



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE



MEDIA RESPONSE

October 15, 2022

Issued at: 5pm

Investigation into the death of Karen Lee Mahlo

Response to Rory Callinan, Sydney Morning Herald:

From time to time, Queensland Police Service members receive financial advice in the form of presentations to staff members and police officers at Maroochydore Police Station. After it was brought to the investigators attention in early 2011 that the person of interest, John Hehir, was a member of the financial company who was attending the station for these presentations, management decided to cease the arrangement with the company to event any possible interference with the death investigation.

The company was one of a number of companies that send a representative to stations for employees to seek information regarding their personal financial situation including salary packaging, novated leases, superannuation, and other tax planning. The Queensland Police Service now has no way of finding out if any police officers sought advice from this company, as it is an independent service.

The Queensland Police Service does not believe that there was any conflict of interest or integrity issues in relation to this matter.

In relation to the initial investigation, investigators attended the address on the morning of May 28, 2008 where a woman was located deceased in a bedroom.

Upon police arrival, the informant was present at the scene and was considered to be a person of interest. Police secured the scene and undertook a forensic examination and an investigative search of the premises. Mr Hehir accompanied investigators to the police station where he was interviewed and a statement was obtained from him. Later that day he was transported back to the scene where investigators escorted him into the residence so that he could collect some of his belongings.

Due to the nature of the scene, it was not appropriate to take the temperature of the deceased's body, however, signs of rigor mortis and lividity were noted. An examination of the room revealed no signs of any struggle. A Scenes of Crime photographer took a series of images of the deceased and a police scientific officer conducted a blood stain analysis.

A door-knock was conducted of the area; however, no one reported observing anything out of the ordinary with the exception of a neighbour who reported a verbal argument on 27 May and then loud music being played later in the evening.

Investigators made checks of phone records, both calls made and received, and triangulations were also conducted of mobile phones used during these recorded calls. The deceased's computer was also analysed by a QPS computer examiner.

An investigator attended the post mortem examination where toxicology tests were conducted on samples taken.

Further details of these examinations and the results are contained in the Coronial report.

Detectives consulted with the deceased's psychologist as part of preparing their report to the Coroner. The psychologist was spoken to on a number of occasions, and the investigators were given detailed medical records. The psychologist was a witness at the inquest, and the report to the coroner (written by police) contains a number of letters from the psychologist.

The original lead investigator has retired from the Queensland Police Service. A currently serving investigator, who is on maternity leave, worked on the case since the beginning of the investigation and gave evidence at the inquest in relation to this matter.

Investigators concluded that the death was not suspicious.

At a later time, family members raised certain allegations in relation to possible fraudulent dealings regarding the deceased's estate. These allegations were put to the Coroner and these family members had the opportunity to provide evidence at the inquest.

The QPS acknowledges that this death, as with any death, has caused grief and distress to family members. Investigators work to determine the circumstances of the death, preparing a reports for the coroner. In this instance the matter went to inquest with the Coroner conducting a thorough examination of all the evidence.

The Coroner concluded that Dr Mahlo intended to cause her own death. Further specific details of the matter and the Coroner's findings can be obtained from the Coroner's report.

Investigators were also in contact with family members up to and during the civil matter. There was ample opportunity for the family to raise issues during this process, or during the hearings. The public interest and family interest has been addressed in the inquest and during the civil hearings.

At the completion of any investigation the Queensland Police Service explores opportunities to improve its investigative response to incidents.

Notwithstanding the Coroners' findings, the Queensland Police Service undertakes investigate any new credible, reliable and admissible information in relation to this matter.