

**2022 Special Commission of Inquiry
into LGBTIQ hate crimes**

**Before: The Commissioner,
The Honourable Justice John Sackar**

**At Level 2, 121 Macquarie Street,
Sydney, New South Wales**

On Wednesday, 24 May 2023 at 10am

(Day 57)

Re death of Bedser:

Ms Christine Melis	(Counsel Assisting)
Mr Enzo Camporeale	(Director Legal)
Ms Emily Burston	(Senior Solicitor)

Also Present:

Mr Mathew Short with Mr Aurhett Barrie for NSW Police

1 MS MELIS: Commissioner, I appear to assist you in this
2 matter of Walter Bedser.

3
4 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

5
6 MR SHORT: Commissioner, S-H-O-R-T, for the Commissioner
7 of Police.

8
9 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

10
11 Before we start, Ms Melis, I note that an application
12 was made by NSW Police for certain pseudonym and
13 non-publication orders. It was agreed between the parties
14 that I deal with that on the papers. For the reasons that
15 are set out in my judgment, which I shall publish, apart
16 from those which are agreed, I otherwise reject the
17 application made by NSW Police and I'll publish my reasons.

18
19 And Mr Short, would you like to have a minute to look
20 at that or are you up to speed, as it were?

21
22 MR SHORT: I am up to speed that this was coming,
23 Commissioner.

24
25 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

26
27 Yes, Ms Melis.

28
29 MS MELIS: Commissioner, these submissions address the
30 death of Mr Walter Bedser on 2 December 1980.

31
32 I have two folders of material in relation to this
33 matter that I will tender, as well as the written
34 submissions of Counsel Assisting, and there are also some
35 orders to be made, Commissioner, with respect to
36 non-publication orders.

37
38 THE COMMISSIONER: I will just make those orders.

39
40 **EXHIBIT #28 TENDER BUNDLE COMPRISING TWO FOLDERS IN**
41 **RELATION TO THE DEATH OF WALTER BEDSER**

42
43 THE COMMISSIONER: Very well, thank you, Ms Melis, I have
44 made those orders.

45
46 MS MELIS: The Inquiry has identified one living family
47 member of Mr Bedser. Attempts to make contact with that

1 person, however, have been unsuccessful.
2

3 Mr Bedser was known more commonly by his middle name,
4 John, or Johnny. He was an antique dealer in Parramatta.
5 His antique shop was on the corner of an arcade on Darcy
6 Street, Parramatta. Immediately opposite his shop was
7 a greengrocer.
8

9 It was well known among his friends and associates
10 that Mr Bedser was gay. There is some evidence that he may
11 have been bisexual. His mother would not accept he was gay
12 and his sister did not know he was gay.
13

14 It is also clear that Mr Bedser had had sexual
15 interactions with or had propositioned a number of teenaged
16 boys, some of whom had, at one time or another, been
17 employed by him in his shop. Most of those boys appear to
18 have been from European and especially Greek backgrounds.
19

20 At approximately 2pm on 2 December 1980 in broad
21 daylight, Mr Bedser was brazenly attacked and stabbed in
22 the chest multiple times with a knife in his shop in
23 Parramatta. A badly wounded Mr Bedser managed to stumble
24 out and collapsed in the greengrocer shop on the opposite
25 side of the arcade. An ambulance was called. He died in
26 Parramatta Hospital shortly afterwards, at 2.15pm, from
27 blood lost from a lacerated liver and left lung.
28

29 He also appeared to have lacerated his arm when he
30 fell through a plate glass display counter in his shop
31 during the attack. He was 47 years old at the time of his
32 death.
33

34 Police were unable to establish a motive for
35 Mr Bedser's murder but thought Mr Bedser knew his killer.
36 In all, the records available to the Inquiry indicate that
37 some 22 witnesses were interviewed by police about what
38 they heard and saw at various times on the day of
39 Mr Bedser's murder.
40

41 The Inquiry, Commissioner, has established that at
42 least 15 of those 22 witnesses are now deceased.
43

44 The accounts of these various witnesses have some
45 similarities but many differences. Some heard sounds of
46 struggle or argument in the vicinity of the antique store
47 shortly before 2pm, with four witnesses expressly reporting

1 the sound of crashing glass.

