

New South Wales Police

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v308STATEMENT in the matter of:
Death of James MEEKPlace: SURRY HILLS
Police Station
Date : 11 March 1995

Name: Michael Francis LAWRENCE

Address: [REDACTED] Northcott Flats, Surry Hills.

Tel. No.: [REDACTED]

Occupation: Pensioner

STATES:-

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence which I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

2. I am 40 years of age.

3. I live at [REDACTED], Northcott Flats, Belvoir Street, Surry Hills. I have lived there for about 18 months.

4. I have known Jim MEEKS for about the same period I have lived in the units. Jim lived in Unit [REDACTED], Level 12, [REDACTED] block. He lived there by himself. Jim was a good friend of mine. I used to help Jim with his legal matters and other things which people his age need. We were both on the Tennants group for the Northcott Flats last year. We were also both on the Northcott Estate Advisory Board for the Department of Housing as tennant's representatives.

5. I would visit Jim a couple of times a week. Sometimes it would be more often, other times less. He would ring me, or sometimes I would ring him. Jim would come over my place

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sometimes, but more then often I would go to his unit. We would talk a lot about Tennant matters and personal descriptions of people he met. He would not get explicit in detail with me. We would sit around the table, have coffee and watch TV.

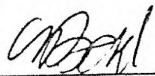
6. From time to time other people would call in to see Jim. The Security Guard on his rounds would drop in for a coffee aswell as other tennants. Some wouldn't stay for coffee, just a chat. He knew a lot of people. He didn't like being alone.

7. The last time I saw Jim would have been Sunday, the 5 th of March, the day after the Mardi Gras. I wasn't feeling well as I felt sick in the stomach and I rang him. I asked him to come over to see me. Jim came over about 9.30am or 10am I think. I was also expecting a friend, Brent EGAN to come over. I think Brent and Jim arrived at the same time or soon after each other. I stayed in the lounge room for about ten or fifteen minutes before I went to bed as I was feeling very tired. Jim left while I was asleep. Brent told me he didn't stay to long. Jim rang my unit later to see about my health and Brent told him I was still asleep. I cannot recall seeing Jim for the next couple of days.

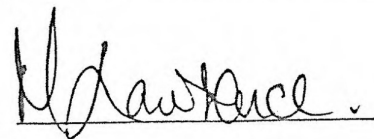
8. On Tuesday the 7th of March I tried to ring Jim on the phone throughout the day. I'm not sure if I tried to ring him earlier in the morning or not. If I did I would have dismissed it as he was not home.

9. I got home late on Tuesday morning, about 7am. I watched TV for a while before the power was cut off about 8am. This affected all the power to the other units aswell. I went up to the front of ■ Block and I spoke to some other tennants. I

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spoke to an electrician and he told me all the power would be cut until 11.30am.

9. I went back to bed about 8.30am. There was a sub committee meeting for Northcott Flats at 10am. I didn't go as I was feeling too tired to go. I had been drinking and socialising fairly heavily. It turned out that no residents went to this meeting, only the department staff.

10. The office for Northcott flats opened in the earlier afternoon. I went there about 12.30pm or 1pm. Whatever time the office opened and spoke to Bill COFFEY, the manager, and apologised for not attending the meeting. Bill told me that none of the residents had attended, only Margaret PERRYMAN. I asked Bill something like, "Even Jim didn't go?" and Bill said that Jim hadn't gone. I think it was something like that as I was still feeling pretty vague.

11. I then went upstairs to Jim's place. I noticed that the screen door was unlocked and there was a newspaper between the security door and the wooden door. I opened the security door and knocked on the wooden door. I think there was a message on one of the doors, the security door I think, from Brian KANE for Jim to contact him. Brian heard me at the door and came out. He lives two doors up from Jim. Brian told me that he had been trying to contact Jim but couldn't.

12. I heard the dogs barking inside Jim's unit. This I thought was strange as his dogs usually only bark when he is at home. I knocked again but there was still no answer. Brian seemed to be worried about Jim not answering. Jim's car was still downstairs in the carpark. We were trying to work out where he would be.

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I can't be certain but I think I told Brian that I would check around and let him know if I saw Jim.

13. I asked a few people whether they had seen Jim, but no-one had. I spoke to the security Guard, Bob GARRETT, and told him to keep a look out for Jim because of the strange circumstances of not being able to find Jim.

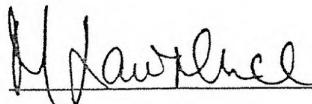
14. I went back down to the Beauchamp Hotel later in the afternoon to see Robert PEEL who was handling the funeral of a very close friend of mine, Karl who had died on Monday ,the day before. I then went to a number of other pubs. I think I spoke to Bob before I went drinking, but it may have been after I returned. I'm sure I spoke to him after I returned, but just not sure whether I did before I left. I then went back to my unit.

15. Later I spoke again to Bob again but there was still no sign of Jim. Jim's car was still parked in the same spot downstairs.

