



CORONERS COURT OF QUEENSLAND

FINDINGS OF INQUEST

CITATION: **Inquest into the death of Sharron Phillips**

TITLE OF COURT: Coroners Court

JURISDICTION: BRISBANE

FILE NO(s): 2017/4541

DELIVERED ON: 20 May 2024

DELIVERED AT: Brisbane

HEARING DATE(s): 11 December 2020, 22 – 24 March 2021
Submissions November 2022 to February 2023.

FINDINGS OF: Terry Ryan, State Coroner

CATCHWORDS: Coroners: inquest, missing person suspected death, reopened inquest, whether missing person is deceased, police investigation, true crime podcast.

REPRESENTATION:

Counsel Assisting: Ms Rhiannon Helsen

Ms Donna Anderson: Mr M Jackson instructed by Caxton Legal Centre

Commissioner of Police: Mr M Nicholson instructed by the Queensland Police Service Legal Unit

Detective Sergeant Chapman
Detective Senior Sergeant Kentwell
Detective Senior Constable
O'Donnell:

Mr C Pratt, Gilshenan & Luton Legal
Practice

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Introduction

1. At around 8:00pm on Friday, 9 May 1986, Sharron Phillips was reported missing to Goodna police by her mother, Dawn Phillips. Sharron was 20 years of age.
2. Sharron's yellow Datsun Bluebird Sedan, registration 463-PKH, had been located earlier that day by her father and brother. The Datsun was parked next to the inbound lanes of Ipswich Road near the Wacol Migrant Centre¹ and Wacol Army Camp. The Datsun had run out of petrol. It was locked and the keys were missing.
3. Sharron's last known activity was making a reverse charge telephone call to a male friend from a public telephone box on Wacol Station Road at Wacol at 12:03am on 9 May 1986.
4. A homicide investigation was conducted. However, Sharron's body was not located and there was insufficient evidence to commence proceedings against any person.
5. A coronial inquiry was conducted on 19 January 1988. The Coroner found that there was a strong possibility that Sharron had "disappeared in suspicious circumstances and not voluntarily". There was no evidence to suggest her whereabouts and insufficient evidence to commit any person for trial.
6. In March 2016, Mr Ian Seeley contacted the Homicide Investigation Unit and provided detailed information regarding Sharron's murder. Mr Seeley nominated his father, Raymond Peter Mulvihill, as the person responsible for the murder. Cold Case Detectives conducted an extensive reinvestigation. The version provided by Mr Seeley was corroborated by investigators. This was through known movements and alleged admissions made by Mr Mulvihill to family members.
7. Raymond Mulvihill had died from cancer in 2002. In October 2017, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) advised the Coroners Court that on the available evidence, if Mr Mulvihill were still alive, he would be arrested for the murder of Ms Phillips.

The inquest

8. On 6 October 2017, following the advice from the QPS in relation to Mr Mulvihill, I wrote to the Attorney-General to recommend that she direct me to reopen, pursuant to s47 of the *Coroners Act 1958*, the inquiry into Sharron's disappearance in May 1986.
9. In light of the new evidence that was provided to the Coroners Court, I recommended that the matter be reopened so that I could consider all of the investigation material with a view to finding the matters required under s24(1) of the *Coroners Act 1958*.

