



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court References: COR 2020 1402
COR 2020 1401
COR 2020 1403

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 63(1)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF:

Sally- Anne Wills

Christopher Polden and

Mohammad Ibrahim

Findings of:	Coroner Leveasque Peterson
Delivered On:	26 May 2022
Delivered At:	65 Kavanagh Street Southbank, Victoria, 3006
Hearing Date:	22 June 2021
Counsel Assisting the Coroner:	Lindsay Spence
Representation:	Mr Ben Ihle QC of Counsel together with Ms Rose Singleton of counsel, on behalf of the Chief Commissioner of Police

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I, Leveasque Peterson, Coroner, having investigated the deaths of Sally-Anne Wills, Christopher Polden and Mohammed Ibrahim, and having held an inquest in relation to these deaths at Melbourne on 22 June 2021 find that:

- (a) the identity of the deceased was Sally-Anne Wills, born on 6 March 1990; and
- (b) the death occurred on 11 March 2020, at Coppin Grove, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Victoria, from multiple stab wounds to the chest; and
- (c) the death occurred in the circumstances described below.

and I also find that:

- (a) the identity of the deceased was Christopher Kevin Polden, born on 17 September 1960; and
- (b) the death occurred on 12 March 2020, at Royal Melbourne Hospital, 300 Grattan Street, Parkville, Victoria, from a single stab wound to the right upper abdomen; and
- (c) the death occurred in the circumstances described below.

and I also find that:

- (a) the identity of the deceased was Mohammed Ismael Ibrahim, born on 28 December 1985; and
- (b) the death occurred on 12 March 2020, outside 1a Walton Street, Kew, Victoria, from gunshot wounds to the chest, abdomen and left upper leg; and
- (c) the death occurred in the circumstances described below.

BACKGROUND

Sally-Anne Wills

1. Sally-Anne Wills (known affectionately as Sals to her family and friends), was born on 6 March 1990 to her parents Brian and Maria Wills.
2. Sally-Anne was born in Sydney, the younger sister to her brother Ben. The Wills family moved to Glen Waverley when Sally-Anne was three months old and as she grew up she was actively engaged in local netball, tennis and swimming clubs. Sally-Anne grew up in a very loving and close family and they remain so to this day, fondly remembering Sals as quick to laugh and always creating something.
3. Sally-Anne was described as a free spirit who was very empathetic and always helping others, often leaving a lasting impression on people after only one meeting. Sally-Anne attended Wesley College until Year 11, where she originally met Ashlee Gunstone.
4. Sally-Anne was a mix of admirable attributes. She was clever, creative and technically minded, often teaching herself skills. She worked in a variety of fields including graphic and web design, digital marketing, social media management, lumberyard operations and vertical gardens. She loved music and was renowned for recommending artists to others they had never heard of but came to love.
5. Sally-Anne moved into an apartment in Coppin Grove, Hawthorn in 2009, sharing with her brother Ben whilst their parents were overseas for a year. After a period of living at other locations, Sally-Anne returned to live in Coppin Grove in 2017 and Ashlee was a regular visitor. In 2018 Ben moved out of the Coppin Grove apartment and Sally-Anne and Ashlee set up their “forever” home with their cat and dog, very happy in their belief of finding lifelong soulmates. Five days prior to her death Sally-Anne’s family and friends gathered to celebrate both her 30th birthday as well as her and Ashlee’s plans for the future.
6. Sally-Anne was 30 years of age when she passed away on 11 March 2020 from multiple stab wounds inflicted by Mohammed Ibrahim in Coppin Grove, Hawthorn.

Christopher Kevin Polden

7. Christopher Kevin Polden (Chris) was born on 17 September 1960 and was adopted by Kevin and Jennifer Polden into the Polden family.
8. Chris grew up and lived in both Burnie and Devonport, Tasmania, where there was a total of eight children (both natural and adopted) to Kevin and Jennifer Polden (both now passed away). Chris moved to Victoria in his early 20s and attended Brunswick Tech as a mature age student studying home economics. Throughout his life, Chris had a number of jobs working in government departments and agencies, being employed by the CSIRO, Department of Housing and the Department of Defence. Chris resided in various northern suburbs in the areas of Clifton Hill, Northcote, Fairfield and Lalor before moving to and settling in Elwood approximately two decades ago. Chris lived by himself in an apartment managed by 'Housing Choices'.
9. In the early 1990s, Chris became heavily involved in various HIV/AIDS advocacy groups including advocating for housing needs. Chris volunteered on the board of Aids Housing Action Group for many years advocating and managing a number of properties for people with HIV. Chris often volunteered at the 'Alternative LifeStyle Organisation' (ALSO), a foundation responsible for organising community social events. Chris also helped out extensively at the Positive Living Centre, described as a safe haven for people with HIV.
10. Maxwell Clarke, who had known Chris for nearly forty years, described him as 'an out and proud gay man for as long as I knew him. He was always willing to help others in need and provided continual support to his friends and the community'.
11. Chris' brother Derek said of Chris, 'I can't even remember ever having an argument or disagreement with Chris. That's just the way he was. You wouldn't be surprised if he just turned up at your door unannounced one day Chris was a very caring and well-respected member of his family and community'.
12. Chris was 59 years of age when he passed away of 12 March 2020 from a stab wound inflicted by Mohammed Ibrahim in Cotham Street, Kew.

