



**CORONERS COURT  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

<b>Inquest:</b>	Inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Colin Campbell
<b>Hearing dates:</b>	18 January 2017
<b>Date of findings:</b>	18 January 2017
<b>Place of findings:</b>	State Coroners Court, Glebe
<b>Findings of:</b>	<b>Magistrate Teresa O’Sullivan, Deputy State Coroner</b>
<b>Catchwords:</b>	CORONIAL LAW – Cause and manner of death Missing person
<b>File number:</b>	2015/364062
<b>Representation:</b>	<b>Sergeant Timothy O’Donnell, Sergeant Assisting</b>

<b>Findings:</b>	<p><b>Identity of deceased:</b> The deceased person was Colin Campbell</p> <p><b>Date of death:</b> Unable to be determined</p> <p><b>Place of death:</b> Unable to be determined</p> <p><b>Manner of death:</b> Unable to be determined</p> <p><b>Cause of death:</b> Unable to be determined</p>
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*The Coroners Act 2009 (NSW) in s81 (1) requires that when an inquest is held, the coroner must record in writing his or her findings as to various aspects of the death.*

*These are the findings of an inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Colin Campbell.*

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

### **Introduction:**

This inquest concerns the disappearance and suspected death of Colin Campbell. Colin was last seen on 29 May 2015. The police brief was tendered at the inquest. The Officer in charge, Detective sergeant Michael Kyneur gave additional oral evidence. No other witnesses were called.

### **The Inquest:**

The first task facing a coroner in a case such as this is to determine whether the missing person is actually dead. If that can be safely established the coroner must continue to make further findings as to the date and place of death and in relation to the manner and cause of death, in the usual way.<sup>1</sup>

Section 81 (1) of the Coroners Act 2009 (NSW) requires that when an inquest is held, the coroner must record in writing his or her findings. These are my brief findings in relation to the disappearance and suspected death of Colin Campbell.

### **Background:**

Colin was born on the 21st October 1964 to Ilona and Kenneth Campbell at Hornsby Hospital. He has a younger brother Peter Campbell, and a younger sister Vivienne Campbell.

Prior to 1979, Colin was residing with his parents and siblings in Coffs Harbour. It was around this time that Colin's mother and father separated, with Colin and Vivienne moving back to Sydney with their mother, and Peter remaining in Coffs Harbour with their father. Upon returning to Sydney, Colin attended Asquith Boys High School and Vivienne went to Asquith Girls High School. The family resided in the Hornsby Heights area.

Colin left high school prior to completing his Higher School Certificate and took up an apprenticeship at a Bakery in Hornsby. He remained there for a few years, but left before completing his apprenticeship. Colin had begun using cannabis recreationally. His mother says that she could see that his cannabis use "was affecting his

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<sup>1</sup> Section 81 Coroners Act 2009 (NSW)

personality and as a result it also affected his ability to hold a job and remain in employment". Colin also worked in the mid 1990's with NSW Railways as a linesman doing track work, but he fell and injured his back whilst at work and received a compensation payout. It is reported from Colin's family members that he squandered most of this money quite quickly and bought a number of new motor vehicles.

When Colin was about 25, his mother took him to see a psychiatrist in Auburn, Dr Peter Cook. At the time, Colin was described as delusional and was displaying erratic behaviour. Dr Cook treated Colin with anti-psychotic medication 'Largactyl', but Colin continued to abuse cannabis and alcohol.

Colin had been admitted to several psychiatric hospitals since his early twenties. In 1998, Colin overdosed on prescription medication, resulted in him being admitted to Ryde Hospital. Colin sustained anoxic brain damage as a result of this overdose, resulting in his actions becoming slow and stilted. His mother states that after this incident, "Colin's demeanour became more subdued and mild, prior to this he was quite psychotic".

Colin had a number of short term relationships over the years, but never married and has no children. He was unemployed since his mid-twenties and was receiving a disability support pension. He had been diagnosed with schizophrenia-paranoid type, Hepatitis C, Cirrhosis secondary to alcohol dependence, and Diabetes. In 2009, Colin was admitted to Hornsby Hospital after an increase in alcohol use, social withdrawal and subsequent deterioration of his mental state. He was later referred to Macquarie Hospital for rehabilitation and remained an inpatient until being discharged in November 2013. From this point on Colin commenced living in accommodation run by the NSW Health Assertive Outreach Team, whose role it is to case manage adults with a serious mental health diagnosis. The accommodation was located at 53 Landers Rd, Lane Cove North. Colin was one of four permanent residents at the location. He was assisted with medication and other social issues by his appointed case manager, registered nurse Kate Newcomb. Colin was seen nightly by a member of the team and one day's supply of medication would be given to him. The staff would observe night time medication. It is reported that Colin was always home for these visits unless he was staying with his mother in Hornsby and he was always very good at advising the team of his plans.

