

Media article - Sydney Star Observer 25/07/2002

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Brief Description: Attached to this investigators note is a copy of an article published in the Sydney Star Observer on 25/07/2002 in relation to the conduct of Operation TARADALE.

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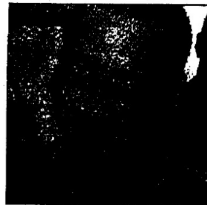
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The truth at last

HATE CRIMES INQUEST READY TO GO

STACY FARRAR

Police will name 24 people believed to have been involved in a series of gay hate crimes in the late 1990s at a coronial inquest next year.

In a week of hate crime headlines, Paddington Police have announced they are ready to go ahead with an inquest into the bashing, deaths or disappearances of six gay men from 1987 to 1990. The announcement came soon after NSW opposition leader John Brogden called for a 25 percent compulsory increase in sentences for hate crimes.

Detective Sergeant Stephen Page has led Operation Thadale investigating anti-gay violence in the late 1990s, for the past two years.

Page told the Star Paddington Police had been working around the clock on inquest preparations, taking 400 statements from witnesses, victims and perpetrators of anti-gay violence in the late 1990s.

Police will meet with the coroner to discuss who will give evidence at the inquest. One of the potential witnesses is a current first grade footballer, Page said.

The inquest will also hear of possible links between the six cases, Page said.

Of the six victims, two were bashed to death in Alexandria Park, Alexandria, two were found dead at the bottom of cliffs around Marks Park Tamarama, one was found in Mission Park, Randwick, and the sixth, Wollongong newsreader Russ Warren's body was not found.

His wallet was later found on a rock ledge at the bottom of a Tamarama cliff.

Police are still investigating the cases and have called for



Alex Sosnov ... "Hate crimes are about sending a message to a community, rather than about an individual. Anything that works to recognise this is a good thing."

witnesses to any anti-gay violence in the eastern suburbs to come forward. Anyone with information should contact Paddington Police on 8356 8299.

As Operation Thadale re-emerged in the media, NSW Opposition leader John Brogden was coming under fire for calling for 25 percent extra sentencing in crimes where hate was proved to be a motivating factor.

Brogden made the call in reaction to public outrage over reported race links in gang rape trials, but told the Star it would also cover gay-hate crimes.

"The message we are trying to send by this is we live in a tolerant and peaceful and open country," he said.

"No-one should be particularly singled out because of

their race, religion, age or sexual orientation. This sends a message to the perpetrators of hate crimes that we will not tolerate their crimes. I want someone who has been raped to have the satisfaction of sending the rapist to jail for a long time."

The changes would apply to upcoming trials and not in cases where life sentences were handed down.

The Gay and Lesbian Legal Rights Lobby has supported the call for tougher penalties.

Lobby co-convenor Alex Sosnov said the proposal "acknowledged that hate crimes are different to other crimes".

"Hate crimes are about sending a message to a community, rather than about an individual. Anything that works to recognise this is a good thing," Sosnov said.

Sosnov said there was also a desperate need for more support services in the courts and the community for victims of hate crimes.

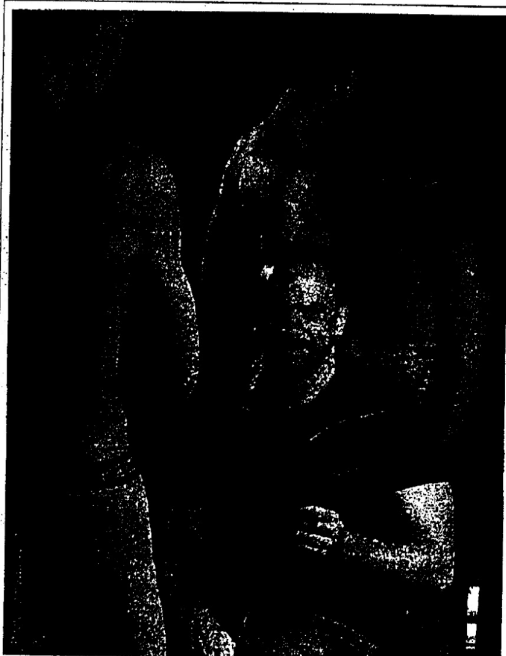
But Attorney-General Bob Debus has slammed the proposal, calling it a "knee jerk response" and an "illogical, cynical and unworkable stunt".

An official from Debus's office explained - judges were already compelled to take hate into consideration while sentencing and the courts had systems in place to punish offenders appropriately.

"Obviously crimes of this nature are particularly heinous, and we do not have a lenient approach," he said.

"But there are problems with this proposal. What does constitute a hate crime and why should victims of other crimes be treated differently?"

Have your say at www.sosnov.com.au.



Positive sex

A new booklet from the AIDS Council of NSW explores practical and ethical concerns facing HIV-positive men in relation to sex. Researcher Kate Race (pictured above with friends) took a closer look at HIV-Positive Gay Sex. See story page 6 ▶

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