



**CORONERS COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Inquest:	Into the death of Albert Metledge
File number:	2019/349655
Hearing dates:	24 November 2021
Date of findings:	24 November 2021
Place of findings:	Coroners Court, Lidcombe
Findings of:	Deputy State Coroner E.Truscott
Catchwords:	Coronial Law-Cause and manner of death-
Representation:	Coronial Advocate Assisting: Ms C. Xanthos
Findings:	<p>Identity Albert Metledge</p> <p>Date: 6 November 2019</p> <p>Place : 63-91 Princes Highway, St Peters</p> <p>Cause: Stab wound to the heart</p> <p>Manner: Homicide by a known person.</p>

IN THE CORONERS COURT
LIDCOMBE
NSW

Section 81 Coroners Act 2009

REASONS FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. Albert Metledge died on 6th November 2019 after being stabbed by a person known to him. Mr Metledge was aged 75 and a much loved husband, father, brother, uncle, grandfather, member of his parish, employer and quiet benefactor.
2. An inquest is required pursuant to s27 (1) (a) of the Coroners Act 2009 (the Act). A four volume brief of evidence was tendered in the inquest. No witnesses were required to attend.
3. Mr Metledge's family decided not to attend the inquest and I understand completely their decision is solely due to sparing themselves adding additional trauma to their horrific experience of Mr Metledge's death. It is best that they do not re-live distressing memories in this public forum and I offer to them my sincere condolences for their unfathomable loss.

Background

4. Mr Metledge was born on 15 July 1945. He and his wife Mary had two children, Antony, and Rhonda. He was a grandfather to Amelia, Antony's only child. Mr Metledge had been working in the building construction industry since 1968 and had mentored his son Antony and nephew Tony who worked with him.

5. In November 2014, Antony and Tony combined their resources, purchased land at 63-81 Princes Highway, St Peters to develop a multi-purpose complex for residential and commercial premises. They were directors of Metcorp Project and though Albert was semi-retired he assisted in the everyday running of the business and managing existing sites.
6. Vladimir Kondakov, the man who stabbed Mr Metledge, was a skilled construction labourer and had been hired by Metcorp Projects to work at the construction site in May 2019. He had been hired by Tony after being highly recommended by a relative, Leo Metledge. Mr Kondakov was a valued member of the team, Antony recalls on their first introduction, feeling 'instantly relieved as I thought he would be part of our team for a long time.'¹
7. Though little was known about Mr Kondakov's personal circumstances he did on two occasions request an advance on his pay. This was allowed and a lump sum was deposited into his account and then the company would be repaid over the subsequent weeks by deducting money from his wages. Antony described Metcorp as a family run business which always tried to help their employees when help was needed. Mr Kondakov was not the only employee who received financial assistance when requested.
8. In September 2019, Mr Kondakov sought and was provided an advance on his pay to allow him to travel to Russia to see his son who was about to enlist in the Russian army. Despite initial reservations the advance of \$6,000 was made on the basis it was to be repaid by Christmas 2019. Before leaving for Russia, Mr Kondakov was living above the Bankstown Hotel at 102 Old Town Plaza, however due to the premises undergoing renovations he was required to vacate. As a result, it appears that Mr Kondakov became homeless.

¹ Statement of Antony Metledge [10].

9. Mr Kondakov returned to work at the St Peters construction site on 26 October 2019. His colleagues noted that he had lost a significant amount of weight. Mr Kondakov disclosed to Tony that he had nowhere to live and Tony gave him access to 31 Morwick Street, Strathfield, another Metcorp construction site, to allow Mr Kondakov to shower. Tony also purchased some clothing for him. Mr Kondakov was apparently embarrassed by his circumstances and told Tony that he had purchased an apartment in Russia for his son and mother for US\$150,000. Mr Kondakov asked Tony if he could live on the construction site at St Peters. Antony and Tony agreed to this and assisted by organising a container that had water and other amenities for him. They also assisted in finding Mr Kondakov more permanent accommodation.