¹ Now the site of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre

10. In 2017, I did not have the power to reopen the inquest as Sharron's disappearance was investigated under the *Coroners Act 1958*. A direction from the Attorney-General was required. That direction was received on 10 October 2017.
11. Following amendments to the *Coroners Act 2003* that commenced on 25 May 2020, I reopened inquest under the 2003 Act. On 11 December 2020, at a pre-inquest hearing, the following issues for the inquest were determined:
 - Findings as required by s.45(1) and (2) of the *Coroners Act 2003*; namely whether or not Sharron Phillips is in fact deceased and, if so, how, when and where she died and what caused her death;
 - The circumstances surrounding Sharron Phillips' disappearance; and
 - Consider whether the actions or omissions of any person caused the disappearance.
12. A brief of evidence was prepared, which included material from the original coronial investigation, an updated coronial investigation report, as well as the numerous statements, interviews, records, audio and video exhibits, photographs and other materials gathered during the investigations. The brief of evidence was tendered at the commencement of the hearing.
13. The pre-inquest hearing was held on 11 December 2020. As outlined at the pre-inquest hearing, the post May 2016 investigations identified that Mr Mulvihill had played a significant role in Sharron's disappearance. It was his link to Sharron's disappearance that was the focus of the reopened inquest.
14. Twelve witnesses were called to give evidence during the course of the inquest from 22– 24 March 2021. At the conclusion of the inquest hearing I determined that further inquiries should be made following the evidence of Ian Seeley, particularly in relation to new information he provided in his evidence about his interactions with police officers on 8-9 May 1986 and his involvement in the Evil Gingerbread Man podcast.
15. After a copy of the relevant material was obtained, it was distributed to the parties to the inquest. I determined that it was not necessary to call additional witnesses to give evidence. Written submissions were received between November 2022 and February 2023. Those submissions were helpful in the preparation of my findings.
16. The relevant facts concerning the circumstances leading up to Sharron's disappearance and the further information provided to Police are summarised below. It is not possible to outline all of the voluminous material tendered at the inquest.

The evidence

17. At 8:00 pm on 9 May 1986, Mrs Dawn Phillips reported to Constable Neuendorf of Goodna Police that her daughter, Sharron, aged 20, was missing.² Earlier that afternoon, Sharron's father, Mr Bob Phillips and her brother, Robert, had travelled to her flat at Archerfield but were unable to locate her.
18. While driving home, they found her yellow Datsun Sedan locked and parked on Ipswich Road, near the Wacol Migrant Centre. It had run out of fuel.
19. Goodna Police advised Mr and Mrs Phillips to move the vehicle off the roadside and transport it home, if possible, which they did.³
20. Sharron's sister, Lisa Phillips, went to her flat on the evening of 9 May 1986 to wait for her. She found a piece of paper with 'Martin' written on it and a telephone number. This was a reference to Sharron's friend, Martin Balazs. Sharron had met Mr Balazs less than a week earlier at a nightclub in Brisbane.
21. At around 7:00pm that evening, Mr Phillips contacted Martin to advise him that Sharron was missing. Martin said that he planned to go looking for her.
22. At around 8:00pm, Mr and Mrs Phillips entered Sharron's flat and found that her belongings were intact. Her pet bird had not been fed and a light had been left on.
23. Before finishing duty on 9 May 1986, Constable Neuendorf circulated Sharron's description and the known details of her disappearance in a Missing Persons Broadcast via the Police Computer Network.
24. On 10 May 1986, Mr Phillips spoke to Martin again. Martin said Sharron had called him at home at around 11:30pm on Thursday, 8 May 1986. She told him her car had run out of fuel and asked him to pick her up. He then drove out to the Wacol/Gailes area but could not locate Sharron. He thought she must have been tired of waiting and found another way home. Martin recalled arriving home at around 3:00am.⁴
25. Investigations established that earlier in the evening on 8 May, Sharron had gone shopping with her close friend and work colleague, Samantha Dalzell. Sharron had withdrawn cash from an ATM at Sunnybank but did not have a two dollar note to operate the pump at the nearby service station. Sharon dropped Samantha at her home at Redbank Plains around 10:30pm.⁵ She was low on fuel and planned to buy some on her way home. Sharron was going to collect Samantha the following morning from the Sherwood Railway Station on her way to work. She never arrived.
26. On her way home from Samantha's residence, it appears Sharron ran out of fuel. She left her vehicle and walked to a telephone box on Wacol Station Road, close to the Wacol Railway station. This was around 1.5km from the location of the Datsun.

² Ex C8, pg. 1; Ex B25, pg. 13

³ Ex B25, pg. 8

⁴ Ex B25, pg. 25

⁵ Ex C4, pg. 17

27. Telephone records confirmed that Sharron made a reverse charge call to Martin at 11:18pm that evening. He then left his residence at Acacia Ridge to collect her.⁶ Sharron made a further reverse charge call to his residence at 12:08am. That call was answered by his flatmate, who told Sharron that Martin was on his way to collect her.⁷

