

18 May 2023

Statement of Paul Rath's family

Paul was a gentle, kind, empathetic and a sensitive person. He loved his family and had strong religious beliefs and was a practising Catholic. He loved nature and all living things and took a keen interest in following the local Rugby League side - Manly Sea Eagles.

Growing up, Paul was always easy to get along with, never getting into fights or being aggressive with siblings or friends. He loved music and had a great collection of records which he unselfishly shared with family members. He attended the local Catholic primary and High schools in Manly and served on the altar at St Mary's Catholic Church, Manly. Later he became a Catechist and volunteered teaching catechism at local public schools in the area.

Prior to when Paul had his breakdown (in his early teens), he had been mistreated and bullied by a teacher at his high school and was also dealing with our father's cancer diagnosis. At the time, Paul thought he had to become the breadwinner for our large family!

He was treated in a medical facility with some sort of sleep therapy and developed pneumonia. A nurse discreetly took our parents aside and told them to pull him out of the facility as she feared for his health. He was put under the care of a psychiatrist then.

Paul was different when he was brought home. He still had the same loving nature but the medication he was put on, seemed to make him agitated and restless in his legs and he developed a fast, awkward walking gait which made him stand out as eccentric or different to others.

One night when he was in his late teens, he was beaten up when he went for his nightly walk to relieve his agitation. We assume he must have caught the attention of some thugs who thought he was odd, strange or possibly gay.

No one in the family believes Paul would have taken his own life because of his strong religious beliefs and love of life. The area where he died was familiar to him as he went there to pray frequently.

It is also hard to accept that he was reckless enough to venture near the edge. The nature and uncertainty of the circumstances of his death have always haunted all of us to this very day. The grief of losing Paul is still heavy in our hearts.

After so many years, we are appreciative of the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes reviewing Paul's case and pray that we can get more understanding and clarity on what possibly occurred on that night in June 1977.