



STATE CORONER'S COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Inquest:	Inquest into the death of a person known as Paul Lachlan
Hearing dates:	11 December 2015, 9 June 2017
Date of findings:	19 June 2017
Place of findings:	State Coroners Court, Glebe
Findings of:	Magistrate Harriet Grahame, Deputy State Coroner
Catchwords:	Coronial Law, identity
File number:	2014/00350723
Representation:	Ms Deb William – Coronial Advocate (11/12/15) Mr Alex Creagh – Coronial Advocate (9/6/17)
Findings:	<p>On the balance of probabilities, I find that the deceased is a man known for many years as Paul Lachlan. He was born in United Kingdom on 22 May 1968 and named John Pritchard. He died between 24-27 November 2014 at [REDACTED] West Esplanade, Manly NSW. His death was [REDACTED] He died [REDACTED]</p>
Non Publication Orders	<p>Pursuant to section 74 of the <i>Coroners Act</i> 2009. I order that there is to be no publication of the following names - [REDACTED]</p>

	<p>Pursuant to section 75 of the <i>Coroners Act</i> 2009, I order that there is no publication of evidence disclosing the cause or manner of death.</p>
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REASONS FOR DECISION

1. This inquest concerns the death of a man known most recently as Paul Lachlan.
2. Paul has been described as a kind and loving person with a great sense of humour.¹ He was also somewhat mysterious and as will emerge, ultimately quite unknowable, even to those closest to him.

The role of the Coroner and scope of the inquest.

3. An inquest is intended to be an independent examination of all the available evidence in relation to the circumstances of a person's death. The Coroner is to make findings as to the identity of the nominated person and in relation to the date and place of death. The Coroner is also to make findings concerning the manner and cause of the person's death.²
4. Somewhat unusually the main issue for this inquest has been the formal identification of the deceased. Although the deceased was known as Paul Lachlan for many years, an extensive investigation at the time of his death was unable to confirm where he was born or when he entered Australia. In short, no Australian or overseas formal documents which link the deceased to the name "Paul Lachlan" could be discovered.

Background and relationship with [REDACTED]

5. At the time of his death, Paul was apparently 46 years of age. He celebrated his birthday on 22 May each year.

¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 6 Statement of [REDACTED], paragraph 59

² Section 81 *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW)

6. He met ██████████ in late February 1997 and they quickly became friends. This friendship developed into an intimate relationship and they commenced living together at a unit in Manly.
7. Over the years Paul told ██████████ very little about his family and background. He said that he had grown up in Preston, Manchester and that his father was American and his mother English. He said that he had a sister still living in that area and that she had two small children, a boy and a girl.³ Paul told ██████████ that he had completed an apprenticeship as a chef in the UK at a Royal Air Force Base and had worked as a chef and cook in various countries. He had travelled to Morocco, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Thailand and New Zealand before arriving in Australia.⁴
8. Paul and ██████████ lived together in an intimate relationship until March 2005. At that time there was an argument and the couple moved into separate bedrooms. They remained on good terms and continued to live together as friends and to go on outings and holidays together.
9. Throughout their relationship there were things that now raise questions about Paul's real identity. In over 17 years ██████████ states that he did not see "any official mail, drivers licence, Medicare card, no tax file number, or passport belonging to Paul. Paul had no bank accounts and paid for everything in cash. The only mail he received was personal items such as birthday cards and Christmas cards and I don't recall any family members."⁵ Paul apparently used a pre-paid mobile phone that had been registered in ██████████ name. He paid all his medical and dental expenses in cash. Paul could apparently drive, but he did not have a drivers licence and at some stage he told ██████████ that his passport had been lost or destroyed.
10. Early in their relationship, Paul said he needed to go back to England for his father's funeral. He left telephone contact numbers, but when ██████████ tried them, they appeared to be wrong numbers. Paul later explained that he must have written them down

³ Another friend thought his sister's name was Jenny.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Statement of ██████████ Tab 6

⁵ Exhibit 1, Statement of ██████████, Tab 6, paragraph 59

incorrectly through grief.⁶ He was away for some weeks. Later Paul also said his mother had died, but he could not afford to go back to the UK. He refused [REDACTED] offer to pay.

