

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 14 June 2026

Partially
Confidential

I'm a 55 year old Sydney resident. In 1989 I was undertaking first year BA studies at ANU, Canberra and made several hitch-hiking trips along the Hume highway to and from Sydney. What follows are details of the encounter.

1. Incident Timeline & Transit Route

- Date/Year: Sometime in the second half of 1989 (prior to the arrest of Ivan Milat).
- Origin Route: Caught a train from Rooty Hill to either Liverpool or Campbelltown station, then walked to the Hume Highway carrying a backpack to hitch-hike south toward Canberra.
- Intercept Location: Picked up on the Hume by a solo male driver.

2. Vehicle & Driver Description

- Vehicle Profile: A light-coloured (possibly tan, silver or white) four-wheel drive (4WD).
- Driver Appearance and Demeanor: Mostly uncommunicative and silent as the vehicle drove south into the Southern Highlands corridor. I don't recall any specific details of his appearance except that he was white, was of average height and had an inconspicuous hairstyle.
- Dialogue/Biases: At one point during the drive, the driver made unsolicited complaints regarding "foreigners" and I told him my father was a truck driver. I am a tall white Australian male.

3. The Detour and Behavioral Triggers

- Location of Detour: The driver suddenly and without warning turned off the Hume Highway onto a side road lined with highly distinctive, towering pine trees. In April 2024 on a trip to Canberra (after decades of not being down that way) I identified this road as most probably the road leading to Cherry Tree Hill Wines), located approximately 1 km south of the official Belanglo State Forest turn-off. At the time of the original incident in 1989, the proximity to Belanglo was unnoticed as it was before Milat was apprehended.
- The Pretext Statement: Upon executing the sudden detour, the driver stated exactly: "I want to see if my mate is at home."
- Aborted Action: The road led to a kind of turning circle/dead-end that gave access to one or more gated properties. Sensing an immediate threat, I became very nervous and mentally prepared to abandon my backpack and jump from the moving vehicle. The driver appeared to notice my physical tension and vigilance. Before an escalation occurred, he looked over at a nearby property, turned the vehicle around without any word of explanation, drove back to the highway, and subsequently let me out.

4. Observations for Analytical Consideration

- The "Backdoor" Fire Trail Hypothesis: Modern satellite imaging of the Cherry Tree Hill Wines area shows a distinct dirt road leading from behind the property through the paddocks beyond directly to the southern end of the Belanglo State Forest. This road could be accessed from the highway if one had access to the properties in the immediate vicinity.

- Investigative Value: It is possible the driver was indeed seeing if anyone was “at home” in order to secure an unnoticed "backdoor" access route into the forest—avoiding the higher-traffic official entrance of the state forest. This pattern strongly aligns with the known movements, vehicle type, and the "casual pretext" modus operandi used by Ivan Milat during his late 80s/early 90s backpacker murders

Yours

Graeme Ussher