Mohammed Ibrahim

13. Mohammed Ibrahim was born on 28 December 1985 to Ismeil Rajab and Soheila Fadavi in Karbala, Iraq.
14. Mohammed was the middle of seven children, having three sisters and three brothers. Mohammed's father Ismeil came to Australia as a refugee and in 2008 the remainder of the family followed, settling in Roxburgh Park.
15. Evidence suggests that Mohammed never held lengthy employment in Australia and, apart from learning English at TAFE, also did not attend school.
16. Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Raid Al Humrany reported in 2015 that Mohammed had informed him that 'he was able to reach grade 4 while he was living in Iraq then after he and his family left the country Iraq and went to Iran and was able to reach grade 4 there and then left the school due to financial problems and went to work in different fields that included gold and glass industries until the time he was able to come to Australia to join his family here seven years back'.
17. During a trip back to Iraq in 2011, Mohammed met his wife. They were married in 2012. Mohammed's first daughter was born in Iraq in February 2013 with Mohammed returning to Australia for a period of months after that. Mohammed's wife moved to Australia in November 2014 and they lived with Mohammed's family for four months before moving out.
18. Mohammed's wife described the relationship as volatile, stating, 'there was always fighting and then he was drinking. Mohammed originally hid the drinking because it is against our religion but when we moved in with his friend, he didn't hide it anymore. The violence started at the very beginning in 2012 and no one could stop him'.
19. On 3 June 2015, Mohammed's wife attended Epping Police Station with their two-year-old daughter requesting assistance in respect of Mohammed's conduct. She reported that the previous evening they had argued and he struck her across the face with an open hand. The Police Report noted that Mohammed's wife only spoke Arabic, had no other friends or family in Australia and was 'fearful of retribution towards her and her daughter from her husband'.

20. Arrangements were immediately made for mother and child to stay at Crisis Accommodation. Mohammed was contacted by telephone and requested to attend Epping Police Station where he was served with a Family Violence Safety Notice with full conditions. The Police Report noted 'Respondent stated happy with that as he wants a divorce'. A Hearing was listed before Heidelberg Magistrates Court on 4 June 2015 where a full intervention order was issued, agreed to by Mohammed and served on him at Court.
21. Two further family violence reports were made to Victoria Police in December 2016 and March 2017 in respect of parenting arrangements and referrals (no offence detected).
22. On 1 May 2017, an Interim Family Violence Intervention Order was issued at Melbourne Magistrates Court and on 12 September 2017 a Full Family Violence Intervention Order was granted for a full five year period to 12 September 2022.
23. At a final Family Court hearing in 2017, Mohammed failed to attend so his wife was granted fulltime care of her children.
24. Mohammed's wife did not see him again after 12 September 2017.
25. Mohammed's brother stated, 'after all of that happened with (his wife) he got very depressed and was thinking too much. He was saying he was hearing things, people talking in his head. He constantly thought people were following him and he was paranoid. Mohammed would always lock the doors when he came home because he thought he was being followed. We tried to get him to go to a doctor but Mohammed didn't think there was anything wrong with him. He stopped telling us about the voices in his head because we weren't believing him'.
26. Mohammed's brother also noted he had 'no idea what Mohammed did all day. He would normally go out in the morning and not come back until that night but I don't know what he did'.
27. Another of Mohammed's brothers observed that 'when my brother and his wife separated, he was not allowed to see his children. This made him very lonely, depressed and upset. This is when my brother started to tell us about hearing voices and noises. Not being able to see his children made him very sad. This caused him to

think a lot. He was very lonely'. The same brother noted that 'Mohammed was never diagnosed with any mental health issues in Australia. As far as I know he never went to the doctor to discuss these issues'.

28. There is no evidence that Mohammed knew or had previously met any of the victims of his attack.

CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

Jurisdiction

29. The deaths of Sally-Anne Wills, Christopher Polden and Mohammed Ibrahim each constituted a '*reportable death*' pursuant to section 4 of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic) (**Coroners Act**), as these deaths occurred in Victoria and were unexpected, violent and resulted directly from injury.

