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GAY LINK TO TAMARAMA DEATHS

DAVID MILLS

Police have re-opened their investigations into the disappearance and death of two gay men near Marks Park, Tamarara, in 1989.

Announcing the investigation on Sunday, police representatives called upon gay community members who were harassed or bashed in the area at the time to come forward now - especially if the incidents were not reported at the time.

NSW Police Gay/Lesbian Client Consultant Sue Thompson said that in the late 1980s, many people were reluctant to tell the police service of their experience of gay hate crime.

"But a decade later, the police service is so advanced in its attitudes to gay and lesbian issues that I would imagine a lot more people would feel comfortable coming forward," Thompson said. "The enquiry has been re-opened now, and now is the time to come forward and help. This is an opportunity ... to finally resolve these crimes."



Ross Warren, who disappeared from Marks Park in July 1989.

Police believe that the July 1989 disappearance of Ross Warren and the November 1989 death of John Russell may well be linked.

Twenty-five-year-old Warren was last seen by friends on 22 July 1989. His car was later discovered at Marks Park and his car keys were found on a rock

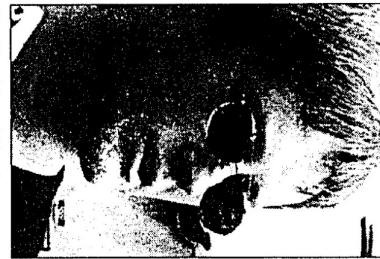
shelf below the reserve. His body has never been recovered.

Thirty-one-year-old John Russell's body was found below a cliff at Marks Park on 24 November 1989.

Crime Manager at Rose Bay Local Area Command, Detective Inspector Terry Dalton, said that suicide had been rejected as a motive in Russell's death as he had shortly before received news that he was the recipient of a sizeable inheritance.

"Despite it being a decade since the disappearance of Mr Warren and the death of Mr Russell, police are anxious to piece together pieces of information which may lead to the successful apprehension of the offender," Detective Inspector Dalton said. DNA tests were also being conducted on strands of hair found on Russell's hand at the time his body was discovered, he said.

Detective Inspector Dalton said that there had been "a number of similar offences" committed at Marks Park around 1989,



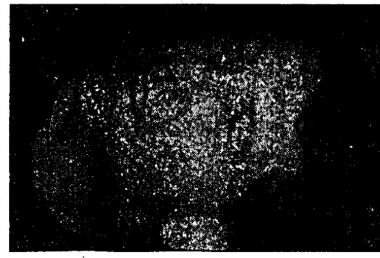
Gay/Lesbian Client Consultant Sue Thompson ... "Now is the time to come forward and help. This is an opportunity ... to finally resolve these crimes."

but that police were keen to hear from any gay men who were assaulted but who had never reported the matter to police "for fear of some sort of reprisal or ostracism".

Thompson said there had been "a lot of targeting of gay men" for assaults in the area in the late 80s and early 90s.

"Those crimes were often perpetrated by young people who were acting out crimes of prejudice," she said. Perpetrators of such crimes often pick areas where they think they will find targets, and Marks Park was known as "a meeting place for men to pick up men in the late 80s", she added.

Police also conducted tests on Russell's likely fall from the Tamarara cliff edge using a shop dummy. The mannequin, dressed in clothes similar to those worn by Russell, was first dropped, and then thrown, from the cliff face, and the landing positions were recorded. The tests, which were carried out under the quizzical eyes of Sunday-morning loggers, will assist investigators in "determining whether Mr Russell fell from the cliff, or was pushed", Detective Inspector Dalton said.



John Russell, whose body was discovered near Marks Park in November 1989.

Anyone with information about assaults in the Marks Park area around 1989 is urged to contact Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000 or their local Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer. Have your say at www.ssonet.com.au.