



**CORONERS COURT  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

<b>Inquest:</b>	Into the death of Rodney Scarman
<b>File number:</b>	2011/44292
<b>Hearing dates:</b>	24 February 2020
<b>Date of findings:</b>	24 February 2020
<b>Place of findings:</b>	Coroners Court, Lidcombe
<b>Findings of:</b>	Deputy State Coroner E.Truscott
<b>Catchwords:</b>	Coronial Law-Cause and manner of death-unsolved homicide
<b>Representation:</b>	Coronial Advocate: Mr D Welsh
<b>Findings:</b>	<p><b>Identity</b> Rodney Scarman</p> <p><b>Date of Death</b> 25 December 2011</p> <p><b>Place of Death</b> Walker Street Waterloo</p> <p><b>Cause of death</b> Blunt Force Injuries to Head</p> <p><b>Manner of death</b> Homicide, after which Mr Scarman's body was moved to and left in an utility closet in the common area of premises where he resided in Walker Street Waterloo.</p>
<b>S65 and s74 Orders</b>	<p><b>Section 65 Order Exhibit 1</b></p> <p>- That no access is to be granted to any person without the express and specific permission of the Coroner after</p>

	<p>consultation with the Police Officer in Charge.</p> <p><b>Section 74 Order Exhibit 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- That the contents of Exhibit 1 are not be published, except for the contents of the Redacted Statement of Detective Sergeant Michael Egan, which is Exhibit 2.</li></ul>

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
LIDCOMBE  
NSW

Section 81 Coroners Act 2009

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

**Introduction**

1. At 4:30 a.m. on the 26 December 2011, Rodney Scarman's body was located within a utility closet situated on the ground floor of a double storey unit block at 105A Walker St, Waterloo.
2. Mr Scarman was a 52 year old man who lived in an upstairs unit number 3 and his neighbour Mr Tran lived in unit 1 directly below. Mr Tran discovered Mr Scarman's body. He had been woken by the sound of the garbage truck and as he was putting out his bin he noticed that the back door to the lane which is usually locked was unlocked. On his return he noticed blood seeping under the utility closet door. Mr Tran opened the door and saw Mr Scarman's body slumped against the wall. He immediately called the police and they arrived and secured a crime scene and commenced a criminal investigation.
3. Mr Scarman had suffered extensive injuries. Dr Irvine, Forensic Pathologist, performed the autopsy and determined that Mr Scarman died of blunt force injuries to the head. Those injuries included multiple skull fractures, a subarachnoid haemorrhage. Dr Irvine identified that in addition to the blunt force injuries to the head Mr Scarman suffered blunt force injuries to his torso and the lower extremities and there were multiple scratch type abrasions to the head, neck, upper extremities and torso. He also suffered a crushed larynx.
4. Toxicology screening of blood samples identified the presence of several drugs including alcohol, Alprazolam, methadone, THC and methamphetamine.
5. The evidence obtained during the police investigation establishes that Mr Scarman's death was a homicide.
6. An inquest is required for a suspicious death pursuant to s.27 (1) (a) of the *Coroner's Act 2009* ("the Act"). Under s81 of the Act a coroner is required, where possible, to make findings as to the following aspects of a death:

- the identity of the deceased
  - the time and date
  - the place
  - the cause and manner, or circumstances
7. Mr Scarman was identified via fingerprints and there is no dispute that he was the person located within the utility closet. The precise time and date of Mr Scarman's death is unknown, although the evidence suggests it occurred between the 25 December 2011 and 4:30 a.m. on the 26 December 2011. Though the medical cause of Mr Scarman's death is known precisely how, when and where and by whom those injuries were incurred is unknown. Also unknown is who placed Mr Scarman in the utility closet.
  8. The criminal investigation into Mr Scarman's death has spanned almost a decade and has utilised a complete range of strategies and instigated a number of task forces. The police conducted multiple canvasses and media releases. As part of the investigation, police flyers were distributed to the residences of Walker St and Morehead St, Waterloo. Over 60 properties close to Mr Scarman's residence were canvassed on the day his body was discovered. In December 2014, a media conference was conducted. On the 26 February 2015, a media release was conducted that received online, television and newspaper coverage. Between 2014-2017 up to date forensic testing was repeated with no changed outcome.
  9. The Officer in Charge of this Detective Egan has provided a 24 page statement which sets out the details of the investigation much of which remains under suppression to protect the integrity of the evidence so that any future advances in the investigation are not jeopardised.

