



Scott Johnson inquest: Chief inspector Pamela Young removed from investigation after candid Lateline interview

Lateline / By Emma Alberici

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last family photo of Scott Johnson who fell to his death from a Sydney cliff in 1988. A \$100k reward has been offered for information after police reopened the case. (NSW Police)

New South Wales coroner Michael Barnes has asked that a senior detective be taken off an investigation into the cliff fall death of American Scott Johnson after she gave a frank interview to the ABC's Lateline program last week.

Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) Pamela Young of the Unsolved Homicide's Unit was removed from the investigation after the coroner's office expressed concerns that by speaking so candidly, the inspector undermined public confidence in Strike Force Macnamir — the investigation into Johnson's 1988 death.

In a letter from senior crown solicitor Naomi Malhotra, it is claimed DCI Young engaged in a departure from the usual standards of conduct by telling the Lateline program she thought Johnson had most likely suicided.

The NSW coroner acknowledged that DCI Young had an intimate knowledge of the very complex investigation and that she had devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to it.

But in the same letter the coroner criticised DCI Young for what he called an "unprecedented" interview which she gave the Lateline program.

"In any event, the state coroner considers the continued involvement of DCI Young will make it very difficult to regain the confidence of the key stakeholders in the inquest and may have a tendency to detract from the real issues, namely the determination of the manner and cause of Scott Johnson's death," the letter states.

The NSW Crime Commission was asked in 2013 to independently examine the integrity of Strike Force Macnamir.

It found the investigation was thorough and comprehensive and did not leave out any obvious line of inquiry.

The coroner said a new investigator should be appointed to the case to restore public confidence in the impartiality of and commitment to the investigation.

Lateline understands Detective Sergeant Penelope Brown will replace DCI Young on the case.

Mr Barnes last week ordered a third inquest into Johnson's death.



Scott Johnson was found dead at the bottom of a Sydney cliff in 1988. (NSW Police)