



## Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes

### Statement of Colin Copnell

19 May 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.

#### Background

1. My name is Colin Copnell.
2. I am 74 years old. My address is known to the Inquiry.
3. I am currently retired.
4. In making this statement, I have tried to be as accurate as I can. As it was such a long time ago, I cannot be sure about dates, but have recorded what I recollect to be the case to the best of my ability.

#### Relationship with Crispin Dye

5. I first met Crispin Dye around 1973, when I was 22 or 23 years of age. Crispin and I both lived in Balmain at the time, and we would catch up now and then. Crispin liked to drink so we would often have a drink when we were together. In around 1975-1976, I moved from Balmain to Glebe. After this time, I did not see Crispin again for some time.
6. During this period of time, Crispin would often play music and sing. He was a very happy and jovial person, and he was easy to make conversation with. He knew people wherever we went. I remember that in around 1989 we went to Port Douglas and met some British backpackers who we had got drinking with. One of them had a shirt that Crispin liked, and Crispin walked up to him and jokingly asked whether he wanted to swap shirts with him, and the British man responded "Sure mate!". It was a shirt with a harlequin pattern and Crispin wore it a lot; it was him all over. Crispin was also very generous. He was always the first person to buy a round of drinks.
7. Crispin and I drifted apart around the time I moved to Glebe, which I also recall was around the time that Crispin started working in the music industry and he started going to different venues to play music. However, in around 1990 I moved to Cairns. Shortly afterwards, at one of the local drinking

## Statement of Colin Copnell – 19 May 2023

venues in Cairns, I saw Crispin. Crispin had also moved to Cairns. We rekindled our friendship at that point. Whilst living in Cairns, Crispin would return to Sydney regularly.

8. During the time I knew Crispin, I never saw him take any drugs. He drank alcohol, but I never saw him get to the stage where he couldn't look after himself. I never saw him get sick or fall over as a result of drinking alcohol.

#### Crispin's sexuality

9. For most of the time I knew Crispin, I thought that he was bisexual. I thought this because although I knew he was interested in men, there were also women in his life. In particular, I remember Crispin had a long-term relationship with a woman and they had a house in Paddington. However, I think towards the end of his life, Crispin identified as gay.
10. After Crispin died, a mutual friend of Crispin and myself, Colin Dorrington, told me that shortly before his death, Crispin had come out as gay to his mother. At that time, I knew that Crispin was going to try and tell her about his sexuality, but I did not realise he was going to tell her as soon as he did and on that particular trip to Sydney.
11. Crispin was not "obviously" gay and he kept his sexuality low-key. I remember that on one occasion I asked Crispin what it was like being gay in the music industry. He replied that 'they didn't know'. On another occasion, Crispin told me that he did not put his real name on his music, because he thought that if someone found out he was gay, they wouldn't buy his music. So as far as I was aware, Crispin was not out to the world at large.


#### Crispin's death

12. The last time I saw Crispin was when he came to see me, shortly before Christmas in 1993. We organised a time to catch up when he returned from Sydney. I recall that at the time he was unemployed and having financial difficulties. He told me he had applied for unemployment benefits.
13. I had no contact with the NSW Police after Crispin's death. The only person I spoke to about his death was Colin Dorrington. I had introduced Crispin to Colin Dorrington, as well as some other mutual friends of ours, Garry Hook and Steven Hodges.
14. I recall that a number of venues in the Oxford Street / Darlinghurst area were gay-oriented in 1993. I don't know if Crispin went to this area frequently and which venues he frequented; however, my recollection is that he would tend to go to trendy clubs in Paddington, that weren't necessarily known as gay venues.

## Statement of Colin Copnell – 19 May 2023

15. I remember that Crispin wore a chain and a ring. He started wearing something that looked like a stopwatch around his neck after he lost his watch. Crispin was wearing it on the day he told me he was going to Sydney, and he would have had it on when he died.

Signature:



Name:

COLIN HENRY COPNELL

Date:

26/5/2023