

**Submission  
No 36**

**INQUIRY INTO GAY AND TRANSGENDER HATE CRIMES  
BETWEEN 1970 AND 2010**

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## **Information concerning the death of Kenneth Brennan, Queen's Birthday Weekend 1995**

To Whom It May Concern,

In the 1990s I was the head teacher of the history department at a large Sydney State High School. Mr. Kenneth Brennan was a senior teacher of Ancient History. He was a very popular teacher, much admired by other staff members and by his students.

On the Tuesday following the Monday Queen's Birthday weekend holiday in 1995 I was telephoned at my home just before I left for school. Another teacher, totally distraught, told me that Ken would not be coming into work that day. I said, "What's wrong?" It was not unusual if someone was ill to let us know as early as possible because we had to try to find another teacher to come in that day. "No" she said, "he has been murdered." I said "murdered?" she said "yes, murdered" I said "tell me a bit more about it" but she did not have very much to tell me.

I then made several telephone calls, including to the school principal who gave me permission to find out more about the situation. I then rang the Police at Kings Cross near Ken Brennan's apartment. The police asked me to come in and see them. They then gave permission for a police officer to accompany me to Ken's address.

When I got there, I was greeted by the most absolutely dreadful, dreadful, dreadful mess. The apartment had two bedrooms and all rooms had been ransacked. There was dried blood all over the walls, all over the carpet, all over the bed and even the curtains had dried blood on them. Someone had wiped their hands on the curtains to try and get rid of the blood. It was a terrible, terrible mess.

I returned to the police at Kings Cross. It was not the new Police Station near the fountain. It was the old Police Station near the Kings Cross railway station. The police interviewed me and asked why on earth I was there as I was not related to Ken. I explained that Ken's death would mean a great deal to me, to the staff at the school and for the HSC students. I needed to know what had happened and what I could say about it.

The Police said they had looked for causes. Why should a popular senior teacher be attacked so violently? They had a film of Ken using an ATM the night before. That would not be unusual because it was the beginning of the week. That's what people did in those days, to get money for the weeks expenditure.

I then went back to the apartment. I did not know what to do. I could not touch anything, and I could not even sit down. Apparently, the murder weapon had been a carving knife. It was fashionable in those days to have knives with handles made of springy rubber,

so there were no finger prints on it. There was no evidence of forced entry to the apartment and there were no finger prints that the Police could identify on the doors. It appeared that Ken had let the person into the apartment. Ken was a hospitable sort of person. He would have opened the front door even to a stranger and said "Come in and talk" or whatever. Ken did not have any family in Sydney. They all lived in South Australia. He was gay man. But this was not the reason I went to investigate what had happened to him. There were so many other people involved. There were the students he was teaching in years 11 and 12 and there were the other teachers he worked with. Unfortunately, it was years before mobile phones were introduced so I did not take any photographs of the ransacked apartment.

Later I was asked to identify Ken's body at the Coroners Court which I did. The worst thing was there had been a horrendous crime, but no one had been arrested, no one had been stopped, no one had seen the person responsible for the murder.

I felt the Police were genuinely unhelpful about it. It was a terrible embarrassment to them and they did not want to know anything about it. It seemed that if Ken had taken someone home or let someone into the apartment that he was responsible for his own death.

I do not think this was possible but even if it were possible, it does not explain the intensity of the murder. The multiple knife wounds, the evidence of the dried blood that went from room to room. Ken was not murdered because he was a school teacher or for any other reason. He was murdered because he was gay. That was the awful thing, that every bit of evidence pointed to the fact that it was a hate crime, an absolutely hideous hate crime.

Even though it is almost 30 years ago, I still remember the details very vividly. I especially remember the blood-stained hand prints on the wall. He had pressed both hands on the wall to protect himself from the person attacking him, as you would in an effort to protect yourself. It was a terrible thing. As far as being gay was concerned, in those days you were regarded as having a "terrible secret" that you would not tell anyone. You made sure that you left behind as few footprints as possible. That was Ken.

He did not have a funeral, so we at the school organised a short service at Waterloo Congregational Church, so people could come along and pay their respects to him.

We did not mention how he died and any of the other unfortunate things that had happened. Ken was loved by all. We were very discreet in what we told the students about it. Just that he had been ill, and he had died, which was sort of true. This is as far as it went. I cannot tell you any more than this.

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