2
3 Six witnesses saw a man hurriedly leaving the shop and
4 fleeing down the street. Five said that the fleeing man
5 shouted for an ambulance to be called, while three said it
6 was the wounded man himself who did so. One witness
7 reported the fleeing man as calling out something to the
8 effect that he had nothing to do with it.

9
10 Two of the witnesses said there was a woman in the
11 shop with Mr Bedser immediately before his death. None of
12 the other witnesses referring to seeing a woman. Most
13 described an adult male, somewhere in the vicinity of the
14 shop or running from it. Most thought he was between 30 to
15 40 years old.

16
17 In particular, one witness, Ms Amani Youseff, said she
18 had looked in through a window of the shop and had seen two
19 men fighting, one, whom she recognised as being Mr Bedser,
20 was behind the counter, and the other man was on the
21 customer side of the counter. She described the other man
22 in this way:

23
24 *In his mid to late 30s, about 6' to 6'2*
25 *tall, strong to solid build, an Australian,*
26 *clean shaven, wearing a light coloured*
27 *safari suit top, possibly a light grey*
28 *colour. Possibly light coloured pants. He*
29 *had a round face and his hair was parted on*
30 *one side. Well dressed and neat looking.*

31
32 The police evidently regarded the account of Ms Youseff as
33 decisive in concluding that the assailant was a man and
34 noted also that the sightings of a woman by two of the
35 witnesses were not inconsistent with that being so.

36
37 Despite there being numerous witnesses to the
38 immediate aftermath of the assault on Mr Bedser who saw
39 another person emerge from the shop, the assailant has
40 never been identified and no-one has ever been charged with
41 his murder.

42
43 A picture of a person was reconstructed from various
44 accounts who saw the suspect running from the crime scene
45 on 2 December 1980. It was released to the public on
46 12 December 1980. This is commonly known as an identikit
47 image.

1
2 Commissioner, I will now show on the screen the
3 identikit image produced shortly after Mr Bedser's murder.
4

5 In a bid for further information, this identikit image
6 appeared in news media in the days that followed. An
7 example is a newspaper article that appeared in the Sydney
8 Morning Herald on 15 December 1980 titled "Motive riddle in
9 arcade murder". This article, Commissioner, can be found
10 at tab 156 [SC01.10064.00007_0001] of the tender bundle and
11 I now wish to show it.
12

13 In addition to the details I have already submitted to
14 you, Commissioner, with respect to the murder, this article
15 also mentions that the man ran from the shop, fled across
16 nearby Church Street, and disappeared into St John's Park.
17

18 There were other sightings of a man on the day of
19 Mr Bedser's murder in and around the arcade that appear
20 relevant. These are outlined in great detail in paragraphs
21 118 to 127 of Counsel Assisting's written submissions.
22

23 In particular, at about 12.30pm, according to Raymond
24 Hadley, an auctioneer who worked a short distance from the
25 murder scene, he had a man come to his showrooms and ask
26 for a price on an antique lounge suite. Mr Hadley
27 mentioned a figure of \$300 to \$400. The man said he had
28 already been offered \$850 by an antique dealer in
29 Parramatta. Mr Hadley said the man should accept the
30 offer. The man left without saying another word.
31 Mr Hadley assumed that the man was referring to Mr Bedser,
32 who he regarded as the only antique dealer in Parramatta.
33

34 When shown the identikit image, Mr Hadley stated that
35 it was identical to the person that entered the premises,
36 except that the person's hair was curly. He described the
37 man as wearing a beige or fawn safari jacket and a pair of
38 dark brown trousers.
39

40 Between about 1 and 2pm on that day, Brant Browne,
41 a proprietor of a coffee lounge within the arcade, saw
42 a man whom he thought appeared to be agitated, standing at
43 the front of the alleyway next to the antique shop, when
44 the man noticed he was being observed by Mr Browne he
45 walked off up Darcy Street, where he disappeared into an
46 unspecified building.
47

1 Mr Browne described the man as wearing brown coloured
2 trousers, a light brown patterned shirt with a similar
3 coloured long-sleeved jacket. When shown the identikit
4 image, he could not say whether it was similar to the man
5 he had seen.
6

7 At 1.30pm, Elsie Nealon saw a man leaning against
8 a wall in the alleyway near the antique shop who stared at
9 her with a vacant expression as she passed. She described
10 him as having a tanned face, dark, well-groomed hair,
11 brushed back, and a mid-brown jacket.
12

