



Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes

Statement of William Towler

3 February 2023

This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary, to give to the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes (“the Inquiry”) as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. My name is William Towler.
2. I was born in 1967. I am employed by the Australian Public Service. My address is known to the Special Commission of Inquiry (“the Inquiry”).

Relationship to Graham Paynter

3. Graham Paynter was my mother’s brother, and my uncle.
4. I recall Graham as being a happy-go-lucky man, affectionately known as Possum by family and friends. He worked in various jobs throughout his life, including as an assistant surveyor for many years, mainly in the Australian Capital Territory, but he occasionally travelled around the country for work. He also worked as a taxi driver in Canberra later in his life, and casually at the Tathra Bowling Club behind the bar just prior to his death.
5. Unfortunately, Graham suffered from an alcohol addiction, and drank heavily towards the end of his life. After his death I found Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) material in his home, which made me believe he had been a member of the AA branch in Bega.
6. I lost touch with my uncle Graham around 6 to 12 months prior to his death. Graham was experiencing money troubles, and often went on “three-day benders” that he often funded by petty theft. He would regularly ask myself and other members of our family for money or lifts.
7. I never knew Graham to be gay, but I don’t consider it to be an unreasonable suggestion. My family and I would have been supportive of Graham no matter his sexuality.

Graham’s associates

8. Graham associated with some people who were involved in crimes.
9. I am aware, from Graham, that to fund their alcohol consumption, some of the people Graham was associated with would engage in criminal activities, including robbery, assault and soliciting. I understand this involved female partners of Graham’s associates being “hired out” for sex, but I am unsure if this extended to Graham and his male friends soliciting themselves.

Tathra area

10. Graham lived in a caravan owned by my grandfather, Graham's father. After Graham's death, I occasionally used this caravan as a holiday home.
11. I recall there were a number of assaults in the Tathra area, and the Tathra Hotel had some notoriety for violence. It was a popular pit-stop between Sydney and Melbourne.
12. I was aware there were some gangs in the area at the time of Graham's death, but I do not recall them specifically. I remember hearing on the radio about violence around the town, in the pubs and in the beach areas. I do not recall any specific gay hate violence.
13. I am not aware of any beats in Tathra.

Signature:



Name: William Towler

Date:

3/2/2023.