



**CORONERS COURT  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Inquest:** Inquest into the death of Walid Ahmad

**Hearing dates:** 27 April 2020

**Date of findings:** 27 April 2020

**Place of findings:** Coroners Court of New South Wales, Lidcombe

**Findings of:** Magistrate Derek Lee, Deputy State Coroner

**Catchwords:** CORONIAL LAW – cause and manner of death, unsolved homicide

**File numbers:** 2016/133463

**Representation:** Ms B Notley, Coronial Advocate Assisting the Coroner

**Findings:** I find that Walid Ahmad died on 29 April 2016 at Bankstown NSW 2200. The cause of Mr Ahmad’s death was gunshot wounds. These gunshot wounds were inflicted when Mr Ahmad was shot seven times by a person, or persons, unknown. The manner of Mr Ahmad’s death is therefore homicide.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that the death of Walid Ahmad be referred to the Unsolved Homicide Unit of the NSW Police Homicide Squad for further investigation in accordance with the protocols and procedures of that Unit.

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## **Introduction**

1. On the morning of 29 April 2016 Walid Ahmad sitting with friends at a cafe in a suburban shopping centre when he was approached by an unknown person wielding a firearm. The unknown person discharged the firearm towards Mr Ahmad, fatally injuring him, before fleeing and entering a vehicle which was driven away from the scene. To date, no person or persons criminally involved in Mr Ahmad's death have been identified.

## **Why was an inquest held?**

2. A Coroner's function and the purpose of an inquest are provided for by law as set out in the *Coroners Act 2009 (the Act)*. One of the primary functions of a Coroner is to investigate the circumstances surrounding a reportable death. This is done so that evidence may be gathered to allow a Coroner to answer questions about the identity of the person who died, when and where they died, and what the cause and the manner of their death was. The manner of a person's death means the circumstances surrounding their death and the events leading up to it.
3. Section 6(1)(a) of the Act defines a reportable death to be one which occurs in circumstances where a person died a violent or unnatural death. As Mr Ahmad died from injuries sustained from a number of gunshot wounds his death is clearly regarded as being both violent and unnatural, making it a reportable death. Further, section 27(1)(a) of the Act provides that an inquest is mandatory if it appears to a coroner that a person died or might have died as a result of homicide. In this case, the evidence establishes that the gunshot wounds were inflicted by another person or persons, meaning that Mr Ahmad died as a result of homicide. It is therefore mandatory to hold an inquest into Mr Ahmad's death.

## **Mr Ahmad's life**

4. Understanding the impact that the death of a person has had on their family only comes from knowing something of that person's life and how the loss of that life has affected those who loved that person the most. Therefore it is extremely important to recognise and acknowledge Mr Ahmad's life in a brief, but hopefully meaningful, way.
5. Mr Ahmad was born to Khaldiya Beyaklieh and Mohamad Ahmad. He had a number of siblings from his parents' relationship, and also from his father's previous relationship. Mr Ahmad previously worked in a number of different areas, including at the Sydney Fruit Markets in Flemington, in the security industry, and in the auto repair industry. He previously worked for a tyre business, and sometime in around 2012 Mr Ahmad bought a smash repair business named "A Team Smash" in Condell Park.
6. Sometime prior to 2002 Mr Ahmad was involved in a relationship with Nidal Hamze, and they had three children together. In 2002 Mr Ahmad met Eman Badra for the first time. They later formed a relationship, were married in 2010, and had three children together.
7. According to Ms Badra, Mr Ahmad had many friends and was acquainted with many people. He had a reputation as someone who was generous, and able to mediate with others and resolve

disagreements. For this reason many people came to Mr Ahmad with their problems, and he did his best to solve them if he could.

8. There is no doubt that Mr Ahmad is greatly missed by his wife, children, parents, siblings, extended family, and many friends. To know that Mr Ahmad lost his life so suddenly and in circumstances involving extreme violence makes his loss even more distressing.