13 As is apparent, Commissioner, the descriptions given
14 by each of these witnesses as to what the man they saw was
15 wearing were broadly similar. A number of other witnesses
16 who described the man fleeing the shop after Mr Bedser had
17 been stabbed gave similar descriptions of the man's
18 clothing as generally brown in colour.
19

20 I now turn to say something about the murder weapon.
21 A knife, stained with what was subsequently identified as
22 Mr Bedser's blood, was found lying behind the counter on
23 the floor, blood splatter evident around it. The knife was
24 variously described as a long-bladed hunting knife with
25 a black handle, with coloured cords or rings on the handle.
26 Such a knife was purchased that very morning by a man at
27 a sports shop in the same arcade as Mr Bedser's shop. It
28 was a Mundial Sheriff knife. The shop assistant who sold
29 the man the knife described it as having a 5 or 6 inch
30 blade, black handle and silver rings around it.
31

32 The Inquiry has had the crime scene photos in this
33 matter developed. The knife shown in those photos matches
34 the description of the Mundial Sheriff knife sold earlier
35 that morning to the man in the sports store. This was also
36 the effect of the evidence of the officer in charge at the
37 inquest into Mr Bedser's murder.
38

39 The shop assistant described the man who purchased the
40 knife as about 35 years old, five foot five to six foot
41 tall, average build, and thought his hair was brown. When
42 later shown the identikit image, she stated that she could
43 not remember what the man looked like and was of no further
44 assistance to police.
45

46 Another witness said that she was present in the
47 Arcade Sports Store on the morning of 2 December when, at

1 about 9.15am, a man had said to the salesgirl that he
2 wanted the black-handled knife in the window. The witness
3 was shown the identikit image and said it was similar to
4 the man she had seen, except that his hair was curly and
5 untidy.
6

7 Commissioner, there is no record in any of the
8 material produced to the Inquiry by NSW Police of any
9 examination of the knife for fingerprints. However, at the
10 inquest in 1983, the following exchange took place between
11 the Coroner and the officer in charge, Detective Sergeant
12 Hamilton, in respect of the knife.
13

14 If that transcript could now be shown, it is page 5 of
15 tab 8 [SC01.00008.00139_0001] of the tender bundle. The
16 Coroner asked:
17

18 *Q. You may have mentioned this, was the*
19 *knife found?*

20 *A. Yes the knife was found near the*
21 *counter where the deceased was stabbed.*

22 *Q. Obviously examined for fingerprints?*

23 *A. Yes, nothing at all.*

24 *Q. Nothing at all?*

25 *A. Nothing.*
26

27 Mr Hamilton, the OIC, is now 84 years old. Police
28 recently spoke with him about his memory of the case and
29 this very exchange at inquest. He expressed the view that
30 the knife would have been examined for fingerprints because
31 "that is the way we operated, definitely", and that the
32 answer, "Yes, nothing at all", would likely mean the knife
33 was examined for fingerprints but no fingerprints could be
34 located.
35

36 There is no ability to now examine this critical piece
37 of evidence, the murder weapon, for fingerprints or indeed
38 subject it to any further forensic analysis. It has been
39 lost. I will say more about this shortly, Commissioner.
40

41 If the man seen by the sports shop assistant and the
42 other witness in the sports shop, as well as the
43 auctioneer, Mr Hadley, the cafe proprietor, Mr Browne, and
44 Ms Nealon, was in fact the man who killed Mr Bedser, then
45 the man's behaviour in the hours leading up to the murder
46 suggests some degree of premeditation. This man purchased
47 a knife and was seen loitering around the antique shop.