The initial investigation

28. Following Sharron's reported disappearance, an investigation, code named 'Operation Eject', involving Detectives from the Oxley CIB, Homicide Investigation Unit and other Police stations commenced. All proof of life checks carried out suggested Sharron was deceased, and it was thought by investigators that she had been murdered. No remains were ever found, and no person was charged in relation to her disappearance. The findings and a precis of the statements obtained as part of the initial investigation were set out in the initial Police Investigation Report.⁸
29. Several hundred witnesses were interviewed,⁹ with over 160 statements obtained by investigators. Extensive areas were searched in order to explore various lines of inquiry provided throughout the course of the investigation. The investigation included:
- Interviews with members of the Phillips family.
 - Searches of the area where the vehicle was located and surroundings, including a nearby drain.¹⁰ Sharron's white flat heeled shoes and her glomesh silver purse were located in the vicinity of the drain on 15 May 1986.
 - Interviews/statements from all persons who had interacted with Sharron in the lead up to her disappearance.
 - Media releases to obtain information from the public and follow-up inquiries with any information of relevance obtained as a result, including sightings.¹¹
 - Forensic testing of Sharron's flat and vehicle, as well as other relevant areas.
 - Various audio and photographic exhibits.¹²
30. Investigators considered a number of possible suspects in Sharron's disappearance, including Mr Balazs, whose vehicle was seized and searched. He was interviewed on multiple occasions.¹³ Local sex offenders as well as various inmates, who had allegedly confessed to being involved in Sharron's

⁶ Ex C4, pg. 17

⁷ Ex C4, pg. 18

⁸ Ex C1

⁹ Ex C1, pg. 8

¹⁰ Ex C1, pg. 7

¹¹ Ex C1, pg. 5; Ex C1, pg. 6 onwards

¹² Ex C1, pg. 29 onwards

¹³ Ex C1, pg. 21

disappearance, were also interviewed and ruled out as having any connection.¹⁴

31. Mr Brown, a local man, was initially thought to be the primary suspect in Sharron's suspected murder, which was a view shared by the Phillips family. He participated in multiple interviews with Police, with all of the statements made describing his involvement explored thoroughly and found to be false.¹⁵
32. At the request of the Phillips family, witnesses, including Mr Brown were subjected to hypnosis. However, no information of assistance to the investigation was obtained.¹⁶
33. The original police investigation was broad and thorough, involving Detectives from the Oxley CIB, Homicide Squad as well as other Police Stations throughout Queensland and interstate.¹⁷ Ultimately, the investigation failed to determine Sharron's whereabouts or the cause of her disappearance. Foul play was suspected.¹⁸ Suicide and a voluntary disappearance were considered and found to be unlikely.¹⁹

Previous Coronial Inquiry

34. On 19 January 1988, Coroner WJ Randall commenced the coronial inquisition into Sharron's disappearance.²⁰ Seventeen witnesses were examined at the hearing.²¹ A transcript of the proceeding was contained in the coronial brief, together with witness statements.²²
35. Coroner Randall found that Sharron disappeared in the early hours of 9 May 1986 after her vehicle ran out of petrol on Ipswich Road, Wacol.²³ He found there was a strong possibility that her disappearance was not voluntary and under suspicious circumstances.²⁴ No person was committed to stand trial.

REINVESTIGATION – TASK FORCE CRIME OPERATIONS 1990

36. In February 1990, Detective Superintendent Huey directed that a task force be set up to reinvestigate a number of unsolved crimes, including Sharron's disappearance.²⁵ The objective was to establish whether a person or persons were responsible for Sharron's suspected murder and to obtain evidence to prosecute the offenders.
37. No additional information was obtained that was able to assist in identifying the person or persons responsible for Sharron's suspected murder or the location of her body.²⁶

¹⁴ Ex C1, pg. 21 onwards; Ex C4, pg. 20

¹⁵ Ex C4, pg. 4

¹⁶ Ex C1, pg. 28

¹⁷ Ex C1, pg. 3

¹⁸ Ex C1, pg. 30

¹⁹ Ex C1, pg. 30

²⁰ Ex A1

²¹ Ex A2, pg. 3; Ex A4

²² Ex B25

²³ Ex B25, pg. 69

²⁴ Ex A3, pg. 2

²⁵ Ex C4

²⁶ Ex C4, pg. 21

OPERATION EJECT REVIEW - 2016

38. In March 2016, further information was received from Ian Seeley in relation to Sharron's disappearance. A review of Operation Eject by the QPS' Homicide Cold Case Unit was commenced. A Coronial Report and various annexures were provided detailing the findings of the additional investigation.²⁷