Purpose of the Coronial Jurisdiction

30. The jurisdiction of the Coroners Court of Victoria (**Coroners Court**) is inquisitorial.¹ The purpose of a coronial investigation is to independently investigate a reportable death to ascertain, if possible, the identity of the deceased person, the cause of death and the circumstances in which the death occurred.
31. The cause of death refers to the medical cause of death, incorporating where possible, the mode or mechanism of death.
32. The circumstances in which the death occurred refers to the context or background and surrounding circumstances of the death. It is confined to those circumstances that are sufficiently proximate and causally relevant to the death.
33. The broader purpose of coronial investigations is to contribute to a reduction in the number of preventable deaths, both through the observations made in the investigation findings and by the making of recommendations by coroners. This is generally referred to as the prevention role.
34. Coroners are empowered to:
 - (a) report to the Attorney-General on a death;

¹ Section 89(4) *Coroners Act 2008*.

- (b) comment on any matter connected with the death they have investigated, including matters of public health or safety and the administration of justice; and
 - (c) make recommendations to any Minister or public statutory authority or entity on any matter connected with the death, including public health or safety or the administration of justice.
35. These powers are the vehicles by which the prevention role may be advanced.
36. The power to comment arises as a consequence of the obligation to make findings. It is not free ranging. It must be a comment “on any matter connected with the death”. The powers to comment and make recommendations are inextricably connected with, rather than independent of, the power to enquire into a death or for the purpose of making findings. They are not separate or distinct sources of power enabling a coroner to enquire for the sole or dominant reason of making comment or recommendation.²
37. It is important to stress that coroners are not empowered to determine the civil or criminal liability arising from the investigation of a reportable death and are specifically prohibited from including a finding or comment or any statement that a person is, or may be, guilty of an offence.³ It is not the role of the coroner to lay or apportion blame, but to establish the facts.⁴
38. A coroner must hold an inquest if it is suspected that the death was the result of homicide, unless a person has been charged with an indictable offence in respect of the death.
39. In this instance an inquest was mandated by the legislation, however, in view of the lack of contentious facts, I determined that it was appropriate to deal with the matter by way of a summary inquest and I heard only from one witness, Detective Sergeant Pixie Fuhrmeister of the Homicide Squad, Victoria Police.

² *Harmsworth v The State Coroner* [1989] VR 989 at 996.

³ Section 69(1). However, a coroner may include a statement relating to a notification to the Director of Public Prosecutions if they believe an indictable offence may have been committed in connection with the death. See sections 69(2) and 49(1) of the Act.

⁴ *Keown v Khan* (1999) 1 VR 69.

Standard of Proof

40. All coronial findings must be made based on proof of relevant facts on the balance of probabilities.⁵ The strength of evidence necessary to prove relevant facts varies according to the nature of the facts and the circumstances in which they are sought to be proved.⁶
41. In determining these matters, I am guided by the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*.⁷ The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals or entities, unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction that they caused or contributed to the death.
42. Proof of facts underpinning a finding that would, or may, have an extremely deleterious effect on a party's character, reputation or employment prospects demand a weight of evidence commensurate with the gravity of the facts sought to be proved.⁸ Facts should not be considered to have been proven on the balance of probabilities by inexact proofs, indefinite testimony or indirect inferences. Rather, such proof should be the result of clear, cogent or strict proof in the context of a presumption of innocence.⁹

Sources of Evidence

43. This finding draws on the totality of the material produced during the coronial investigations into Sally-Anne, Christopher and Mohammed's deaths. That is, the court records maintained during the coronial investigation, the Coronial Brief and further material sought and obtained by the Court, the evidence adduced during the Inquest and submissions provided by Counsel Assisting and Counsel Representing the Chief Commissioner of Police.
44. In writing this finding, I do not purport to summarise all of the evidence but refer to it only in such detail as appears warranted by its forensic significance and the interests of

⁵ *Re State Coroner; ex parte Minister for Health* (2009) 261 ALR 152.

⁶ *Qantas Airways Limited v Gama* (2008) 167 FCR 537 at [139] per Branson J (noting that His Honour was referring to the correct approach to the standard of proof in a civil proceeding in the Federal Court with reference to section 140 of the *Evidence Act 1995* (Cth); *Neat Holdings Pty Ltd v Karajan Holdings Pty Ltd* (1992) 67 ALJR 170 at 170-171 per Mason CJ, Brennan, Deane and Gaudron JJ.

⁷ (1938) 60 CLR 336.

⁸ *Anderson v Blashki* [1993] 2 VR 89, following *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336.

⁹ *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336 at pp 362-3 per Dixon J.

narrative clarity. It is important to note the absence of reference to any particular aspect of the evidence does not mean that it has not been considered.