11. For much of the time [REDACTED] and Paul lived together, Paul worked casually as a furniture removalist or in other casual jobs and he was always paid in cash. When he ran short of money, [REDACTED] supported him.

Events of 27 November 2014

12. In July 2014, Paul and [REDACTED] had a disagreement and began to live more separate lives, while remaining in the unit together. Looking back now, [REDACTED] believes Paul may have been depressed in the months leading up to his death. His eating habits changed, he had lost his job and was quite reluctant to leave the house.⁷ Although he would put a good face on it for others, he appeared to be withdrawing.
13. Just before 5pm on 27 November 2014, [REDACTED] returned to the unit at Manly, after ten days holiday on the North Coast.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

15. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. He was clearly dead [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

16. Police arrived and commenced investigations.

⁶ Exhibit 1, Statement of [REDACTED] Tab 6, paragraph 12

⁷ Exhibit 1, Statement of [REDACTED] Tab 6

⁸ Note left by Paul Lachlan. See Photographs, Exhibit 1, tab16

Time and place of death

17. When an autopsy was conducted the following morning the pathologist noted that the body was in the early stages of decomposition. The time of death was estimated as being between 20-27 November 2014. However, we now know that Paul was seen by a neighbour on 24 or 25 November, so it is likely to have been after that. Paul's death occurred in his bedroom at [REDACTED] West Esplanade, Manly NSW.
18. It appears that Paul may have borrowed a drill from a neighbour on 24 or 25 November 2014. He returned it the same day. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Cause and manner of death

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Initial investigations into Paul Lachlan's identity

20. At autopsy Paul was described as "an adequately nourished adult male whose features were in keeping with the stated age of 46".⁹ His hair was short and black. . He weighed 82.5 kilograms and was 1.87 metres tall. He had no unusual or especially remarkable features. He had no tattoos.
21. To try to ascertain Paul's true identity, NSW Police undertook many inquiries. They were assisted by [REDACTED] who shared any information he had. Various documents found in Paul's room were checked including an old Medicare card (in a different name), a slip from the Mosman Club, an old gym membership card and a card from Austin Clinic.

⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 1 Autopsy Report created by Dr Issabella Brouwer.

22. Police also spoke with neighbours¹⁰ and friends.¹¹ Unfortunately none of these inquiries proved very helpful in providing new information.
23. Police spoke to a friend of Paul's, Barbara Bryant-Rycroft who indicated that she had worked with Paul at Lifeline between 1995-2001. Unfortunately Lifeline did not keep records of volunteers at the relevant time. A more comprehensive statement was subsequently obtained from Ms Bryant-Rycroft.¹² It annexed a Lifeline Newsletter which noted that Paul Lachlan had been a volunteer and was working at Lifeline as a sales assistant in 1998.
24. Other early police investigations included
- * A fingerprint check through the Police systems Australia wide was conducted, but contained a negative result¹³. Fingerprints were also sent to Interpol in Manchester and Dublin.¹⁴
 - * Police contacted the British Consulate. They were unable to find a record of a person matching Paul's stated name, date and country of birth.¹⁵
 - * Inquiries with the Royal Air Force, with a negative result.
 - * Police made inquiries with the Department of Immigration. There was no record matching Paul's stated name, date and place of birth ever entering or leaving Australia.¹⁶
 - * Police did an Electoral Roll check. No matching record was found.
 - * The telephone used by Paul was interrogated, but no useful information was obtained. Another sim card found in Paul's diary turned out to have belonged to a local

¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 7 Statement of Deinora Grassi

¹¹ See Exhibit 1, Tab 2 Statement of Constable Alana Scheveling. Paragraph 31. Contact made with Barbara Rycroft.