### **Background**

10. Mr Scarman had lived in his unit for over 12 years. He was a reclusive man who had limited social interactions with others. He had a medical history of post traumatic seizure disorder, anxiety and schizophrenia. Mr Scarman's sister Robyn and niece Karli attended this inquest. Robyn spoke of her brother's struggle with substance abuse and his gentle ways and his artistic skills. She spoke of the impact his death has had on her and the grief she has in knowing that he suffered a violent death.
11. Mr Scarman had some artistic skills and he liked to paint. There were paintings and an easel in his unit. He was known to use and occasionally sell both prescription and illicit drugs. A few days prior to his death Mr Scarman provided \$160 to Lynda, a person who lived in a nearby street to buy him some drugs. However, he did not receive the drugs and nor was the money returned to him.
12. Lynda was a friend of the Daniella Woodward, who lived at 4/113A Walker Street Waterloo. Both Lynda and Daniella are transgendered women who are sex

workers. Throughout the evidence it seems that they were referred to as “the trannies” and it seems that it was common knowledge that those responsible for Ms Scarman being “ripped off” in a drug transaction and later killed were “the trannies”.

13. Three days prior to his death Mr Scarman left a message at the doorstep of Daniella’s unit. He had painted on the inside of a plastic washing basket which read “Lynn. 4/113. 160 by 6 pm tonight. At 7 pm will be ringing my debt collector. Put in letter box”. When he saw another associate arrive and leave by taxi he yelled out from his balcony that he wanted his money back.

### **The Police Investigation**

14. There were a number of features about the location of Mr Scarman’s body and other matters which establish that Mr Scarman was killed about 10-12 hours before his body was discovered at a location other than at his unit complex.
15. Police located a red and white sleeveless jersey similar in style to what Mr Scarman was wearing atop a garbage bin in an alleyway several hundred metres from the crime scene. They also located a blood stain on the front doormat immediately inside the entrance to the unit complex and along the tiled floor from the unit block entrance to the closet where Mr Scarman was discovered.
16. When the police attempted to enter Mr Scarman’s unit the front door and screen door were locked and intact. Mr Scarman was known to have two sets of keys, one of which was inside the unit but the other set were not located on Mr Scarman. The police gained access entering an open door on the balcony. Inside the unit the police saw paraphernalia associated with illicit drug use, such as resealable plastic bags, syringes and digital scales. Cannabis was also located inside the premises. The lounge room and hallway were separated by a bead curtain. Several blood stains were present halfway down the curtain.
17. Inside the unit the hallway led to a bathroom and laundry. An examination of the bathroom revealed that there was a blood smear above the outside door handle, several droplets of blood on the mat in front of the toilet and the stacked toilet rolls and blood stains on the bathroom floor, the bath and the bath and basin taps handles and on the splashbacks.
18. The unit was subjected to numerous chemical forensic testing techniques. Forensic testing on the blood within the unit identified it as solely that of Mr Scarman’s. Police forensically examined the external areas of the deceased’s unit, common stairwells and hallways.
19. Notes located during a search of the property suggest Mr Scarman suffered from mental illness and struggled in his personal relationships. The notes in his diary disclose his thoughts regarding disputes with his neighbours. There was a letter that refers to a Lynda owing him \$160 located in the unit.

