



Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes Statement of Michael Burge 30 January 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 Michael Burge. I was born in 1970. My address is known to the Special Commission of Inquiry (the Inquiry).
2. I am employed as a freelance journalist, author and artist.

Research into the death of Russell Payne

3. Since 2018 I have been researching the death of Russell Payne, as part of my work as a journalist. I was born in Inverell, where Mr Payne died, and still live in the area.
4. In the course of my inquiries I made contact with members of Mr Payne’s family. On 2 August 2022, I met and had a conversation with:
 - a. Julie Kilgour, Mr Payne’s sister;
 - b. Ray Kilgour, Julie Kilgour’s former partner;
 - c. Lou Kilgour, Julie and Ray Kilgour’s daughter;
 - d. Terry Forster, Julie Kilgour’s former partner.
5. We spoke about Mr Payne’s death and the subsequent police investigation.
6. Julie and Ray told me that the police directed them to collect Russell’s personal effects from an address other than the address at [REDACTED] Henderson St, Inverell, where Mr Payne’s body was found and where he was residing. They were sent to a different address, which I believe from their description to be [REDACTED] Warialda Road, Inverell.
7. Julie and Ray told me that the address from which they collected Mr Payne’s property looked “unlived-in” and that there were very few personal effects to collect. They commented that that Mr Payne’s wristwatch, television and radio were missing and never provided to his next of kin.
8. Julie and Ray said that they never knew Mr Payne to reside at [REDACTED] Henderson Road, Inverell, where his body was found. However, they also described being somewhat estranged from Mr Payne at the time of his death. They described Mr Payne as “a strange kettle of fish” who “kept to himself”.

9. Terry Forster told me that he'd visited Inverell every fortnight or so for a shopping trip in 1988-1989, and would often see Mr Payne on his trips to Inverell.
10. Terry said that Mr Payne came out as gay to him a year or so prior to Russell's death.
11. Julie, Ray and Lou were present when Terry said this. None of them were aware that Mr Payne was gay, but they all expressed support and understanding of that possibility.
12. I told the family about Strike Force Parrabell and the Inquiry.
13. I have provided this information to the Inquiry with the permission of Mr Payne's family.
14. My meeting with the Kilgours and Terry Forster did not constitute a formal interview, and the details provided above are based on my notes and recollections of what was told to me at that time. I have not independently confirmed any of the information that they told to me.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Burge". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the "Signature:" label. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Name: Michael Burge

Date: January 31, 2023