IDENTITY OF DECEASED

Sally-Anne Wills

45. On 13 March 2020, Sally-Anne Wills was visually identified by her father, Brian Wills. Sally-Anne's identity was not in dispute and required no further investigation.

Christopher Polden

46. On 16 March 2020, Christopher Kevin Polden was visually identified by his sister-in-law, Helen Polden. Christopher's identity was not in dispute and required no further investigation.

Mohammed Ismael Ibrahim

47. On 17 March 2020, Mohammed Ismael Ibrahim was visually identified by his brother, Haghi Mashat. Mohammed's identity was not in dispute and required no further investigation.

MEDICAL CAUSE OF DEATH

Sally-Anne Wills

48. On 12 March 2020, Dr Brian Beer, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine conducted an autopsy on Sally-Anne Wills. In a report dated 10 July 2020, Dr Beer made the following findings:

(a) A total of five stab wounds to the chest were identified:

- i. Wound Nos. 1 & 2 enter the left upper anterior chest wall involving the left upper lung only. Wound depths approximately 5-7cm.
- ii. Wound No. 3 enters through the right mid antero-medial chest wall, involving the right lung, heart and left upper lung. Wound depth approximately 8-9cm.
- iii. Wound No. 4 enters through the right antero-lateral chest wall involving the external chest wall soft tissues only. Wound depth difficult to assess but is in the order of 4-5cm.

iv. Wound No. 5 enters through the right upper lateral chest wall involving the chest wall soft tissues only. Wound depth approximately 2cm.

(b) Incised wounds were identified to the left hand and right forearm:

i. Three incised wounds to the dorsal aspect (back of) the left index, middle and ring fingers.

ii. Two incised wounds to the posterior right forearm and posterolateral right wrist.

(c) Right and left pleural cavity haemorrhage.

49. Dr Beer made the following relevant comments:

(a) The cause of death was due to haemorrhage and hypovolaemic shock from the stab wounds to the chest (primarily stab wound No. 3, with a contribution from stab wounds No. 1 & 2).

(b) There were minor stab wounds to the right chest which only involved the external chest wall.

(c) There were incised wounds to the back of the middle three fingers of the left hand (left index, middle and ring fingers) and to the posterior right forearm consistent with defence wounds. The right wrist wound is less typical for a defence wound.

50. Post-mortem toxicology did not detect the presence of any substance contributory to the cause of death.

51. Dr Beer formulated the cause of death as 1a) *Stab wounds to the chest.*

Christopher Polden

52. On 12 March 2020, Dr Brian Beer, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine conducted an autopsy on Christopher Polden. In a report dated 10 July 2020, Dr Beer made the following findings:

(a) A single stab wound to the right upper quadrant of the abdominal wall, passing through the transverse colon and omentum, partially transecting the first part of the duodenum with an incised wound to the ventral aspect of the liver

transecting the portal vessels. The wound tracked front to back, right to left and slightly upwards.

(b) Two litres of blood and blood clot in the peritoneal cavity.

53. Dr Beer made the following relevant comments:

(a) The cause of death was due to hypovolaemic shock due to marked haemorrhage into the peritoneal cavity caused by a single stab wound to the right upper abdomen with transection of the portal vessels and an extensive ventral (inferior) incised wound to the liver.

(b) There were no other wounds and no defensive injuries.

54. Post-mortem toxicology did not detect the presence of any substance contributory to the cause of death.

55. Dr Beer formulated the cause of death as 1a) *Single stab wound to the right upper abdomen.*

Mohammed Ismael Ibrahim

56. On 13 March 2020, Dr Brian Beer, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine conducted an autopsy on Mohammed Ibrahim. In a report dated 10 July 2020, Dr Beer made the following findings:

(a) Three bullet tract trajectories:

i. Trajectory No. 1 enters the mid left anterior chest, passes through the lower half of the sternum, across the surface anterior pericardium, across the surface of the right middle lobe of the lung, through the right lateral chest wall and exits in the right upper antero-lateral chest wall near the axilla. A bullet jacket was not found.

ii. Trajectory No. 2 enters in the lateral aspect of the abdomen to left flank, just above the left iliac crest, passes through small bowel, sigmoid colon, posterior aorta – left iliac artery and lower inferior vena cava, and through the body of L5 vertebra, shattering it. A bullet jacket was retrieved from soft tissues just above the right sacroiliac joint adjacent to the vertebral body of L5. There was no exit wound.

iii. Trajectory No. 3 enters in the mid left lateral thigh, passing upwards through the left anterior thigh exiting on the antero-medial aspect of the left upper thigh-groin region. It re-entered through the left scrotum shattering the left testicle, passed up and diagonally through the scrotum and exited in the right groin. A bullet jacket was not found.