20. There is evidence that at about 12:15 a.m. on the 25 December 2011 Mr Scarman was pacing up and down the footpath in front of the unit shouting "fuck" at the sky. Mr Scarman went into his unit where he was playing loud music. About 9:00 a.m. on the 25 December 2011, Mr Scarman was yelling over the balcony, "I get even with you, you keep this up and I will kill you." This was consistent with evidence that in the three days before his death Mr Scarman was more agitated and aggressive than usual.
21. At 3.33 pm Mr Scarman made his last telephone call and probably shortly thereafter he left his unit, leaving the phone inside.
22. About 3:30 a.m. on the 26 December 2011, a resident who lived behind Mr Scarman's unit complex was woken by noises in the rear lane of his property. He heard two male voices. One voice said: "*Check up there if anyone is coming.*" Matta heard someone running toward Morehead Street and then heard, "*Check if there are any people there,*" followed by "*Is anyone coming?*"
23. Lynda has accounted for her actions on 25 December 2011 and police have located evidence that supports her assertion that she had no involvement with Mr Scarman or knowledge about his death.
24. During the investigation, numerous exhibits were subjected to DNA testing. The results were compared to the DNA database as well as comparison samples obtained from numerous people. All exhibits returned DNA results for Mr Scarman with five results returning a trace result for one individual that could not be identified.
25. In 2015 the officer in charge met with pathologist Rebecca Irvine and neuropathologist Dr Rodriguez in 2015 to discuss the death. Due to lividity markings on the fingers and thumbs, Dr Irvine believed Mr Scarman had been laying on his back with his palm down prior to his insertion in the cupboard. However, she also wished to qualify her opinion by saying that there were limitations on her interpretation as there were no time markings on the photographs and that Crime Scene took some 11 hrs after discovery to allow her access to the body. The heat on the day also would have affected the lividity.
26. Dr Irvine and Dr Rodriguez also expressed the view that the injuries to Mr Scarman's head did not originate from a strike with an acute object, but a fall or striking with a solid object were possibilities. They did not believe a punch was the likely cause as there were no external injuries consistent with such a punch and only a trained boxer could conceivably deliver the impact required. They also were of the view that the scratches on Mr Scarman were not caused by the scalpel located on him and were likely occasioned shortly before he died.
27. Dr Irvine indicated that the injuries to the hands and forearms were consistent with someone raising their arms to protect their head. She also stated that they could have been caused by someone raising their arms to brace against a fall. Dr Irvine also noted that Mr Scarman's feet appeared to have been immersed in a

dirty medium. The dirt did not extend to the entire sole and one thong had no dirt on it.

28. The investigation received and pursued numerous leads all of which subsequently excluded all persons of interest except for one sole suspect responsible for Rodney Scarman's death.

#### Likely Circumstances of Mr Scarman's death

29. In the afternoon of 25 December 2011, Mr Scarman attended 14/113A Walker Street Waterloo to confront the occupant who he, erroneously believed, was involved in a \$160 incident.
30. This confrontation was met by the occupant inflicting blunt force injuries to Rodney Scarman which resulted in him falling which have occasioned further injuries. Mr Scarman was left in situ for a number of hours, rigor mortis set in and distinctive lividity patterns developed which were identified by Dr Irvine. The suspect then moved the body to council garbage "wheelie bin" which contained an amount of dirty swill which staining Mr Scarman's feet.
31. This person then moved the body to Mr Scarman's unit block likely intending to return Mr Scarman to his own unit but rather than negotiating the stairs she left him in the utility closet.
32. After disposing of the body, the person then entered Mr Scarman's premises and washed their hands in the bathroom and possibly looked for money and drugs.
33. Detective Egan has reviewed the brief of evidence and has had others review the brief many times and has concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence to charge this person. I agree with that conclusion but note that advances in technology and future occurrences may lead to a resolution of this investigation. In the meantime, the case will be registered with the unsolved homicide unit.

#### **34. I now enter my findings:**

Rodney Scarman died on 25 December 2011 at premises near his home in Walker Street Waterloo. Rodney Scarman died as a result of a homicide, specifically having incurred blunt force injuries to his head after which Mr Scarman's body was moved to and left in a utility closet in the common area of premises where he resided in Walker Street Waterloo.

Magistrate E Truscott  
Deputy State Coroner

24 February 2020