¹² Statement of Barbara Bryant-Rycroft, dated 5 June 2017, Exhibit 8

¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 Statement of Constable Dusko Miroslavljec Paragraph 11

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 Statement of Constable Alana Scheveling. Paragraph 31, Exhibit 1, Tab 5 Statement of Constable Dusko Miroslavljec Paragraph 14

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 Statement of Constable Alana Scheveling. Paragraph 6

¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 Statement of Constable Dusko Miroslavljec Paragraph 5

man whose car had been broken into nearby Paul's apartment. No phone was found to have been registered in Paul's name

* No bank accounts have been found which can be connected with Paul.

* Paul's dentist confirmed that he always paid cash and did not appear to have a private health card or Medicare card.

* Police checked Paul's details against the data kept by the NSW Missing Persons Unit. There were no matching results.

* A photograph of Paul was sent to the UK Missing Person's Unit.

* NSW Witness Protection confirmed that Paul was not part of their program.¹⁷

Conduct of the Inquest and further necessary investigations

25. The inquest had commenced on 11 December 2015. At that time the Officer then in charge of the investigation and [REDACTED] gave evidence. It was immediately obvious that further inquiries should be carried out. Matters that had arisen during the course of [REDACTED] evidence that made it clear that there were gaps in the investigation. The Court was also keen for Paul's photograph to be widely shown in the United Kingdom on social media or by any other available means.

Contact from John Pritchard's family

26. After the inquest adjourned in December 2015, Paul Lachlan's photograph was shown widely in the media. Police sent information about their investigation to police in the United Kingdom, who also shared the photograph in a number of ways. A young woman named [REDACTED] recognised one of the pictures she had seen on Facebook, as her uncle John Pritchard. Subsequently [REDACTED] showed the photograph to her mother, [REDACTED] and her aunt [REDACTED]. Both women immediately recognised their brother.
27. [REDACTED] stated that she was the eldest of five children born to Anne and Joseph Pritchard. John Pritchard was the youngest child in the family and had been

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 Statement of Constable Dusko Miroslavljevic Paragraph 15

born on 22 May 1967¹⁸. They grew up in Wigan, Lancashire. Their mother left the family home when John was five years of age and difficult times followed. By about 14 years of age John was living in a children's home. He studied catering at the local technical college in Wigan and later moved to Scotland for work. John moved to New Zealand for a time and then returned to live with [REDACTED] and her family in Lancashire. She reported that he moved to Australia in 1992. She appears to have lost contact with him around 2002. She said " I never considered filing a "missing person" report because as far as I was concerned he was not missing I knew he was living a very happy life in the country he wanted to live in".¹⁹ [REDACTED] had no doubt that the pictures she had seen were her brother and she provided other family photographs²⁰ of what appear to be the same man.

28. [REDACTED] also provided a statement after viewing the original photograph on Facebook. She gave a history of sporadic contact with her brother John over the years. She was unable to offer much detail about where and when John had moved around, but believed he had gone to work as a chef in New Zealand around 1995/6. She said "over the years I spoke with John via telephone. This was usually at Christmas or times of celebration. He always sounded happy and confident. There was no inclination that there was anything wrong in his life. I again lost contact with John". She was certain the picture showed her brother and she stated that she was shocked that he was dead.

DNA testing

29. DNA testing has subsequently been undertaken. There were considerable frustrations and difficulties in this process, resulting in an unacceptable delay.²¹ The relevant police authorities should work on streamlining procedures for the taking and transport of samples across national borders.
30. Finally, two results were presented to the investigating team.²² The first compared the results for [REDACTED] and the results of the deceased. It used

¹⁸ All other references suggest that his birthday was 22 May 1968, including information from her sister, [REDACTED]. It may be that [REDACTED] is mistaken.