Statement of Ian Seeley

39. On 22 March 2016, Mr Seeley participated in a drive around and re-enactment with Police of the events surrounding Sharron's disappearance that were known to him. He also recounted a death bed confession by his late father, Raymond Mulvihill, in September 2002. Mr Seeley was not Mulvihill's biological son. However, he adopted him at a young age and raised him as his own.
40. In 1986, Mr Mulvihill and his family lived at 49 Russell Drive, Redbank Plains.²⁸ Mr Seeley described Mr Mulvihill as a violent man, who may have suffered some mental health issues.²⁹ He was employed as a Taxi driver by Mr Jerzy Biedak, who lived at 15 Wacol Station Road, Wacol. Mr Biedak operated a green and white Ascot Taxi. The Taxi was a Ford Falcon sedan.³⁰
41. Mr Seeley provided the following information to Police in a sworn statement about the events of 8 May 1986, the evening Sharron went missing:³¹
- Mr Seeley dropped his girlfriend home at Nudgee in his 1967 brown and white HK Holden Sedan after she played basketball.³²
 - As he was driving home towards Redbank Plains, Mr Mulvihill pulled up along-side Mr Seeley at a set of traffic lights near the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Woolloongabba on Ipswich Road in the green and white Ascot Taxi.³³ He appeared to be drunk and claimed he had a good night.
 - Mr Mulvihill indicated that he was finished for the night, and Mr Seeley stated that he would collect him after he had dropped the Taxi back at Mr Biedak's residence on Station Road.³⁴
 - On the drive to Station Road, Mr Seeley was intercepted by police on Ipswich Rd, Oxley. He was given a defect notice for a broken tail light.³⁵ He claimed that he swerved in front of the police vehicle to prevent them intercepting Mr Mulvihill, who he knew was drunk. He claimed that one of the officers deliberately smashed his rear tail light.³⁶

²⁷ Ex C8

²⁸ Ex B20, [12]

²⁹ Ex B20, [9] & [10]

³⁰ Ex G19

³¹ Ex B20

³² Ex B20, [14]

³³ Ex B20, [15]

³⁴ Ex B20, [16]

³⁵ Ex B20, [22]

³⁶ Ex B20, [22]

- After Mr Seeley arrived at Mr Biedak's residence he claimed his father approached him and told him to wait on the street.³⁷
 - Mr Mulvihill took Mr Seeley's keys and reversed the Holden Sedan down the driveway behind the residence. He heard Mr Mulvihill state something to the effect of '*Get in there, get in the fucking boot or I will kill you*'.³⁸ He claimed that he did not see what was happening, but heard noises that suggested the Taxi and Holden boots were both open.³⁹
 - Mr Mulvihill then instructed Mr Seeley to drive home. During that trip he heard banging coming from inside the boot.⁴⁰ When he asked Mr Mulvihill about the banging, he was told he did not need to worry what was in the boot. While Mr Seeley claimed he got out of the vehicle at one point, Mr Mulvihill had a knife and tapped it on the passenger glass window. Mr Seeley decided to continue driving, turning up the stereo.⁴¹
 - Mr Seeley claimed that when they arrived home, they parked around the corner and he went inside as Mr Mulvihill took his Holden. Mr Mulvihill did not return home until after 4:00am the following day.⁴² He could still hear banging in the boot when he exited the vehicle.
 - A day or so later, Mr Seeley found a black handbag and black pair of shoes in the Holden when he was repairing the brakes.⁴³ He placed the items on the shoe rack at home, believing they belonged to his mother or sister. He claimed that when Mr Mulvihill saw the shoes and handbag, he became enraged and removed them from the residence.
42. Mr Seeley claimed he only started to have regular contact with Mr Mulvihill again closer to his death on 20 September 2002. The night before Mr Mulvihill died, Mr Seeley claims he stated, '*I've been too weak; you have to tell them about the girls...it's time to give the girls back*'.⁴⁴
43. He recalled asking if there was more than one. Mr Mulvihill indicated that Sharron was buried under the sand in an area known as 'Cascades', which was in Carole Park, halfway along the drain.⁴⁵ It was a place that Mr Seeley and his siblings frequented as children.
44. During subsequent reenactments with Mr Seeley, he directed investigators to each location of interest, including the location he believed his father indicated Sharron was buried. Mr Seeley described various odd statements made by Mr Mulvihill before the death bed confession, which not only raised his suspicions about his involvement in Sharron's death but the location of her body.