(b) Three ill-defined zones of central chest bruising and two abrasions to the upper left chest-clavicle region and to the left lower chest-flank region consistent with being hit by bean bag rounds.

(c) Multiple other abrasions to the head, torso and limbs.

57. Dr Beer made the following relevant comments:

(a) The cause of death was due to blood loss (hypovolaemic shock) secondary to bullet wounds to the chest, abdomen and the left thigh.

(b) Three bullet trajectories were identified, one to the chest, one to the lower left flank-abdomen region and one to the left leg and genital region. Only one bullet jacket was retrieved from the body (the pelvic-abdominal trajectory). In the other two tracts the bullets exited the body. This bullet jacket and the rifling on this fired bullet was consistent with the .300 ammunition used in the MCX rifles. The entry wound features are consistent with “distant” range of fire.

(c) The bruising to the central chest and two of the larger chest abrasions (upper left chest-clavicle region and left lower chest/flank region) are compatible with firing of the bean bag rounds.

(d) There were abrasions to the head, torso and limbs which would be consistent with having occurred during the ensuing struggle after being shot.

(e) There was no underlying natural disease that may have contributed to the death. The deceased showed severe and widespread keloid skin scarring.

58. Post-mortem toxicology did not detect the presence of ethanol, common drugs, poisons or novel psychoactive substances. The toxicology showed a marginal ethanol increase in the cavity blood, not present in the leg blood or vitreous and consistent with artefact.

59. Dr Beer formulated the cause of death as 1a) *gunshot wounds to the chest, abdomen and left upper leg.*

EVENTS IMMEDIATELY PROXIMATE TO DEATH

60. On Wednesday 11 March 2020 at approximately 4.35pm, Mohammed attended the Broadmeadows Central Shopping Centre, withdrew \$600 from an ATM in two withdrawals. CCTV captured him wearing a salmon-coloured polo top and blue jeans. He attended the Sketchers Store and purchased a pair of black on black size 10 shoes, paying cash. Mohammed was clearly carrying an item wrapped in white cloth or plastic which is visible in the CCTV. At 5.15pm he travelled to Broadmeadows Railway Station arriving 5.24pm.
61. At 5.28pm Mohammed boarded a train headed for Flinders Street Railway Station and at 5.33pm he left the train at Glenroy Railway Station. At 5.51pm he boarded another train heading to Flinders Street Railway Station and at 6.18pm disembarked at Southern Cross Railway Station. Mohammed is seen on a range of Safe City CCTV cameras walking around the CBD between 6.25pm-7.12pm, the last location being Dukes Walk, South Wharf. Despite an extensive search of surrounding CCTV cameras Mohammed is not sighted again until 9.23pm and between this time and 10.18pm he is seen on various CCTV cameras. Mohammed is last seen walking in the direction of Jolimont Railway Station.

11 March 2020 | Jolimont Railway Station | Non-Fatal Stabbing of PSO Josh Davies

62. At approximately 10.38pm on Wednesday 11 March 2020, Protective Services Officers (PSOs) Josh Davies and Jamie Radovanovich were patrolling Jolimont Train Station. Davies and Radovanovich were on their way to the PSO office when they observed Mohammed walking towards them in an easterly direction. Davies and Radovanovich acknowledged him and continued walking towards the PSO office.
63. As Radovanovich opened the gate to the office, Davies heard Mohammed say something that got his attention. Davies turned back to him and asked if he could help Mohammed. Mohammed replied he wanted to travel to Oakland. Davies thought that he meant Oakleigh but Mohammed repeated Oakland. Davies took out his mobile phone to use Google Maps to determine where Oakland was located. At that time Radovanovich was standing directly behind Davies.