1 Further, if the killer removed his fingerprints from the
2 knife handle after stabbing Mr Bedser, or wore gloves so as
3 to leave no fingerprints, that would also suggest a degree
4 of premeditation, as well as perhaps some degree of
5 criminal experience.
6

7 Who, then, wanted Mr Bedser dead, and why? More
8 particularly, was his death potentially motivated by LGBTIQ
9 bias? Attempting to answer these questions, Commissioner,
10 has been far from simple.
11

12 The Inquiry's review of Mr Bedser's death revealed one
13 of the most complex cases in which to try and unravel the
14 question of motive. The Inquiry's investigation of this
15 matter was made more difficult for the following
16 deficiencies in the original police investigation.
17

18 First, as already mentioned, the NSW Police are unable
19 to locate the murder weapon. With the lost knife, also
20 comes the lost opportunity to subject it to more modern
21 forensic analysis. Police obviously should have taken
22 steps to ensure that the knife and other crime scene
23 exhibits, including Mr Bedser's clothing and blood samples
24 taken from the scene, were retained and preserved for
25 further reinvestigation or forensic testing.
26

27 It is submitted that the loss of the murder weapon in
28 an unsolved homicide is plainly deplorable.
29

30 The other crime scene exhibits are also unable to be
31 located. This is an unacceptable state of affairs.
32

33 Secondly, although the police seem to have carried out
34 quite extensive inquiries in relation to numerous aspects
35 of their investigation into Mr Bedser's murder, no
36 comprehensive or detailed statement by the officer in
37 charge summarising the entirety of the investigation has
38 ever been produced. Indeed, the coronial file includes
39 only a one-page document provided by the officer in charge
40 setting out the basic facts of Mr Bedser's death. The
41 Inquiry has been left to surmise the direction and extent
42 of this very complex murder investigation from surviving
43 materials such as running sheets, occurrence pads and
44 witness statements.
45

46 Thirdly, Commissioner, a considerable amount of
47 documentation appears to be missing from the material that

1 has been produced to the Inquiry. In particular, the
2 running sheets and occurrence entries produced to the
3 Inquiry terminate abruptly in January 1981, only a little
4 more than a month after Mr Bedser's murder, yet it is clear
5 that various lines of investigation were still being
6 actively explored at that time.

7
8 The inquest did not take place until another two years
9 after that, in July 1983. What inquiries were pursued and
10 what was accomplished or not accomplished between January
11 1981 and mid-1983 is simply unknown.

12
13 From the documents produced by police and the Coroners
14 Court, the Inquiry has been able to glean that at the time
15 of the initial police investigation, there were at least
16 three main possible case theories.

17
18 Case theory 1. That this was a revenge attack by
19 a parent or family associate of a teenage boy, or possibly
20 girl, with whom Mr Bedser was known or believed to have had
21 or to have sought to have, sexual interactions.

22
23 Case theory 2. That this was an attack by a member or
24 associate of a particular family as a result of acrimony
25 flowing from various financial dealings. To protect the
26 identity of members of this family, I will be using various
27 pseudonyms throughout these submissions when referring to
28 them.

29
30 Case theory 3. That this was an attack for other
31 reasons altogether, such as a robbery or a dispute over
32 jewellery or other property in Mr Bedser's shop.

33
34 The Inquiry went about investigating these various
35 theories. To properly enable it to do so, it summonsed all
36 relevant records pertaining to the police investigation and
37 coronial proceedings. The Inquiry developed negatives of
38 the crime scene and other photos found in the police file.
39 These included photos taken during police surveillance at
40 Mr Bedser's funeral. Relevantly, the crime scene photos
41 included a photo of the murder weapon in situ.

42
43 Other photos included photographs of boys, some in
44 sexually suggestive positions, and photographs of what
45 appear to be family events involving various boys and
46 Mr Bedser, including photographs which appeared to have
47 been taken overseas, likely in Greece.

1
2 Whether these negatives had been in the possession of
3 Mr Bedser or whether, for example, they were obtained by
4 police for some investigative purpose, is unknown. Whether
5 police had themselves developed any of these negatives in
6 the course of their investigation is also unknown.

7
8 The Inquiry also reviewed the fingerprint file in this
9 case. Relevantly, in about 2007 and 2008, further
10 fingerprint analysis was conducted by the Unsolved Homicide
11 Team of NSW Police from prints which had been lifted from
12 glass display cases at the crime scene. This produced
13 matches with three persons.

14
15 Person 1 was a man named Geoffrey Smith. Person 2 was
16 a boy whom I will call "PD"; and another boy I will call
17 "MM".

18
19 Only one of these three persons, Mr Smith, was of an
20 age and description as at December 1980 possibly comparable
21 to that of the person seen by several witnesses fleeing the
22 scene.