³⁷ Ex B20, [28]

³⁸ Ex B20, [31]

³⁹ Ex B20, [31]

⁴⁰ Ex B20, [33]

⁴¹ Ex B20, [35] & [36]

⁴² Ex B20, [39] & [40]

⁴³ Ex B20, [45] – [48]

⁴⁴ Ex B20, [70]

⁴⁵ Ex B20, [70] – [72]

45. The statements included:
- While at the sands one day, “*don’t dig too deep, you might run into someone you know*’.⁴⁶
 - ‘*You can fuck someone for hours after they’re dead and it’s still good*’.⁴⁷
 - ‘*I’ve had to kill to get that*’, when referring to anal sex.⁴⁸
46. Following the statement and interviews with Mr Seeley, numerous inquiries were made by QPS investigators to corroborate the account provided and to implicate Mr Mulvihill. The scope of the review was limited to the information Mr Seeley had provided, and to determine whether Mr Mulvihill had played a part in Sharron’s disappearance.

Crime scene excavation

47. On 31 May 2016, a crime scene warrant was obtained for the area identified by Mr Seeley, specifically the drain culverts running under Cobolt Street, Carole Park. This warrant was subsequently extended on two occasions and remained valid until 15 June 2016.
48. The entire contents of the site, including two large concrete culvert drains were excavated and reviewed by hand. All bone fragments were considered by QPS scientific officers and an anthropologist. No human remains were found.

Location of vehicle and corroboration

49. Extensive attempts were made by investigators to locate Mr Seeley’s Holden sedan, a photograph of which he provided.⁴⁹ This included inquiries with the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Information received confirmed that the vehicle had been registered to Mr Seeley until October 1987 when it was cancelled.⁵⁰ No subsequent owners could be located.

State-wide QPS email

50. On 25 August 2017, a state-wide email was sent to all QPS members requesting information identifying any police officers working in May 1986 who recalled intercepting Mr Seeley’s Holden sedan.⁵¹
51. In response, Sergeant Jones of Caboolture Station advised investigators that he recalled intercepting a vehicle under similar circumstances at the time Sharron had gone missing. Sergeant Jones recalled that while approaching the traffic lights near the Oxley Fire Station, he saw two vehicles driving at high speed along Ipswich Road, one of which matched the description of Mr Seeley’s vehicle.⁵²

⁴⁶ Ex B20, [59]

⁴⁷ Ex B20, [61]

⁴⁸ Ex B20, [60]

⁴⁹ Ex F1

⁵⁰ Ex C9

⁵¹ Ex C10

⁵² Ex B1, [14] & [15]

52. Sergeant Jones recalled there was a Taxi further ahead that was travelling at speed, but they were unable to intercept it due to other vehicles on the roadway. As a consequence, they only pulled over the Holden sedan by activating lights and sirens.⁵³ The Taxi continued westbound along Ipswich Road.⁵⁴
53. At the inquest, Sergeant Jones recalled that an infringement notice was issued to the driver of the Holden that was intercepted.⁵⁵ Senior Officer Barraba spoke to the driver, while Sergeant Jones exited the police vehicle and stayed towards the back of the intercepted vehicle. He recalled the driver of the vehicle was a male.⁵⁶
54. Sergeant Jones recalled intercepting the same vehicle again later that evening, within around an hour of the initial intercept.⁵⁷
55. Attempts were made to obtain archive files from 1986 from the Inala police station. Unfortunately, records were not archived from this time, with those processes only commencing in 1987. This meant that a copy of the defect notice was not able to be sourced.

