media channels, particularly in relation to unverified information
- Establish dedicated support pathways for families of long-term missing persons, including proactive outreach, continuity of care, and access to appropriately trained professionals with experience in ambiguous loss and prolonged trauma
- Establish specialised review units for regional and long-term missing persons cases, with dedicated expertise to reassess early investigative decisions, integrate new information over time, and apply contemporary investigative and forensic methods
- Explore the development of a more integrated and accessible national missing persons information framework, building on existing coordination structures, to improve consistency, transparency, and information sharing across government, law

enforcement, and community-based platforms, including consultation with established community-based organisations and networks to identify and inform best practice approaches

11. Conclusion

This case, and cases like it across the scope of this Inquiry, demonstrate how early investigative decisions can have long-term and irreversible consequences. This is particularly relevant in regional areas of New South Wales, including the Mid North Coast, where broader regional pressures - including resourcing, geography, and operational conditions - can influence early investigative responses.

Where evidence is not preserved and opportunities are missed, later recovery becomes significantly more challenging.

Based on the factors outlined above, including the absence of a verified last sighting, inconsistencies in witness accounts, the presence of personal belongings, environmental context, and early investigative limitations - this case appears to have met the threshold for classification as a suspicious disappearance at an early stage.

The extent to which this threshold was recognised and acted upon remains a matter of concern, particularly given the long-term consequences of early investigative framing.

It is hoped that this Inquiry will contribute to improvements in policy, practice, and accountability to ensure future cases are handled with appropriate structure, consistency, and urgency.

12. Permissions

I would be willing to provide further information if requested by the Committee.

I request that my identity remain confidential and that this submission be published in anonymised form.

13. Signature

Anonymous