23
24 Mr Smith died in custody in 2002. The Inquiry
25 summonsed further material in relation to this person.
26 Nothing in the material available suggests any connection
27 between Mr Smith and Mr Bedser that would link him to the
28 homicide.

29
30 At the time of Mr Bedser's death, PD would have been
31 15 years old and MM would have been nine years old. None
32 of the witnesses outside the shop in December 1980 suggest
33 that any person of such an age was seen. Nor is there any
34 indication in the available evidence that either boy was
35 one of the boys with whom Mr Bedser had any relevant
36 association.

37
38 I turn now to each of the three case theories and what
39 the Inquiry has learned.

40
41 Was this a revenge attack by a parent or family
42 associate of a teenage boy with whom Mr Bedser was known or
43 believed to have had sexual relations? There is abundant
44 evidence that Mr Bedser had had sexual relations with or
45 had propositioned a number of teenage boys. One such boy
46 was a person I will refer to as "SN".
47

1 SN was 17 years old as at 2 December 1980. The
2 associations and dealings between SN and Mr Bedser and SN's
3 family were both close and complex.
4

5 SN was interviewed by police on 3 December, the day
6 after the murder. He said that his association with
7 Mr Bedser had commenced about two years ago when he was 15
8 and ended about four or five months ago - that is,
9 about July or August 1980. SN said he initially started
10 working for Mr Bedser, including doing deliveries for him.
11 After about two or three months, they developed
12 a relationship in which they would have oral sex in a room
13 above the shop, for which Mr Bedser would pay SN \$10.
14

15 SN said the end of the so-called affair came after he
16 and Mr Bedser had an argument, because Mr Bedser had
17 refused to lend him money to buy a car, having previously
18 promised to do so. He claimed that that was the last time
19 he had seen Mr Bedser.
20

21 Three other young people, all of whom were aged 15 to
22 20 as at December 1980, also told police that Mr Bedser had
23 sexual interactions with them. A further five people said
24 that Mr Bedser had propositioned them but they had rejected
25 his advances.
26

27 The available evidence indicates that at least two or
28 perhaps more of the parents of these boys had come to know
29 or suspect something of the nature of their son's
30 relationship with Mr Bedser. One such parent was SN's
31 mother.
32

33 In a taped conversation in about June 1980, SN's
34 mother is recorded as saying to Mr Bedser that she had some
35 letters that Mr Bedser had written to SN when he was young
36 which amounted to "big proof against" Mr Bedser.
37

38 Another boy, whom I will refer to as "PB", told police
39 that he had refused advances by Mr Bedser but that his
40 father had found out that Mr Bedser was homosexual and had
41 an argument with him in which he told him to keep away from
42 his son. Another witness also mentioned this very threat to
43 police.
44

45 Mrs Margaret Horwood, who did some bookkeeping work
46 for Mr Bedser, told police that numerous young boys used to
47 hang around the shop and that one of them, a young Greek

1 boy, had told her that he could have \$5 from the till,
2 which he said was authorised by Mr Bedser. She said that
3 the father of that boy once came into the shop and spoke to
4 Mr Bedser about his son.

5
6 It is possible that one of the fathers of one of these
7 young people, or another family member or associate, killed
8 Mr Bedser in retribution for his actual or feared sexual
9 interactions with that young person. It is not clear to
10 what extent police ultimately pursued this possible motive,
11 principally because the material produced breaks off
12 at January 1981.

13
14 Many of the people who might have had some
15 recollection of any of these matters are deceased or cannot
16 be located. More fundamentally, the loss of the murder
17 weapon and the blood samples means that it is now
18 impossible to tie any person to the killing of Mr Bedser.

19
20 It is submitted, Commissioner, that this first case
21 theory cannot be established on the evidence available to
22 the Inquiry.

23
24 Moving to the second case theory, was this an attack
25 instigated by a member or associate of SN's family or
26 a result of acrimony flowing from various financial
27 dealings?

28
29 The police investigation revealed financial and other
30 dealings between and among Mr Bedser, SN and his family,
31 principally his mother. These financial dealings were
32 numerous and of some complexity. It is necessary,
33 Commissioner, to take a chronological approach to these
34 events.

35
36 As mentioned, in about late 1978, SN started working
37 for Mr Bedser and a few months later began having oral sex
38 with him. Mr Bedser frequently travelled with SN on work
39 trips to the country and had given SN various gifts.