Medical Records

56. In June 2016, the medical files from the Royal Brisbane Hospital with respect to both Mr Mulvihill and Mr Seeley were obtained by way of warrant. These documents were said not to provide any information to assist the investigation.
57. However, in the records for Mr Mulvihill from the RBH's Emergency Psychiatry Unit⁵⁸, a notation from 1:30pm on 10 May 1986 (the day after Sharron disappeared) describes the following:
 - *42 year old male Taxi driver who broke up with his wife 8 weeks ago presenting anxious and depressed complaining of insomnia.*
 - *Married 16 years.*
 - *Wife left following an argument 5 weeks ago and at time she confessed to having an affair with a married man. Says he hit his wife at the time.*
 - *This morning had an argument with his 16yo daughter. Says he hit daughter in anger.*
 - *Concerned re financial worries repaying a housing loan and says is behind in his payments.*
 - *Expects police to put out a warrant for his arrest following unpaid speeding fines.*
 - *Just worked 14 nights straight driving cab.*
 - *Acknowledged drank heavily in the past and was taking Temazepam.*
 - *Wife now living in New Farm. Wife works in coffee shop.*
 - *Preoccupied with getting his wife back. (emphasis added)*

⁵³ Ex B1, [16]

⁵⁴ T2-6, lines 15

⁵⁵ T2-7 & 8

⁵⁶ T2-12

⁵⁷ T2-9, lines 30-45

⁵⁸ Ex G1 – Ward 3A - psychiatric section of the Emergency Department

58. Mr Mulvihill was discharged and referred to the Barrett Centre for follow up. The summary noted that he was a 43 year old man presenting with adjustment disorder and depressed/ anxious mood. No injuries of any description were recorded at the RBH.
59. Notes from an admission to the Rosemount Psychiatric Unit on 13 March 1987 indicated Mr Mulvihill had "separated from wife of 16 years – 14 months ago".

Courier Mail article 2016

60. In July 2016, journalist Ms Kate Kyriacou authored an article about Sharron's disappearance, which included details of a conversation with retired homicide detective, Bob Dallow, who was previously involved in investigating the disappearance.⁵⁹
61. Mr Dallow recounted a conversation he had with Mr Seeley in which Mr Seeley described seeing Sharron tied up and gagged with tape in the boot of the Taxi and being walked by his father to the boot of the Holden.⁶⁰ Mr Seeley told Mr Dallow that he drove his father home in the Holden. He got out before his father drove away.⁶¹ His father later told him, while out driving, that he had left her body in a stormwater drain in Carole Park.⁶²
62. Ms Kyriacou made contemporaneous notes of this conversation, which was not recorded.⁶³ She provided a statement for the purpose of the coronial investigation.⁶⁴
63. Mr Seeley contacted Mr Dallow before he approached Police. He said that he had recognised Sharron as she was forced into the boot of the Holden.⁶⁵ Mr Dallow did not record this conversation but provided a statement outlining the details.⁶⁶
64. During the inquest, Mr Dallow gave evidence about this initial discussion. He recalled that Mr Seeley had told him he had gone to collect his father from the back of the shops after his shift. He was late as the police had stopped him for a smashed tail light.⁶⁷ Mr Seeley recognised Sharron as he helped his father place her in the boot of his vehicle.⁶⁸ Mr Seeley reportedly stated that Sharron had blood on her head.⁶⁹ He drove his father home and could hear Sharron kicking around in the boot.⁷⁰ After arriving home, his father took the vehicle and drove off.

⁵⁹ Ex C5

⁶⁰ Ex C6, pg. 5

⁶¹ Ex C6, pg. 6

⁶² Ex C6, pg. 6

⁶³ Ex C6

⁶⁴ Ex B11

⁶⁵ Ex C6, pg. 5 & 6; Ex B7, [16]

⁶⁶ Ex B7

⁶⁷ T2-16, lines 4-10

⁶⁸ T2-16, lines 15-25; 17, lines 1-10

⁶⁹ T2-16, lines 30

⁷⁰ T2-16, lines 30-45

65. On 12 September 2017, a pretext phone call was conducted between Dallow and Mr Seeley, which was recorded.⁷¹ While Mr Seeley denied during this call that he played an active role in Sharron's disappearance and murder, he appeared to evade questions posed by Mr Dallow by changing the topic, answering as a question or simply not answering.

