

Media Release



Family seeks justice as inquest into 2007 death of Lynette Phillips is set to hand down findings

Monday 10 December 2012 – for immediate release

Family members and family violence prevention advocates are calling for strong recommendations that will help stop future deaths when Judge Jennifer Coate hands down her findings in the inquest on the 2007 death of Lynette Phillips from 2.00pm today at the Coroners Court of Victoria.

Following the findings, Lynette's family and family violence prevention advocates will hold a press conference at 3.30pm to offer their response and answer questions from the media (details below).

'This inquest is about justice for Lynette, it's about our grief and our recovery as a family, and it's about stopping future family violence deaths so that other families in the Victorian community do not have to go through the irretrievable tragedy of what happened to our precious daughter and sister,' said Lynette's mother, Cheryl Dyson, today.

Lynette's body was found in the Yarra River at Dights Falls in March 2007. The body of her former partner, Ben Pappas, was found in the river near Docklands eight days later, with evidence presented by police at the inquest strongly suggesting Pappas killed Lynette before killing himself.

Advocates highlighted the national importance of the findings in strengthening the way that general practitioners respond to patients who present as experiencing family violence. Understanding the risks and working with their patients to prioritise their safety requires sound understanding of the nature and dynamics of family violence, and of the specialist services that can assist their patients to manage the risks.

'We need to strengthen the approach of doctors to signs of family violence, so they ensure that those at risk are seen independently of perpetrators and are referred to specialist services better placed to deal with the risks of intimate partner violence,' said Federation policy officer, Dr Chris Atmore, today.

'We also look to these findings to underscore the critical importance of family violence death reviews in the context of the recent report of the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths, to which the Victorian Government has so far failed to commit continuing dedicated funding of only \$250,000 per year.

'What happened to Lynette is typical of deaths considered in the first Review Report, and we cannot afford the human cost of failing to recognise the central role of family violence in her death,' Dr Atmore said.

In a document that will be available to the media, Dr Atmore has detailed key findings of the report as they apply to the specific circumstances of Lynette's inquest.

The findings into the death of Ben Pappas will also be handed down today at 10.00am. The family wishes media to respect their decision that questions about the death of Lynette will only be answered at the afternoon press conference, or by specific prior arrangement with the media contacts listed below.

'Today is not about Ben Pappas. It's about respecting and honouring and achieving justice for Lynette, and making sure we learn from the circumstances of her death and take the steps that will stop future deaths in similar cases,' said Lynette's sister, Wendy Phillips, today.

The findings of the inquest into the death of Lynette Phillips are the last findings to be handed down by Judge Jennifer Coate, formerly State Coroner of Victoria.

The press conference with the family of Lynette Phillips and family violence prevention advocates will be held today, Monday 10 December, at 3.30pm at the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Level 3, 225 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Media attending the press conference are strongly encouraged to RSVP to Federation Communications Manager, Darren Lewin-Hill, on 0488 773 535.

Media contacts

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