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Sydney NSW 2000

Commissioner Andrew Scipione  
NSW Police  
Locked Bag 5102  
Parramatta, NSW 2124

CC: Minister for Police

21 April 2015

Dear Commissioner,

**RE: Coronial Inquest into the death of Scott Johnson**

I am writing to request that you appoint a new officer-in-charge to lead the investigation and assist in the third inquest into the death of Scott Johnson, with Detective Chief Inspector Pamela Young's role confined to that of a witness.

As you are aware, on the day the new inquest was announced (13 April 2015), DCI Young gave a nationally broadcast interview on ABC's Lateline.

The interview raised genuine questions of whether DCI Young's strong and influential personal views are such that a reasonable and impartial observer would consider her to have a biased and negative opinion of the investigation.

At the centre of the concerns are statements by DCI Young to the effect that the initial investigation was not at all flawed. She defended the conclusion that the cause of death was suicide by stating that she had not "found any evidence that completely eliminates that as a possibility". With respect to DCI Young, that is an erroneous test for an investigator to apply to any investigation.

She dismissed out of hand that 50 people of interest had been identified through a private investigation, and instead said that John Agius SC, counsel engaged by the Johnson family, might have "plagiaris[ed] things from [her] own statements".

During the interview, DCI Young casually inflated evidence of an articulated thought of suicide to a "very sorry attempt at suicide". She focused heavily on the unconvincing similarity between the deceased mentioning suicide by jumping from the Golden Gate

Bridge (over water) with jumping from North Head cliff (onto rocks), as if there was some kind of *modus operandi* of suicide.

DCI Young also asserted that whilst a suicidal ideation communicated to the deceased's partner 3 years prior to his death could be relied upon to ground a suicide hypothesis, the family did not need to be interviewed at the time because they had not seen Scott Johnson in person for three months.

Further, serious questions are raised regarding DCI Young's neutrality and openness to new information following several serious allegations she made, seemingly with little basis:

- That Steve Johnson improperly influenced the Government to make Scott Johnson's death a priority, making repeated references to Mr Johnson's affluence, status and influence.
- That the former Minister for Police and his staff "kowtow[ed]" to the Johnson family.
- That the former Minister for Police encouraged and invited Steve Johnson to "go along the lines of what I would call not representing all the facts... in the media".
- In light of the above, that it was "absolutely improper, wrong on every level" that Strikeforce Macnamir was established.

The basis for these deeply troubling assertions of improper influence appears to be no more than uninformed and biased speculation on the part of DCI Young.

On a practical level, I have grave concerns that the hostile impression DCI Young gave towards the inquest and the Johnson family is likely to deter members of the public, particularly from the gay community, who may have information to offer from coming forward.

Already reluctant witnesses are likely to be significantly dissuaded by an investigator who has pre-judged the outcome of the inquest, made plain her lack of interest in reopening the investigation, and minimised concerns about homophobia in the NSW Police in the 1980s.

I note that during the nationally broadcast interview DCI Young did not take the obvious opportunity to draw public attention to the reward police have offered for information, or even advise viewers that police would like to hear from anyone with information that may assist. For an investigator to miss this opportunity is inexcusable.

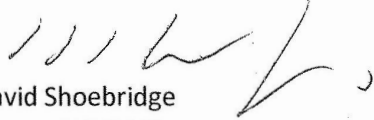
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Regardless of the ultimate outcome, the only way for the Johnson family and the public to have faith that the third inquest will bring justice and closure is for DCI Young to be replaced as officer-in-charge. Time will be of the essence to restore public confidence in the investigation while the matter is receiving media coverage.

Finally, I join the CEO of ACON to urge you to consider a review of other investigations into the deaths of homosexual people during a time when police homophobia (along with the broader society's homophobia) was commonplace. NSW Police ought celebrate their much improved culture in this regard by acknowledging and attempting to rectify the prejudices of the past.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your earliest response.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Shoebridge', written over a faint horizontal line.

David Shoebridge  
Greens NSW MP  
Spokesperson for Justice and Police