### **Mr Ahmad's criminal history**

9. Mr Ahmad had a significant criminal history in New South Wales as an adult, and numerous interactions with police, dating back to 1996. He had previously been charged and convicted of a number of matters involving drug-related offences, dishonesty offences, and offences of violence. Some of these convictions resulted in periods of incarceration for Mr Ahmad. The nature of many of these offences suggested that Mr Ahmad had associations with, or was linked to, organised crime elements.

### **Background to the events of 29 April 2016**

10. On 9 April 2016 a violent confrontation occurred outside the A Team Smash premises in Condell Park, involving members and associates of the Ahmad family on one side, and members and associates of the Elmir family on the other. The confrontation on 9 April 2016 resulted in gunfire being exchanged both sides, with an associate of the Elmir family (Safwan Charbaji) being fatally wounded.
11. The subsequent police investigation into this incident identified a number of persons of interest, including one of Mr Ahmad's brothers, an associate of the Ahmad family, and Mr Ahmad himself.
12. In the weeks that followed police investigators formed the belief that Mr Ahmad became fearful of reprisals from those opposing family members and associates involved in the 9 April 2016 incident. As a result Mr Ahmad altered his usual daily routine, which typically included meeting friends at the Havana Cafe and attending the Crunch Fitness gym at Bankstown Central shopping centre in the mornings. Mr Ahmad ceased these attendances and also travelled interstate in the immediate period after the 9 April 2016 incident. However, in the week preceding his death, Mr Ahmad resumed his usual routine and attended his gym in Bankstown on 28 and 29 April 2016.

### **What happened on 29 April 2016?**

13. At about 10:25am on 29 April 2016 Mr Ahmad went to Bankstown Central shopping centre and met two friends at the Havana Cafe. They later entered the Crunch Fitness gym, and were joined by another friend, to work out together. Shortly after 11:00am Mr Ahmad completed his workout and returned to the Havana Cafe with two of his friends, sitting down at a table.
14. At around 11:43am Mr Ahmad and his friends were seated at the table. At this time an unknown person, wearing dark coloured clothing and with their face covered, exited the rear passenger side of a white coloured Mercedes sedan (**the Mercedes**) and ran up to the table where Mr Ahmad was seated, approaching Mr Ahmad from behind. The Mercedes had entered Bankstown Shopping Centre a short time earlier and parked about 40 metres from the cafe seating area. Subsequent

police investigation revealed that the Mercedes had also attended Bankstown Central the previous day when Mr Ahmad had visited the Havana Cafe and Crunch Fitness.

15. The unknown person who approached Mr Ahmad discharged 11 rounds from a pistol in Mr Ahmad's direction, with seven of the rounds striking Mr Ahmad. Some of the rounds struck and injured Mr Ahmad's friends who were still seated at the cafe table.
16. The unknown person ran back to the Mercedes which quickly departed the scene. It was shortly joined by another vehicle, a Volkswagen Scirocco hatchback (**the Volkswagen**). Both vehicles drove away from the shopping centre at high speed to Salamander Place, Mount Lewis where the occupants of the Mercedes exited the vehicle. The Mercedes was then deliberately set on fire. The occupants of the Mercedes entered the Volkswagen and were driven away. The Volkswagen was later found abandoned in Cooyeena Avenue, Mount Lewis. The occupants of both the Mercedes and the Volkswagen fled from the scene and were not apprehended or identified.
17. Emergency services were called to the scene at Bankstown Central. Despite resuscitation attempts Mr Ahmad succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced life extinct at the scene.

#### **What was the cause and manner of Mr Ahmad's death?**

18. Mr Ahmad was later taken to the Department of Forensic Medicine where an autopsy was performed on 3 and 4 May 2016 by Dr Rianie Van Vuuren, forensic pathologist. The autopsy identified seven gunshots to the body, with entrance wounds to the following areas: two wounds to the left side of the back near the midline, one wound to the left upper back, one wound to the left lower chest, one wound to the lateral aspect of the right index finger, one wound to the dorsolateral aspect of the left elbow, and one wound to the lateral aspect of the left knee. It was noted that one of the wounds to the left side of the back near the midline extended through the pericardium and left ventricle of the heart, before exiting on the left anterior aspect of the chest in the midline.
19. In her autopsy report dated 11 May 2017, Dr Van Vuuren opined that the cause of Mr Ahmad's death was gunshot wounds.