16. I woke up on Wednesday morning and rang Jim's number and there was no answer. About 9am or a bit earlier I walked around to the back of the units and saw that the window drapes to Jim's unit hadn't been moved. I went up and knocked again on Jim's door and there was still no answer. The dogs were barking. I ran into Brian Kane. We were trying to work out who would have a key to Jim's unit or who he left a key with.

17. I spoke to Bob GARRETT on the phone and he told me that he had put some paper into the door jams to see whether they would be disturbed. This would indicate whether anyone had opened the

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door. I asked Brian Kane where Barbara WILSON, a tenant, who is also a friend of Jim's lived. Barbara would sometimes look after Jim's dogs when he was away or in hospital. I thought she might have a key or might have seen him. Brian pointed to her unit and gave me directions.

8. I went straight over and spoke to Barbara and she did not have a key and hadn't seen Jim either. I made more inquiries to try to find Jim but no one had seen him.


19. I rang the Police from Barbara's place just after 10am and told them about Jim being missing and the circumstances relating to this.

20. The Northcott Administration office opened at 1pm on Wednesday and I told the relief clerk about Jim being missing. I made further calls including calling some locksmiths to get a quote for opening the lock on Jim's door. I kept checking Jim's unit during the day but there was always no answer. Brian was also doing the same thing.

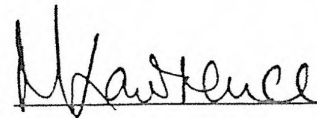
21. Jim always attends the Tenants meetings unless he is sick. He is a creature of habit. I rang the Surry Hills Police back about 3pm. I spoke to a female operator and I recall her saying that a car had been dispatched, but someone had rang and said he had been sighted. I discussed the matter with her and she arranged for another Police car to come over.

22. Soon after a Police car arrived at the Northcott Flats and there was a locksmith on site doing another job. Bill COFFEY, myself, the locksmith and the two female Police officers went up to Jim's flat. I think the newspaper was still between the two

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doors.

23. The locksmith opened the door and I saw Jim lying on the floor in the entrance foyer. I stayed in the doorway to get hold of the dogs. I was in shock. I spoke to the Police and identified Jim to them.

24. Jim was a homosexual. He told me he was Category four HIV. He was taking a lot of medication for this from time to time. I think he had stopped taking AZT.

25. Jim had a number of casual relationships. He also one night stands. He liked a rougher type of man. I didn't take that much notice of the men he was having over to his unit. He would see his male friends when I wasn't there. Sometimes I would stay, but more often than not I would go.

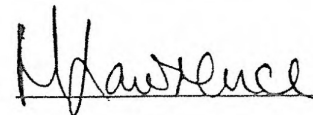
26. I showed Jim a couple of beats around town in the last three weeks. The Mardi Gras was around and there were more gays in town. Jim showed me where he usually went at Centennial Park. There are apparently about three beats there. The one he showed me was the one adjacent to Lachlan Swamp, at the toilets. I showed him the beat on the Foreshore Road at Botany Bay. Jim told me that he often went to Centennial Park in the morning and in the afternoon and that the park was open until 8pm. Jim was a early riser and would often met people in the mornings at Centennial Park. He had a new car, as crimson red 1995 Daewoo hatchback, and once we went down to La Perouse and he met a man there. I went for a walk while they stayed in the toilet. Jim used to take a lot of chances when meeting men.

27. One of the men he was seeing lately was named Jason. He

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would see Jason fairly regularly, once or twice a week and then not see him for some time. This may have been a month or longer. I can't remember whether he told me his last name or not. Jim generally met Jason once or twice a week. He genuinely liked Jason. I would describe Jason as being in his earlier twenties, about 6 foot tall, fairish complexion, Australian, solid build, dark brown collar length untidy hair, and he worked he worked for the City of Sydney or South Sydney council as a street sweeper. Or he may have drove a street sweeper truck. I didn't take that much notice of him. He was married and/or divorced and had a kid.

28. There were some young blokes who lived at Northcott flats who Jim saw sometimes but I don't think it was sexual. One of them was **NP220**, about 19 or 20 old, over 6 foot, he has just bleached his hair from dark to blonde. He lived in ████ block. I know he saw some others but I don't know who they were.

27. During Mardi Gras Jim met a new guy while he was walking his dog in Ward park. Jim pointed a man out to me one day and I think it was this man. He was in his mid 30's, and he was walking a large dog which I think could have been a labrador. He got this man a ticket to the Mardi Gras Party at the Hordern Pavilion. I think he spent Saturday night, or part of it with this man.

28. There was another man who he met a couple of months ago. He had a west highland white terrier dog who walked his dog in Ward park. He was in his late 20's or early 30's, Australian, fair complexion, near 6 foot tall, slim build. I don't know whether this was a sexual contact or not.

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29. Jim was a friendly bloke and used to talk to a lot of people. He used to walk his dogs very early in the morning, from 6am or 7am onwards, sometimes earlier. He also walked his dogs during the day aswell as a night. He used to walk his dogs in Ward Park. The dogs were a maltese terrier cross, white in colour and a black mixed breed terrier. There names were Snooky and Tiffany.

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