



## **STATE CORONER'S COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **Inquest into the deaths arising from the Lindt Café siege**

**Media statement of the State Coroner of New South Wales, Magistrate Michael Barnes**

**15 December 2015**

On the anniversary of the Lindt Café siege, I would like to express my condolences and deep sympathy to the families and friends of Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson.

Today will also be extremely difficult for the survivors and responders to the horrifying events that unfolded on 15 and 16 December last year.

Unexpected and violent deaths cause severe distress and I know it has been traumatic and stressful for everyone to re-live these events as they are replayed in the media and at the inquest.

In the days following the siege, we saw a monumental outpouring of emotion as thousands of people paid their respects to Katrina and Tori at Martin Place.

One year on, we need to remember these feelings will not have subsided, particularly for those directly impacted by the siege. In some instances, it could be worse.

Often people are expected to get on with their lives after losing a loved one, but you cannot put time limits on grief. Everyone processes loss in their own way and we need to support those who are grieving no matter how long it takes.

I am conscious the Lindt Cafe inquest has been a challenging and confronting process for the families of Tori and Katrina. I am grateful the families and their lawyers have participated so constructively in the inquest.

It is rare for an inquest to begin within a year of a death, and in this case the hearings and findings will be completed before the second anniversary of the siege.

I recognise this is an unusual situation, however due to national security issues and potential risks to public safety the inquest had to be conducted expeditiously.

Ideally, the inquest would have been held over consecutive weeks but given the magnitude and complexity of investigations it was necessary to hold the inquest in sections.

So far, we have held three public hearings, as well as closed sessions. The final segment of public hearings will run for at least eight weeks from 21 March next year, and will include testimony from survivors and emergency services' personnel.

I aim to deliver findings and recommendations in mid-2016. It is important to remember this is the first time in Australia a coronial inquest has examined a potential act of terrorism and the aim of this process is to help NSW develop strategies to help tackle and prevent events of this nature in the future.

These endeavours are justified because the families of Katrina and Tori are entitled to know whether the incident could have been managed in a way that would have avoided their deaths. Further, the people of Sydney deserve reassurance the law enforcement and intelligence agencies will, whenever possible, prevent similar incidents occurring in future and, if it is not possible, the response will be in accordance with world's best practice.

I thank the NSW Government for supporting the inquest and providing extra resources to ensure no other coronial inquests are delayed by the siege investigations.

In addition, it is important to recognise the outstanding efforts of the team assisting me with the inquest.

Since December, the team of barristers and solicitors have worked more than 10,000 hours meticulously reviewing tens of thousands of pages of evidence.

In addition, they have spent extensive periods conferring with witnesses to prepare them for hearings and have worked with numerous experts and agencies across the state, nationally and internationally.

It has been a mammoth task and they will be working over Christmas to ensure the inquest is finalised on time.

I also extend my gratitude to Detective Chief Inspector Angelo Memmolo and his team, Strike Force Verum, who have done a remarkable job leading the investigations into the siege.

This is one of the largest and most complex inquests ever carried out in Australia. To give you an appreciation of the enormity of the police investigations here is a snapshot of the work they have completed over the last 12 months:

- 9,300 investigative notes and tasks including the taking over 1,000 statements from police officers, experts and civilians witnesses.
- Over 14,500 individuals spoken to who were in the Sydney CBD at the relevant time of the siege.
- 250 businesses canvassed in the Sydney CBD and outer suburbs for CCTV.
- More than 1,000 hours of CCTV viewed. In addition, approximately 200 hours of media footage and 1,100 still photographs have been analysed in detail.
- Assessed over 1,500 National Security Hotline phone calls made during the siege.

- Reviewed 1,700 calls to the Public Information and Inquiry Centre made during the siege.
- Analysed large volumes of various police logs and individual police notes.
- Liaised with 32 different foreign, commonwealth and state government and private commercial agencies in relation to Mr Monis' history and interaction with those agencies.
- Spent approximately 1,000 hours with personnel in the Forensic Imaging Unit who have utilised 3D laser scanning imaging technology, video recording, high speed camera recordings as well as other reconstructive imaging techniques.
- Consulted chemical criminalistics, fingerprints, bomb technicians, DNA analysis, and blood splatter experts. Investigators have also worked with experts in determining types of wood and glass in the incident premises and their characteristics.
- Carried out ballistic testing on glass and furniture similar to that used in the Lindt Café, used high speed cameras and Doppler Radars to replicate and record the conditions the police marksman and the police assault group contended with during the siege.
- Dedicated 6,000 hours to analysing ballistic evidence and completing over 50 ballistic tests/evidentiary certificates.

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