64. As Davies was looking down at his phone and without warning, Mohammed struck Davies with a wooden handled knife to the right side of his jaw. Instinctively Davies raised his right arm to protect himself and Mohammed slashed at him, contacting his arm. Davies and Radovanovich immediately moved away from Mohammed who turned and ran.
65. Radovanovich contacted D24 Police Communications and detailed what had occurred. Both of the PSO officers then commenced a pursuit of Mohammed.
66. After a short time, Davies felt blood running down his neck and the PSO officers ceased their pursuit, concerned about the severity of the injuries Davies had sustained.
67. Sergeant Brian Patterson, the Transit 251 Supervisor attended Jolimont Train Station soon after and advised Davies and Radovanovich that Ambulance Victoria was en-route. Sergeant Patterson broadcast a “Keep a Look Out For” over the Police Channel based upon the description of Mohammed given by Davies and Radovanovich (Male, blue jeans, pink polo shirt, about six foot tall, bald, wearing reading glasses, armed with a knife) and his last known direction heading along the Melbourne Cricket Ground towards Richmond Railway Station. As a consequence, numerous units commenced patrol attempting to locate Mohammed. Jolimont Train Station where the incident occurred was cordoned off as a crime scene and subsequently forensically examined by multiple resources from Victoria Police.
68. Approximately 10.47pm Ambulance Victoria (AV) attended Jolimont Train Station, arriving on scene at 10.57pm. AV officers examined Davies and established that he had a laceration to his right forearm approximately 4-5 centimetres long, together with a one-centimetre stab wound to his right lower cheek. He was treated on scene and transported to the Epworth Richmond for further treatment.
69. In response to this incident, Victoria Police mobilised multiple resources including the Police AirWing, multiple Police Canine Units and the Critical Incident Response Team. Divisional Supervisor broadcast very soon after notification, ‘West 265, can I have all available units respond to this one and provide assistance to try and lock this person down please? I’m happy for you to utilise Yarra resources also’. The Divisional Transit Supervisor (callsign Transit 265) also broadcast ‘the main priority is to try and cordon that area so that we can do a strategic search for this offender’.

70. A cordon was established by a number of units whilst other units commenced roving patrols attempting to locate Mohammed. Transit 265 also requested Public Transport Victoria Security to review CCTV footage to confirm a description of Mohammed whilst all trains arriving at Clifton Hill and Flinders Street Stations were searched by PSOs prior to any persons being permitted to alight.
71. A Police Canine Unit attended Jolimont Police Station and, with security coverage from the Critical Incident Response Team, tracked a scent through Yarra Park however was unable to establish an effective track due to the quantity of pedestrian traffic through the area. Multiple units from the Critical Incident Response Team and Uniform continued to circulate in an attempt to identify and locate Mohammed.
72. In the approximately thirty minutes between 10.40pm and 11.10pm Mohammed travelled from Jolimont Railway Station to Coppin Grove, Hawthorn by unknown means, most likely on foot.

11 March 2020 | Coppin Grove, HAWTHORN | Fatal Stabbing of Sally-Anne Wills and Non-Fatal Stabbing of Ashlee Gunstone

73. On Wednesday 11 March 2020, Sally-Anne had attended a residence in Richmond working on a job in her employment with Vertical Gardens Australia. She returned home approximately 6.30pm and had dinner with Ashlee, but realised that she had left tools and materials at the job site. After dinner, Ashlee, who was unwell at the time returned to bed, and later that evening Sally-Anne left their Coppin Grove residence to return to the Richmond job site and collect her tools and materials. Whilst enroute to the Richmond residence, Sally-Anne was involved in a minor car accident resulting in the attendance of Victoria Police and her vehicle being towed.
74. Ashlee became aware that Sally-Anne had been involved in an accident and her car required towing. Ashlee left home and attended the accident scene in Bridge Road where she helped transfer Sally-Anne's tool bag, laptop bag, ladder and other materials from the work ute and returned to Coppin Grove, Hawthorn.
75. Upon arriving home approximately 11.06pm Ashlee parked her car on the street in Coppin Grove and Ashlee and Sally-Anne sat in the vehicle discussing arrangements Sally-Anne had to make in the context of her accident. Sally-Anne decided to wait

until the following day to collect the tools and materials and took her seatbelt off and opened the front passenger door.

76. Mohammed was standing directly outside the door on the nature strip and stated “I want sex”. He then pulled out a knife and began to stab Sally-Anne in the chest and neck regions, causing her to collapse onto the front passenger seat and then fall into the front passenger footwell of the vehicle. Sally-Anne continued to try to fend off the attack and both Sally-Anne and Ashlee screamed for assistance.
77. In an effort to protect Sally-Anne, Ashlee threw her body over Sally-Anne, whilst Mohammed continued his attack, causing stab wounds to Ashlee’s back and neck. Ashlee leaned on the vehicle horn continuously which caused him to finally stop and run.
78. Ashlee immediately went to Sally-Anne’s assistance as she had collapsed from the vehicle into the street. Ashlee called 000 at 11.11pm. Neighbours also came to their assistance having heard the screams.
79. Sally-Anne was moved to the nature strip and CPR was immediately commenced prior to the arrival of Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police.
80. Approximately 11.13pm, Constable Wynne and Leading Senior Constable Whitehead received a job via D24 Police Communications to attend Coppin Grove, arriving within minutes at 11.16pm. Constable Wynne and Leading Senior Constable Whitehead were the first Police Officers to arrive on scene and immediately took over performing CPR upon Sally-Anne as well as rendering first aid to Ashlee.
81. Ambulance Victoria was en-route to attend the Coppin Grove address at approximately 11.13pm and responded with their in-field Team Manager, two MICA paramedics, ALS paramedics and a range of other resources. The first responding vehicle was on-scene at 11.18pm. Upon their arrival, Sally-Anne was located unconscious, not breathing in cardiac and respiratory arrest with Victoria Police performing CPR. Despite resuscitation attempts from MICA paramedics, Sally-Anne was unable to be revived due to the critical nature of the injuries sustained.
82. Ashlee was conscious and breathing however her condition deteriorated.