40
41 SN had also stolen jewellery from Mr Bedser and had
42 gone joyriding in his car. Mr Bedser was aware of these
43 incidents and had confronted SN about them.

44
45 In 1979, Mr Bedser's mother won \$60,000 in a lottery
46 and gave \$20,000 to each of Mr Bedser and his sister.
47 Mr Bedser must have told SN or his family, as other

1 documents make it clear that at least SN and his mother
2 were aware he had won the lottery. At some stage,
3 Mr Bedser even gave SN a gift of \$500.
4

5 On 9 March 1980, Mr Bedser lent SN, or the family,
6 \$2,900 to assist them to purchase a car. The car purchased
7 was a 1973 Ford Escort.
8

9 On 20 March 1980, car insurance in the amount of
10 \$2,999 was taken out on the car by SN's parents.
11

12 Of the \$2,900 lent to the family by Mr Bedser, all but
13 \$220 had been repaid by about June 1980. At some point,
14 Mr Bedser had also lent \$300 to SN's mother to assist her
15 in relation to her sick father in Greece, and there's no
16 controversy about that.
17

18 On 3 June 1980, Mr Bedser wrote a letter to SN's
19 mother demanding that the \$220 and the \$300 be repaid. On
20 11 June 1980, Mr Bedser secretly taped a conversation that
21 he had with SN's mother in his shop, a conversation that
22 I previously mentioned.
23

24 The next day, on 12 June 1980, Mr Bedser wrote to his
25 solicitor enclosing the tape. After Mr Bedser's death, the
26 solicitor provided the tape to police. The police had it
27 transcribed. The transcript is barely comprehensible, but
28 it is clear that the conversation was heated. These were
29 some of the highlights: SN's mother said she was aware
30 that SN loved Mr Bedser and kept secrets for him. At one
31 stage, she described Mr Bedser as a second father to her
32 son. SN's mother said that she loved Mr Bedser like a son
33 and would never forget him. She accused Mr Bedser of
34 seeking to be repaid relatively small sums of money,
35 despite being a millionaire after winning the lottery.
36 Mr Bedser accused SN of repeatedly seeking money from him
37 and accused his mother of coming to him for money when SN's
38 father had \$35,000.
39

40 Soon afterwards, Mr Bedser asked his solicitor to
41 write a letter of demand about the \$220 and the \$300, which
42 the solicitor did.
43

44 On 24 July 1980, having had no response to the letter
45 of demand, the solicitor issued two small debt summonses,
46 which were served on 25 July 1980. However, curiously, on
47 that same day, Mr Bedser contacted his solicitor and told

1 him that he had come to an arrangement with the family and
2 asked him to take no further action and to send him a bill.

3
4 In about July 1980, Mr Bedser offered to lend SN
5 another \$1,000 towards the purchase of another car.
6 However, again, according to SN, Mr Bedser resiled from
7 that offer. They had an argument about this and SN told
8 Mr Bedser to "piss off".

9
10 SN told police that this was the last time he saw
11 Mr Bedser. Things got more complicated after this,
12 Commissioner. On 27 September 1980, the Ford Escort was
13 allegedly stolen and was found burnt out, and on 2 October
14 1980, SN's parents made a claim on the insurer, NRMA.

15
16 On 3 October 1980, an anonymous caller called the NRMA
17 and alleged that SN paid a person to burn the car for him.
18 The caller stated that he had lent money to SN's family to
19 purchase the car, but that some of that loan had not been
20 repaid. The caller made several subsequent calls to check
21 on the progress of the matter.

22
23 SN was interviewed by the NRMA on 30 October 1980. He
24 told them that Mr Bedser had lent money for the car but
25 that all but \$200 had been repaid. He said that his father
26 had told him that he would have to pay the final \$200
27 himself and that an argument had ensued between him and
28 Mr Bedser because the repayment was late. He denied any
29 wrongdoing in relation to the car and signed a statutory
30 declaration to that effect.

31
32 The NRMA subsequently formed the view that the
33 anonymous caller was Mr Bedser and interviewed him on
34 21 November 1980. Mr Bedser denied having made the calls.
35 In fact, he told NRMA that all the money lent for the
36 vehicle had been paid back to him. He showed the
37 investigator a copy of a receipt dated 23 September 1980
38 for \$100 and said that this was the final payment for all
39 outstanding moneys for the loan on the car.