Further Statements following QPS Media Release

66. On 6 October 2016, the QPS released a media statement identifying Mr Mulvihill as the principal suspect in the disappearance of Sharron Phillips. The purpose of the release was to generate public interest and to obtain further information. The following additional significant information was obtained by way of additional statements.

*Shelley Robb, Mr Mulvihill's daughter*⁷²

67. According to Shelley, Mr Mulvihill had a bad temper, drank heavily and was violent at home.⁷³ She confirmed that he worked as a Taxi driver. She claimed that Mr Seeley told her in 2015 that he thought Mr Mulvihill was responsible for Sharron's death.⁷⁴ He had described Mr Mulvihill pulling a knife on him when he heard a noise while driving him home.⁷⁵ She also indicated she thought Mr Seeley had mental health issues.
68. Ms Robb gave evidence during the inquest.⁷⁶ She confirmed that Mr Mulvihill was physically and verbally abusive towards her mother, Daphne, and the children.⁷⁷ She was of the view that Mr Mulvihill treated Mr Seeley differently as he was not his biological son. They seemed to have a lot of arguments when he was a teenager.⁷⁸
69. Ms Robb did not recall her father ever mentioning Sharron Phillips or her disappearance.⁷⁹

*Shirley Mulvihill, second wife of Mr Mulvihill*⁸⁰

70. In a telephone call with police, Mrs Mulvihill was recorded as denying her husband ever made admissions to murdering anyone. However, she indicated he had spoken to Mr Seeley on his own shortly before he passed away. She denied that he was a violent man. When she was advised that police would be making a media announcement about the Sharron Phillips investigation and the involvement of Raymond Mulvihill, Mrs Mulvihill commented:

Well I don't know anything about it and we weren't married then.

⁷¹ Ex B24

⁷² Ex B19

⁷³ Ex B19, [7]

⁷⁴ Ex B19, [20] & [21]

⁷⁵ Ex B19, [21]

⁷⁶ T2-43

⁷⁷ T2-44 & 45

⁷⁸ T2-45, lines 18-45

⁷⁹ T2-47

⁸⁰ Ex B26

Ewa Biedak, wife of Jerzy⁸¹

71. Mrs Biedak recalled Mr Mulvihill and confirmed that he used to work as a Taxi driver. She recalls hearing a disturbance outside her residence around midnight on 8 May 1986. However, when she looked outside could not see anything.

Jerzy Biedak⁸²

72. Mr Biedak confirmed that Mr Mulvihill drove his Ascot Taxi during the afternoon and night shift (4pm-4am).⁸³ The handover procedure for the Taxi was to park it in the rear yard of 15 Wacol Station Road, Wacol and leave the takings in the glove box with a set of keys kept by Mr Mulvihill.⁸⁴ On occasion, he was aware that Mr Mulvihill's son Mr Seeley would collect him from Wacol Station Road.
73. On 8 and 9 May 1986, Mr Biedak recalled that Mr Mulvihill was driving his Ascot Taxi on an afternoon and night shift, which was normally from 4 pm until 4 am.⁸⁵ Given the length of time, he had no specific recollection of what happened that evening.⁸⁶
74. During the inquest, Mr Biedak stated that there were a number of arguments between Mr Mulvihill and his wife, Daphne, as well as issues between Mr Seeley and Mr Mulvihill.⁸⁷

Owen & Dale Lockett⁸⁸

75. Mr and Mrs Lockett provided evidence that between 10:30pm and 12:00am while Owen was driving Dale home to Hillcrest, a Taxi (recalled to be yellow or orange) was seen parked in long grass near dense bushland across from a property at 248 Johnson Road, Forestdale.⁸⁹ Owen stopped to render assistance and saw a male emerging from the bushland matching Mr Mulvihill's description. He was holding a shovel.⁹⁰ When offered assistance the male replied, '*what, can't a man go for a shit?*' before driving off in his Taxi.⁹¹ Mr Lockett thought the incident was suspicious and recalled calling either 000 or the Browns Plains Police Station when he returned home.⁹²
76. During evidence at the inquest, Mr Lockett said the vehicle had no lights on and was parked at an angle with both doors wide open, which appeared odd.⁹³ He was concerned something may have happened to the driver of the Taxi. He recalled that the vehicle was a Ford of some sort.⁹⁴