#### **What investigation was conducted into Mr Ahmad's death?**

20. The circumstances of Mr Ahmad's death and the events of 29 April 2016 strongly indicated to investigating police the involvement of organised crime elements and an aspect of retribution against Mr Ahmad relating to the 9 April 2016 incident. Strike Force Bindon was formed to investigate the circumstances surrounding Mr Ahmad's death in an attempt to identify the person or persons responsible. As the investigation currently remains open it is only intended to provide a broad summary below of the investigative steps taken following Mr Ahmad's death. These steps may be summarised as follows:
  - (a) A crime scene and ballistics examination was conducted in relation to the projectiles discharged on 29 April 2016. Further forensics examination identified the head stamp on the 11 cartridge cases, which were all found to have been discharged from the same firearm.

- (b) A crime scene examination was conducted in relation to the abandoned Mercedes and Volkswagen, and surrounding areas. Items seized from the vehicles were subjected to forensic testing. Further investigations revealed that both vehicles had been reported as stolen prior to the events of 29 April 2016, and both vehicles bore false registration plates.
  - (c) Extensive examination was conducted in relation to the mobile phone records of a number of persons of interest identified during the course of the investigation in order to identify relevant communications and movements leading up to, and on, 29 April 2016.
  - (d) CCTV footage, including footage of the 29 April 2016 incident, taken from Bankstown Central and its surrounding areas was obtained and examined.
  - (e) Using CCTV footage of the 29 April 2016 incident, a biometric examination was performed in relation to the unknown person who discharged the firearm.
  - (f) An extensive canvass was conducted of civilian witnesses who were at Bankstown Central on 29 April 2016, and who observed the Mercedes and Volkswagen after both vehicles left the scene, with numerous statements taken and interviews conducted.
21. Despite an extensive police investigation, employing a variety of investigative strategies, the occupants of the Mercedes and Volkswagen, and any other person who may have been criminally involved in Mr Ahmad's death, have not been identified. Whilst the police investigation has considered that there are a number of persons of interest, criminal proceedings have not been commenced against any person.

**Should any recommendation pursuant to section 82 of the Coroners Act 2009 be made?**

22. Section 82 of the Act allows a Coroner to make recommendations in relation to any matter connected with a person's death may be made if a Coroner considers them to be necessary or desirable. Such recommendations are often made with view to hopefully improving public health and safety.
23. The discharging of a firearm multiple times in a public location resulting in the death of a person is unquestionably a matter of utmost seriousness which impacts upon the safety of members of the community. There is obviously considerable public interest in having the person, or persons, responsible for such a criminal act being brought to justice. Accordingly, the following recommendation is both necessary and desirable: I recommend that the death of Walid Ahmad be referred to the Unsolved Homicide Unit of the NSW Police Homicide Squad for further investigation in accordance with the protocols and procedures of that Unit.

**Findings**

24. Before turning to the findings that I am required to make, I would like to thank Ms Brooke Notley for her assistance during both the preparation for the inquest, and the inquest itself. I also thank Detective Sergeant Peter Rudens, the officer-in-charge of the police investigation, for conducting a comprehensive investigation and compiling the extensive brief of evidence.

25. The findings I make under section 81(1) of the Act are:

***Identity***

The person who died was Walid Ahmad.

***Date of death***

Mr Ahmad died on 29 April 2016.

***Place of death***

Mr Ahmad died at Bankstown NSW 2200.

***Cause of death***

The cause of Mr Ahmad's death was gunshot wounds.

***Manner of death***

These gunshot wounds were inflicted when Mr Ahmad was shot seven times by a person, or persons, unknown. The manner of Mr Ahmad's death is therefore homicide.

**Epilogue**

26. On behalf of the Coroners Court of NSW I extend my sincere and respectful condolences to Mr Ahmad's family and many friends for their painful and tragic loss. It is hoped that those criminally involved in Mr Ahmad's death will eventually be brought to justice.

27. I close this inquest.

Magistrate Derek Lee  
Deputy State Coroner  
27 April 2020  
NSW State Coroner's Court, Glebe