40
41 On 25 November 1980, the NRMA interviewed SN's friend,
42 a person I will refer to as "JF". JF supported SN's
43 account of the theft and produced a statutory declaration
44 to that effect.

45
46 The insurance claim had not been finalised as at
47 2 December 1980, the date of Mr Bedser's murder.

1
2 On 26 December 1980, police interviewed JF, who now
3 admitted that the claim was false, that he had lied to the
4 NRMA and that SN had told him he had arranged for another
5 friend to steal the car so that he could make a false claim
6 and buy a different car. JF also said he had overheard SN
7 say, shortly after Mr Bedser's murder, that he was happy
8 Mr Bedser was dead, but that it was a "slack way" for him
9 to die.

10
11 Whether police interviewed SN or his parents about
12 these specific matters is unknown on the material available
13 to this Inquiry.

14
15 A friend of both SN and Mr Bedser, whom I will refer
16 to as "GG", spoke to SN after finding out about the murder.
17 He said to police that SN had had a lot of problems with
18 his parents because of his association with Mr Bedser, and
19 that his parents had often used the words, "What are we
20 going to do with this bloke", when referring to Mr Bedser.
21 Again, to what extent that information was pursued by
22 police with either SN or his parents is unknown.

23
24 SN supplied fingerprints for elimination, with no
25 match, and he did not match the description of the man
26 fleeing from the crime scene.

27
28 Although it is not apparent from the material before
29 the Inquiry that police expressly ruled out SN's father, it
30 would seem that he was regarded as unlikely to be involved
31 due to suffering from back injuries for which he was
32 receiving workers compensation. Any similarity between the
33 father and the identikit image would presumably have been
34 remarked upon by police who interviewed him. However,
35 a review of this matter undertaken by police in 2005 noted
36 that there was no evidence that the father had been further
37 spoken to about the money apparently owed by his wife to
38 Mr Bedser, and that the initial investigation had failed to
39 conclusively eliminate him by way of alibi.

40
41 SN's father is deceased.

42
43 The extent to which police checked whether other
44 members or associates of SN's family resembled the
45 identikit image is not known. It is clear that there had
46 been considerable animosity during the course of 1980
47 between Mr Bedser and SN's family in relation to these

1 various loans and other financial and legal dealings.
2 Whether that animosity still prevailed as at 2 December
3 1980 is less clear, Commissioner.
4

5 The Inquiry has endeavoured to establish the extent of
6 the property holdings of SN's family in 1980. Whilst it
7 has not been possible to confirm the exact holdings of the
8 family, there are a number of properties linked to the
9 family name with at least one property definitively owned
10 in 1980. In those circumstances, the likelihood that the
11 family would have been involved in the murder of a man over
12 \$200 or even \$520 seems remote.
13

14 Possible resentment over Mr Bedser's apparently having
15 alerted the NRMA to a false insurance claim may be
16 different, but the evidence available to the Inquiry does
17 not enable anything more than speculation on that point.
18

19 The Inquiry has undertaken searches to identify other
20 relevant family members who might meet the description of
21 the assailant. Those searches are ongoing, Commissioner.
22

23 The existence of a motive for killing Mr Bedser
24 stemming from the financial dealings is theoretically
25 possible. However, on the available evidence, it is
26 submitted that no such motive can be established.
27

28 I now move to the third case theory. Was this an
29 attack for other reasons altogether, such as a robbery or
30 a dispute over jewellery or property?
31

32 In the immediate aftermath of the attack on Mr Bedser
33 on 2 December 1980, his sister, Mrs Shirley Driscoll,
34 attended the shop and indicated to police that nothing in
35 the shop appeared to have been stolen. However, at the
36 inquest in July 1983, Mrs Driscoll raised concerns that
37 \$20,000 to \$30,000 worth of French watches which had been
38 advertised by Mr Bedser the day after his death had not
39 been located, nor any money indicating their sale.
40

41 The officer in charge, Detective Sergeant Hamilton,
42 acknowledged that police could not rule out the possibility
43 that they had been stolen, although it was possible they
44 had simply been sold beforehand. Police had made inquiries
45 with pawnbrokers and elsewhere, to no avail.
46

47 The Inquiry conducted an extensive media search to

1 find the advertisement relating to the French watches that
2 Mrs Driscoll mentioned at the inquest. The relevant
3 advertisement was found in the Parramatta Advertiser, dated
4 3 December 1980. If that advertisement could please be
5 shown, it can be found at tab 151 [SC01.83194_0001] of the
6 tender bundle.