10. On Monday 4 November 2019, Mr Kondakov approached Antony and he asked to receive his pay rather than wait the two days to payday on Wednesday. He said that he had to pay for his car registration. This advance of \$2,100 made by electronic transfer.

11. About 8:30pm on 5 November 2019, Tony was at the St Peters site and Mr Kondakov started asking him questions about the Russian boxer Kostya Tzu and suggested that he had seen Tony on television at one of his fights, Tony said he didn't even know who the boxer was but suggested Mr Kondakov could have seen his cousin Victor as he attended such sporting events.²

12. Tony then started to use the air compressor to clean tools when Mr Kondakov approached him from behind, startling him. Tony reported that Mr Kondakov had a 'strange, glassy eyed expression on his face...that he had never seen him like that.' Mr Kondakov made a 'pfft' sound and walked away without saying anything. Shortly after finishing his task Tony said goodbye but Mr Kondakov asked Tony to look at the fire stairs he had been working on. Tony declined saying he would look at them the following day,

² Statement of Tony Metledge [21]-[23].

but Mr Kondakov was insistent asking several times and when Tony agreed Mr Kondakov said, “What are you scared or something?” Tony found this all unsettling and later stated to Antony, “Something’s up with Vlad. He’s acting very strange”.³

Mr Metledge’s Death

13. About 10:00am on 6 November 2019, Antony and Mr Metledge arrived at the St Peters construction site. After they had attended a senior management meeting, they walked down a set of fire stairs on the northern side of the property to the ground level. Mr Kondakov approached them and wanted to show them the work he had completed at the fire stairs- the same ones he had shown Tony. They walked around the site and when they arrived at another set of fire stairs, Mr Metledge complimented Mr Kondakov, “It looks like you know better than us about this job” but it would appear that Mr Kondakov felt criticised.

14. Antony was in the doorway about 4 metres ahead of Mr Kondakov and Mr Metledge who were both still in the stairwell. Mr Kondakov produced a knife and stabbed Mr Metledge twice, one to the chest and the other to his abdomen. Antony was not looking directly at them but heard his father call out, “No, no”.⁴

15. When Antony turned around, Mr Kondakov and Mr Metledge were standing chest to chest facing each other. Mr Metledge immediately turned and ran to Antony falling into his arms and dropping to the ground. Antony could see a large amount of blood coming from his father’s torso and mouth. Mr Kondakov turned his attention to Antony, walking behind him and stabbed him once in the back before running away down the fire stairs. Antony ran up the driveway ramp to the street level calling out to other employees who came to assist.

³ Statement from Tony Metledge [27].

⁴ Statement of Antony Metledge [30].

16. Paramedics arrived at 1:08pm but unfortunately, there was nothing that could be done, and Mr Metledge was declared deceased at the scene. Antony was conveyed to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and underwent surgery to remove the knife blade still embedded in his back.
17. Dr Szentmariay performed a post- mortem examination. He determined that the wound to Mr Metledge's lower abdomen was not fatal; however, the wound to Mr Metledge's chest penetrated the underlying intercostal space and rib, pericardial sac, heart, and resulted in the collapse of his left lung. The depth of the wound was 14-16cm and was fatal.

Police investigation

18. Police quickly established a crime scene and commenced their investigation under Strike Force Tangent led by Detective Sergeant Jason Van Gestel. Witnesses and surrounding CCTV enabled the police to quickly identify where Mr Kondakov had run to.
19. He had run past the post office located south of the construction site at 91 Princes Highway. About 12:50pm, a tow truck driver on the Princes Highway was slowing down to stop at a red traffic light and Mr Kondakov ran out in front of the truck. He yelled out, "Stop, stop, stop, this is an emergency".⁵ He opened the passenger door of the truck and climbed in saying, "You need to drive me to Rockdale hospital quickly. Someone has fallen off the scaffolding. They have been taken to hospital by ambulance. You need to take me there".⁶ Mr Kondakov introduced himself as "Victor". During the ride, he removed his hard hat and hi-visibility vest, revealing a blue shirt underneath. Investigators were told that during this car trip, he was very nervous and fidgeting. When the truck stopped at the intersection of Princes Highway and Bryant Street, Rockdale, Mr Kondakov opened the truck door and said, "...I will run there."⁷ He ran

⁵ Statement of Jason Roberts [6].