Ms Newcomb reported that she would often find Colin intoxicated or under the influence of illicit substances during home visits, which Colin would flatly deny. When intoxicated, Colin did not display any threatening behaviours, but would be vulnerable to falls or potentially harm from others. On the 15th April 2014, Colin was treated at the Royal North Shore Emergency Department for a laceration to the back of his head and a blood alcohol reading of 0.28 after he fell heavily on the street whilst

intoxicated. On the 9th of May 2014, Colin again presented to the Royal North Shore Emergency Department after an accidental overdose on prescription medication, which he had been prescribed after attending a medical centre GP. In the months leading up to his disappearance, Ms Newcomb reports that the instances of intoxication appeared to reduce.

On the 2nd March 2015, Colin met with Ms Newcomb to ask for a supportive letter for a Department of Housing application to move to Lithgow. According to Ms Newcomb, Colin stated that he finds Lithgow to be calm and that he wants to move there. After receiving psycho education and being reminded of his support base in Sydney, Colin acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed to stay in Sydney, however still stated that he would rather go to Lithgow. He expressed that he could reconsider things after a year to see how he feels then. Colin does not own or drive a motor vehicle, nor does he own or operate a mobile phone.

### ***The Disappearance:***

The last time Colin was seen was at about 5am on Friday 29th May 2015 by David Ferguson, a fellow housemate at 53 Landers Rd. Mr Ferguson describes this in his statement to police:

*“I was sitting on the front balcony at 53 Landers Rd Lane Cove. I saw Colin walk from the rear yard of the home down the driveway towards the street. This was unusual as Colin normally leaves the home by walking out the front door and down the path. Colin was wearing a black jacket, black pants and was carrying a dark coloured umbrella. I didn’t get to talk to Colin as he walked straight down the drive way and walked up Landers Road towards Lane Cove shops. It was also unusual that Colin would leave the house around this time. I get up early just about every morning and I have never seen Colin up that early and leave the house that early in the morning”.*

Mr Ferguson also stated that during a conversation in early April 2015, Colin had mentioned that he wanted to live in Lithgow as *“there was clean air there”*. He never mentioned anything else about Lithgow or why he wanted to move there.

On Sunday 31st May 2015, Colin was reported missing to police by his mother Ilona Campbell, after she and the Assertive Outreach Team tried find him.

### ***The Police Investigation:***

Police made numerous inquiries in relation to this investigation. All known bank accounts were monitored, with no withdrawal activity being present since Colin disappeared. There are no records held by the Department of Immigration and Border protection of Colin entering or leaving the country. It was confirmed that Colin was a member of the Chatswood RSL club and The Lane Cove Club, however neither of these establishments had any records of Colin attending since his disappearance.

After receiving the information about Colin's desire to move to Lithgow, police made enquiries with the Department of Housing in Lithgow. It was confirmed that on the 4th of December 2014, Colin had made an application for housing in the Lithgow area. Correspondence was then sent to Colin's address in Lane Cove, however this correspondence was unanswered and, as such, he was not provided with any housing in Lithgow.

On 13th of August 2015, a media release was prepared and issued by the NSW Police Media Unit. On 21st August 2015 a check of 'Facebook' and other internet sites was conducted using Colin's details, however these were of no assistance and it's believed Colin was not a user of social media. An article was also published in the North Shore Times in January 2016 calling for assistance.

All relevant signs of life checks have been completed by the Officer in Charge and the Missing Persons Unit. No signs of life have been detected and Colin's whereabouts remain unknown.

### ***Is Colin Deceased?***

Colin has had no access to his bank accounts and therefore has no source of income; all signs of life checks carried out by Police and the Missing Persons Unit have resulted in a negative response. I have come to the sad conclusion that Colin Campbell is deceased.

### **Findings required by s81(1)**

As a result of considering all of the documentary evidence and the oral evidence heard at the inquest, I am able to confirm that the death occurred and make the following findings in relation to it:

***The identity of the deceased:***

The deceased person was Colin Campbell

***Date of death:***

Unable to be determined

***Place of death:***

Unable to be determined

***Cause of death***

Unable to be determined

***Manner of death***

Unable to be determined

I close this inquest.

Magistrate Teresa O'Sullivan  
**Deputy State Coroner**

**Date 18 January 2017**