83. Leading Senior Constable Whitehead gave evidence that ‘whilst placing pressure on her neck I asked if she could tell me what had happened, still unsure if she could actually communicate, but she continued to repeat “Where’s Sal?” I asked her if she could tell me what happened and whilst struggling to breathe she said “We pulled up and we opened the door and this guy” before having a significant pause and trying to gain her breath. She went silent for a short time before she turned her head to face me and I asked “Did you know the guy?” and she said “Nah” and began to describe him stating “He had a bald head, tanned, Middle Eastern, I think he had glasses and a salmon coloured t-shirt and a big knife, like a kitchen knife”.’
84. As Ashlee said these words, Leading Senior Constable Whitehead repeated them to Senior Constable Irvine and the description was immediately broadcast to D24 Police Communications for the attention of all circulating units.
85. Ashlee was transported to the Alfred Hospital and treated enroute by MICA paramedics. Prior to Ashlee being taken to surgery, Senior Constable Irvine was able to have a conversation with Ashlee, recorded on his Body Worn Camera, where she again recounted what had occurred.
86. In response to this incident, Victoria Police continued the mobilisation of multiple resources including ongoing support from the Police AirWing, ongoing support from multiple Police Canine Units and all available units from the Critical Incident Response Team being deployed into the field. Yarra Trams were also notified of the incidents for their drivers to keep a look out for the offender attempting to utilise public transport to leave the area.
87. Despite an extensive search, Mohammed was unable to be located.
88. At 11.08pm CCTV captured Mohammed walking along Shakespeare Grove, Hawthorn. He is seen at a 7-Eleven at the corner of Pine and Church Streets, Hawthorn. CCTV footage shows Mohammed appeared calm and had no visible blood on his clothing.

12 March 2020 | Cotham Road, KEW | Fatal Stabbing of Christopher POLDEN

89. At the date of the incident, Chris had been staying in temporary accommodation in Kew while renovations were done on his home.

90. At 12.04am on Thursday 12 March 2020 Chris and Mohammed are captured on CCTV cameras. Chris was in front of Mohammed. CCTV cameras show Mohammed approaching Chris from behind and having a short conversation with him. Mohammed waited as a vehicle drove past and, without warning, stabbed Chris once to the abdomen. Chris immediately ran from Mohammed, who followed him briefly then turned and walked in the opposite direction north along High Street. Mohammed paused to secrete the knife within the waistband of his clothing.
91. At 12.08am Chris called 000 from his mobile phone after being stabbed. He provided a description of his attacker as male, wearing a pink shirt.
92. At approximately 12.13am Senior Constable Bongiovanni, Senior Constable Kent and Senior Constable Swan from the Critical Incident Response Team arrived at the corner of High Street and Cotham Street, Kew and located Chris. Senior Constable Speedy and Constable Macdonald also arrived to assist. Senior Constable Bongiovanni removed the Tactical First Aid Medical Pouch from the vehicle and rendered immediate first aid to Chris. At the time of the Critical Incident Response Team arrival Chris was still on the phone to the 000 operator. He had suffered a deep and extensive laceration to his abdomen.
93. Ambulance Victoria arrived moments later. Chris' condition was critical.
94. On the way to Royal Melbourne Hospital and Chris lapsed into unconsciousness and went into cardiac arrest. Despite significant efforts Chris was unable to be revived.

12 March 2020 | Walton Street, KEW | Fatal Police Shooting of Mohammed Ibrahim

95. In response to the 000 call made by Chris, all available units from the Critical Incident Response Team were deployed to Kew.
96. Senior Constable HALL and Senior Constable RICSHIN were patrolling High Street, when they saw Mohammed on the northern side of the road exiting Peel Street.
97. Senior Constable Ricshin stopped the vehicle and Senior Constable Hall stepped out of the vehicle and pointed his weapon at Mohammed and gave instructions to him not to move. Mohammed ran and turned right into Peel Street, then turned left into Walton Street.