⁶ Statement of Jason Roberts [7].

⁷ Statement of Jason Roberts [15].

across two lanes of traffic to the eastern footpath holding his hard hat and yellow shirt.

20. The area of Rockdale was canvassed by investigators. CCTV captured Mr Kondakov approach a female outside 21 King Street, Rockdale at 1 pm. According to the witness he asked, "Can you tell me where to buy a phone?" He walked east down King Lane, into Cameron Street and back onto the Princes Highway past Shop 3/452. He was holding the hat, shirt and a 2-way radio in his left hand. He entered Kings Lane and discarded these items in the council bins. Police later located and seized the items for forensic examination. The blood on the shirt matched the DNA profile for Mr Metledge.
21. Police located Mr Kondakov's vehicle parked in a carport opposite the construction site at St Peters. It was a black Lexus. A rolled-up mattress and sleeping bag were on the back seat. There was nothing else of significance found other than personal documents name and four tablets of a medication for anxiety.
22. The police also located another vehicle apparently owned by Mr Kondakov at a mechanics premises in Greenacre. This vehicle was a black Holden Colorado which had remained on the premises for several months due to unpaid costs for repairs. The car was searched with nothing relevant located.
23. Police obtained statements from many witnesses who worked on the construction site, some employee reported that Mr Kondakov would often complain about Mr Metledge and say that he would always give Mr Kondakov the hard jobs and he would complain that Mr Metledge was never happy with the work he did. Other employees also reported that they had observed recent changes in Mr Kondakov's personality, particularly after his return from Russia. Investigators were told that he was 'not the same' and 'unmotivated.'

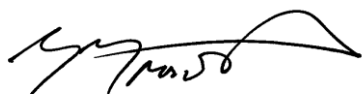
24. Police located the handle of the knife used to stab Mr Metledge and Antony. Despite efforts to continue looking for him, he remained at large. On 10 November 2019 walkers located Mr Kondakov's body hanging at Aspley Baseball grounds at 233 Holt Road, Taren Point. He had suicided.
25. Investigators found limited information about Vladimir Kondakov details from his son. He was born in Russia. It is unknown when he migrated to Australia, however at the time of his death, according to his son, he had been involved in a dispute where he had lost a lot of money. It was following this incident that his mental health declined significantly. Investigators were able to confirm that Mr Kondakov was on a payment plan to repay a GST debt of \$10,112.08 to the Australian Taxation Office and he continued to send money back to Russia to support his son and aging mother.
26. Tony Metledge recalled that Mr Kondakov frequently spoke about having money problems.. He would request loans and would say, "Albert's got plenty of money. Look at Albert and his son".⁸ The Metledge family were not aware of Mr Kondakov's financial troubles however it can be inferred by the comments about Mr Metledge's financial status, that perhaps there may have been some resentment towards him.
27. The Metledge family provided to the inquest a statement about Albert and it makes for exceptionally sad reading because their loss is great and shared by many. Albert was described as "Noble, Bright, Loving, Patient and Humble". He was described as "a man who asked for little but gave so much and had touched the lives of many". That was borne out by the many loving testimonials in their document. Mr Metledge's sudden and violent death was a senseless and tragic wrong.
28. Below are findings pursuant to s81. There are no recommendations arising from this inquest. I again extend my condolences to Mr Metledge's family and many friends.

⁸ Statement of Tony Metledge [12].

Findings

Identity Albert Metledge
Date: 6 November 2019
Place : 63-91 Princes Highway, St Peters
Cause: Stab wound to the heart
Manner: Homicide by a known person.

29. The inquest is now closed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Truscott', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Magistrate E Truscott
Deputy State Coroner
24 November 2021