¹⁹ Exhibit 5 Statement of [REDACTED], paragraph 22

²⁰ Exhibit 6

²¹ See statement of Senior Constable Dusko Miroslavljevic, at Exhibit 4

²² See Exhibit 14, and the evidence of Virginia Friedman at the inquest (9/6/17)

the Powerplex 21 System, examining nuclear DNA. The result was essentially inconclusive. It was thus necessary to carry out mitochondrial DNA testing. The mitochondrial DNA profile was recovered from the deceased's fingernail. It was consistent with the mitochondrial DNA profiles of both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It was noted that the profile is expected to occur in approximately 1 in 820 unrelated individuals in the general population. In evidence Virginia Friedman from the Forensic & Analytical Science Service (FASS) considered the evidence of relationship "moderately strong".²³

Immigration Records

31. Once investigating police had the possible name of John Pritchard they were able to undertake a number of other important inquiries. The Department of Immigration was able to locate an "incoming passenger card" for John Pritchard, date of birth 22 May 1968. It appears that he entered Australia from the United Kingdom by aeroplane on 12 January 1996.²⁴ There were no further movements found for that person during the period for 1/1/1991 and 1/1/2016.²⁵
32. The last known address for John Pritchard on their system was "Cossies Café" at 638A Crown Street, Surry Hills. Senior Constable Mirosavljevic was able to find the owner of that café at the time and supply that person with photographs of the deceased but no identification could be made. Given the passage of time and the casual nature of café staffing arrangements, this is not surprising.

A link to the Surry Hills Address

33. A number of other leads were followed up. [REDACTED] had given evidence that when they first met, Paul was living somewhere in the city area. He remembered going to the Mosman Club and seeing Paul put down an address in Bourke Street, Surry Hills. After Paul's death, [REDACTED] went through all Paul's personal possessions looking for answers.

²³ Evidence of Virginia Friedman at inquest (9/6/17)

²⁴ Exhibit 12

²⁵ Email correspondence Australian Border Force, at Exhibit 12

Strangely, after all the time that had passed, he came upon that slip and gave it to the Police.²⁶ The address was 627 Bourke Street, Surry Hills.

34. Later inquiries on the COPS System have linked that address to the name John Pritchard with a date of birth of 22 May 1968.²⁷ The COPS record, which dates from January 1997, outlines an allegation of dishonesty and a complaint which had been made by John Pritchard's flatmates.
35. Police spoke with two of the original complainants. Andrew Cook stated that he had shared a house with a number of people during 1996. One of the flatmates was an Englishman named John Pritchard who worked at a café in Crown Street, Surry Hills. He was gay and also worked as a barman at the Carrington Hotel. Mr Cook outlined various allegations of dishonesty involving John, including a stolen computer, missing CDs and stolen rent money. Eventually Mr Cook and his friends changed the locks and they never saw John again. The incidents were described as extremely distressing at the time. Andrew Cook believed they had been told many lies by John Pritchard and found it difficult in retrospect to know what had been lies or fabrications. Mr Cook was shown a photograph of Paul Lachlan and he thought it "showed a strong resemblance" to the man he knew as John Pritchard, but given the passage of time he could not say for sure. The general physical description he gave was consistent with the deceased.
36. Police also interviewed Natasha Troyak. She confirmed having lived with Andrew Cook, John Pritchard and others at 627 Bourke Street at the relevant time. She recalled that John was from Manchester, United Kingdom and that he worked as a chef. She remembered the missing rent and that there was stolen money. She recalled that when they reported it to police they were told that John Pritchard's visa had expired. She told police that she left that house because she no longer felt safe.
37. Leaving aside the truth or otherwise of the allegations, it is significant that after the police were involved, nobody from that friendship group appears to have had any further contact with their old flatmate, John. There are also no further sightings recorded on the COPS system for John Pritchard. It appears that he could not be found.

²⁶ A photograph of the slip was tendered. Exhibit 11

²⁷ COPS record, Exhibit 13

Who is Paul Lachlan ?