7
8 As can be seen, the ad describes a number of antiques
9 and other items. Towards the bottom, it does mention
10 a gold fob chain and pocket watches. Whether these are the
11 watches Mrs Driscoll was referring to is unknown. In the
12 absence of any extant records regarding Mr Bedser's stock
13 and transactions, there is little the Inquiry can do to
14 further advance the case theory that Mr Bedser was the
15 victim of a robbery.

16
17 While the man seen by Mr Hadley on the day of
18 Mr Bedser's death was inquiring as to the sale price of an
19 antique chair, there is nothing which connects that matter
20 to Mr Bedser's death or even a dispute. Indeed, the
21 evidence suggests that Mr Bedser had made an overly
22 generous offer for the item.

23
24 It is possible that Mr Bedser was the subject of
25 a robbery or attempted robbery that did not proceed as
26 planned, perhaps due to Mr Bedser displaying unexpected
27 resistance. In such hypothetical circumstances, the
28 attacker may have fled before taking anything of value.
29 However, there is no positive evidence to support that
30 theory. By contrast, the prior purchase of the knife that
31 day, its abandonment at the scene and the absence of any
32 fingerprints on it would more strongly suggest it was
33 intended to be used to kill Mr Bedser while leaving minimal
34 traceable evidence, as opposed to an opportunistic robbery
35 gone wrong.

36
37 The available evidence on this case theory is
38 insufficient to found a submission one way or the other as
39 to whether this theory is a probable motive for the murder
40 of Mr Bedser.

41
42 I now move, Commissioner, to make some submissions as
43 to bias.

44
45 The Bias Crimes Indicators Form used by Strike Force
46 Parrabell in their review of Mr Bedser's case categorised
47 the case as having insufficient information to establish

1 a bias crime.

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The Inquiry requested an expert report by Dr Danny Sullivan, consultant forensic psychiatrist, in relation to whether there were any aspects of the death that may indicate that the homicide occurred in the context of LGBTIQ bias.

In his report dated 24 October 2022, Dr Sullivan expressed the views that there are no features of the crime scene suggesting hate crime. However, he also acknowledged that the available evidence leaves open the possibility of an argument between Mr Bedser and his assailant over sexual relationships, including that the assailant may have been a male relative of one of the young persons with whom Mr Bedser had sexual interactions.

Dr Sullivan considered that the purchase of a knife beforehand suggests the protagonist had intended to kill Mr Bedser specifically.

If the murder of Mr Bedser was motivated by knowledge of his sexual interactions with one or more teenage boys, that would raise for consideration the question whether that motivation, in the mind of the offender, was derived from animosity towards paedophiles or from animosity towards gay men.

It must be borne in mind also that some offenders wrongly conflate homosexuality with paedophilia. It is submitted that such a conflation in the mind of an offender does not mean that a case is not one involving gay hate bias; to the contrary, it supports a positive conclusion that such a bias is present. However, the case of Mr Bedser is not one where this issue falls to be considered, it is submitted, Commissioner. That is because on the available evidence, it is simply not possible to ascertain who killed Mr Bedser and why, with the consequence that the question of whether a gay hate bias was a factor in the death cannot be answered.

Finally, Commissioner, I move to manner and cause of death. An inquest was held on 11 July 1983. The finding of Coroner Gregory Glass was that Mr Bedser died on 2 December 1980 of the effects of blood loss due to a lacerated liver and a lacerated left lung inflicted earlier that day at the premises of 4 Darcy Street,

1 Parramatta, by a person unknown. It is submitted that the
2 coronial finding as to Mr Bedser's death remains
3 appropriate.
4

5 Those are my submissions, Commissioner.
6

7 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.
8

9 Mr Short, anything at this moment?
10

11 MR SHORT: The Commissioner seeks to reserve her position.
12

13 THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, certainly. All right. Thank you
14 very much. I will now adjourn, thank you.
15

16 **AT 10.55AM THE SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY WAS ADJOURNED**
17 **ACCORDINGLY**
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