98. As Senior Constable Hall entered Walton Street he saw Mohammed approximately twenty metres in front of him and again told him to stop, however Mohammed kept running.
99. At this same time, Senior Constables Taylor, Sirenko, Di Benedetto and Cutajar arrived at the western end of Walton Street blocking the exit.
100. CCTV (both audio and visual) from an adjoining business captured Critical Incident Response Team Officers repeatedly tell Mohammed to stop and get on the ground.
101. Senior Constables Sirenko and Taylor ran toward Mohammed, who veered and run down the right side of the driveway of 1A Walton Street, which was a single entry and exit point laneway. Senior Constable Hall arrived moments later.
102. The Critical Incident Response Team Officers instructed Mohammed to drop his knife. Mohammed ignored them and approached them brandishing a knife.
103. In response, over a one-and-a-half to two second period, all of the officers discharged their weapons at Mohammed.
104. Mohammed immediately fell to the ground. Senior Constable Hall updated the tactical channel shots had been fired and requested an ambulance. Another officer returned to the vehicle and obtained the Tactical First Aid Medical Pouch and rendered CPR and first aid to Mohammed.
105. A MICA Paramedic arrived and continued resuscitation efforts however Mohammed was declared deceased at the scene.
106. Police declared a Critical Incident and the investigation was taken over by the Homicide Squad and overseen by Professional Standards Command.
107. All officers involved from the Critical Incident Response Team were subject to mandatory drug and alcohol testing that evening and all members returned negative results.

CORONIAL INVESTIGATION AND INQUEST

108. Detective Pixie Fuhmeister was appointed as the Coronial Investigator and compiled a brief of evidence which was comprised of witness statements, documentary exhibits and multimedia exhibits.

109. An inquest was held on 22 June 2021 at Melbourne.

FINDINGS

110. Having investigated the death of Sally-Anne Wills, Christopher Polden and Mohammad Ibrahim, and having held an inquest in relation to their deaths on 22 June 2021 at Melbourne, I make the following findings, pursuant to section 67(1) of the Coroners Act:

- (a) the identity of the deceased was Sally-Anne Wills, born on 6 March 1990; and
- (b) the death occurred on 11 March 2020, at Coppin Grove, Kew, Melbourne, Victoria, from multiple stab wounds to the chest; and
- (c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

and I also find that:

- (d) the identity of the deceased was Christopher Kevin Polden, born on 17 September 1960; and
- (e) the death occurred on 12 March 2017, at Royal Melbourne Hospital, 300 Grattan Street, Parkville, Victoria, from a single stab wound to the right upper abdomen; and
- (f) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

and I also find that:

- (g) the identity of the deceased was Mohammed Ibrahim, born on 28 December 1985; and
- (h) the death occurred on 12 March 2017, outside 1a Walton Street, Kew, Victoria, from gunshot wounds to the chest, abdomen and left upper leg; and
- (i) the death occurred in the circumstances described below.

111. I find that that Mohammed's death occurred because police officers discharged their firearms and tactical weapons during an attempt to apprehend him. Further, I find that:
- (a) the shooting was justified in the circumstances and complied with Operational Safety Tactics training provided to Victoria Police members and complied with s462A Crimes Act 1958 (use of force in effecting the lawful arrest of a person); and
 - (b) that the overarching police response to all of the nights incidents was timely and reasonable.
112. I also find that there were no warning flags missed by law enforcement in respect of Mohammed. He was not known to any intelligence or security agencies. He had no recorded criminal antecedents. At the time of his death Mohammed was subject to a family violence intervention order, however although he was identified as possibly having a mental disorder, there was nothing in his interactions with police that was indicative or suggestive of his subsequent conduct.

COMMENTS PURSUANT TO S 67 OF THE CORONERS ACT

113. Whilst there is insufficient evidence before me that enables me to quantify to what degree mental health issues played a role in Mohammed's actions, I cannot exclude the possibility that he was suffering a psychiatric illness at the time he committed these acts.
114. In what can only be described as a random act of violence on the evening of 11 March 2020, Mohammad seemingly without motive, took the lives of Sally- Anne Wills and Christopher Polden, and seriously injured Ashlee Gunstone and Josh Davies. No clear motive has been identified in respect of his conduct and there is no apparent reason why each of the respective victims was targeted, other than proximity to him at the relevant time. There is no evidence that he undertook his violent acts in service of a political, religious or ideological cause.
115. Police, emergency responders and members of the community showed great bravery that night and those involved are to be commended on their actions. Whilst many individuals acted with scant regard for the consequences to themselves that evening,

none more so than Ashlee Gunstone. Her actions that night were the epitome of courage, love and selflessness.

116. I extend my sincere condolences to the Wills, Polden and Ibrahim families.

ORDERS

117. Pursuant to section 73(1) of the Coroners Act, I order that this finding be published on the internet.

118. I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Chief Commissioner of Police
Family of Sally-Anne Wills
Ashlee Gunstone
Family of Christopher Polden
Family of Mohammad Ibrahim

Signature:



Leveasque Peterson
Coroner

Date: 26 May 2022