38. I am satisfied that Mr Paul Lachlan and Mr John Pritchard are the same person. I base this on the strong picture identifications made by John Pritchard's sisters and niece. The old family photographs they supplied also show a strong resemblance to the known photographs of Paul Lachlan. The identification is supported by the DNA evidence, which has been described as "moderately strong".
39. There are numerous other pieces of supporting evidence. Since 1997 there is no record of John Pritchard in Australia or leaving the country. His family in the United Kingdom have not seen him. Police tried to find him after the fraud and theft allegations emerged in relation to the house at 627 Bourke Street, Surry Hills. They were unsuccessful. People who knew John Pritchard at that time describe a person whose accent and appearance is consistent with Paul Lachlan's. [REDACTED] has provided evidence of Paul Lachlan using the same Bourke Street address on a club membership form in early 1997. The original immigration entry form lists John Pritchard's address as a café in Surry Hills, this is consistent with information provided by former flatmates.
40. While there is no official record in the name of Paul Lachlan, it appears that John commenced using the name in early 1997. [REDACTED] told the Court that Paul only ever used cash, had no passport or Medicare card and provided sketchy and sometimes conflicting versions of his past. He was also extremely keen to avoid police in all situations and even appeared quite stressed if police were around.
41. Barbara Bryant-Rycroft's statement outlined her friendship with Paul Lachlan. She first met him when he came to work as a volunteer at Lifeline. She said "he had a happy disposition" and they grew close over the years. Interestingly, Paul told her that his parents did not accept that he was gay²⁸ and that may have been part of the reason for the distance he had from his family. I have no way now of knowing if that is true. However, I note that in Australia, Paul was part of the gay community, attending Mardi Gras and at one time working in a gay venue. He had long term relationships with men. I note that neither of his family members mention this aspect of his life and wonder if it was hidden from them.

²⁸ Evidence of Barbara Rycroft

42. After Paul died both Barbara Bryant-Rycroft and ██████████ could see many holes in the stories they had been told over the years. There were many inconsistencies and conflicting versions of his past. ██████████, for example had been told that Barbara and Paul had worked together as health and training inspectors. Paul would go so far as to leave in the morning with a satchel of books about safety in the food industry and tell stories of training he had conducted in milk bars and takeaways²⁹. And yet none of that actually happened. While he did work with Barbara at Lifeline, the dream of moving into the food safety business never actually occurred. It was at best a fantasy.
43. ██████████ also gave evidence of Paul leaving to attend his parent's funerals in the United Kingdom. This must also be a lie. If one accepts ██████████ evidence, their mother died in 2004 and their father in 2016. John did not attend either funeral. It is impossible to know where he went or what he did, when he pretended to be in the United Kingdom for the funeral of his parent.
44. These are just two examples of the many lies and fantasies that Paul apparently told. Barbara Bryant -Rycroft, fond of Paul as she clearly was, also had many examples of stories which just did not stand up to scrutiny. The court acknowledges how painful and distressing this may be for those that loved him. It may also be that ultimately the web of lies that Paul had created became increasing stressful for him as well.
45. By the time of his tragic death, Paul Lachlan appears to have been a somewhat troubled man. ██████████ described him as loving, caring and uplifting when they first met. He could clearly be a lot of fun and a good friend. That much is confirmed by Barbara Bryant-Rycroft. But towards the end of his life there were mood swings. He became increasingly difficult and could be aggressive.³⁰ He had had no contact with his family in many years and after breaking up with ██████████, had few really close friends on whom he could rely. It must also be remembered that he was by then in Australia illegally, without an ability to get social security payments or Medicare benefits. He had become quite withdrawn and socially reclusive. ██████████
██████████
██████████

²⁹ Evidence of ██████████ at Inquest, 11/12/15 at page 12, line 40 onwards

³⁰ See Evidence of ██████████

Findings

46. On the balance of probabilities, I find that the deceased is a man known for many years as Paul Lachlan. He was born in the United Kingdom on 22 May 1968. He was named John Pritchard at birth. He died between 24-27 November 2014 at [REDACTED] West Esplanade, Manly NSW. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
47. I offer my sincere condolences to his friend and former partner [REDACTED] I thank [REDACTED] for his support of the coronial process and I acknowledge that the length of time that it has taken to get to this point has been extremely frustrating. It is clear that [REDACTED] offered Paul stability and great comfort for many years.
48. I offer my condolences to Paul's English family. While they had not been in contact for years, I understand their shock and loss is nevertheless significant. I note their requests for non-publication orders relating to their names and to the manner and cause of death. And I am prepared to grant those orders.

Magistrate Harriet Grahame
Deputy State Coroner
19 June 2017