⁸¹ Ex B4 (original 1986 statement); Ex B4.1

⁸² Ex B3

⁸³ Ex B3, [11]

⁸⁴ Ex B3, [14]

⁸⁵ T1-43, lines 7-15

⁸⁶ T1-44

⁸⁷ T1-42, lines 5-40

⁸⁸ Ex B13 & B14

⁸⁹ Ex B13, [6]; Ex B14, [6] & [7]

⁹⁰ Ex B14, [10]

⁹¹ Ex B13, [8]; Ex B14, [12]

⁹² Ex B14, [14]

⁹³ T1-72, lines 15-30

⁹⁴ T1-73, lines 23-25

77. Mr Lockett described a female neighbour approaching him, who had heard a commotion, which startled her before it went quiet.⁹⁵ A short while later, a male exited the bushland. Mr Lockett described the male as looking like Danny DeVito⁹⁶, wearing a white shirt that was untucked on one side, and carrying a spade/shovel.⁹⁷ He was sweating.⁹⁸ The male was 'very terse' and threw something in the car before slamming the door and driving away.⁹⁹
78. During the inquest, Mrs Lockett described the evening as very dark and it was difficult to see.¹⁰⁰ She recalled the Taxi was parked completely off the road, at an angle with the doors open but the lights off.¹⁰¹ A neighbour had walked over to the couple as she had heard a commotion.¹⁰² After the neighbour had returned to her residence, a while later she saw a male in a white collared shirt exit the bushland carrying a small spade.¹⁰³ He appeared sweaty and was 'really aggressive'.¹⁰⁴
79. Neither Mr or Mrs Lockett had a clear recollection of the style or colour of the vehicle. Mrs Lockett indicated that the vehicle had square tail lights and confirmed when shown a photograph that the back of the Ascot Taxi looked familiar.¹⁰⁵

Allison Clancy¹⁰⁶

80. Ms Clancy is Mr Seeley's aunt, the sister of Mr Mulvihill's wife, Daphne. She had resided with her sister and Mr Mulvihill at their home for around six months after she left home in year 10. She described the relationship as volatile, with her sister not performing the role of a traditional 'housewife'. This said to be the cause of regular arguments and verbal abuse. She described Mr Mulvihill as a 'womaniser'.
81. She alleged Mr Mulvihill raped her when she was aged 17. She had returned home to live with her parents, who engaged Mr Mulvihill as a Taxi service.¹⁰⁷ She described that he came into the house to collect a Taxi fare and asked for a cigarette before following her to her bedroom and raping her. He threatened that if she ever told anyone he would dump her in an area where she would never be found.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁵ T1-74 & 75

⁹⁶ T1-76, lines 44-50

⁹⁷ T1-77, lines 1-15

⁹⁸ T1-85, lines 20

⁹⁹ T1-77 & 78

¹⁰⁰ T1-57, lines 30-45

¹⁰¹ T1-55, lines 5-45

¹⁰² T1-56

¹⁰³ T1-58 - 62

¹⁰⁴ T1-58

¹⁰⁵ T1-67

¹⁰⁶ Ex B6

¹⁰⁷ Ex B6, [11]

¹⁰⁸ Ex B6, [14]

82. In 1982, Ms Clancy, her fiancé, Mr Mulvihill and her sister, Daphne, went on a camping trip.¹⁰⁹ She said she had told her fiancée about the rape.¹¹⁰ During the course of the trip, Ms Clancy and Daphne went skinny dipping, and were joined subsequently by Mr Mulvihill and her fiancé.¹¹¹ During this encounter, Mr Mulvihill was said to have made a threat to a passer-by insinuating that he knew a good spot to take a body where it would not be found again.¹¹²
83. Ms Clancy claimed that she saw Mr Mulvihill again in 1992 at the christening of Mr Seeley's son.¹¹³ Mr Mulvihill had divorced her sister, Daphne, by that time and had re-partnered. They spoke, and Mr Mulvihill was said to have mentioned Sharron Phillips, referring to it as his '*5 minutes of fame*', who was '*dumped by the big hero downstairs*'.¹¹⁴
84. Mr Mulvihill claimed he had met Sharron at a phone box where she told him she had run out of fuel.¹¹⁵ He told Ms Clancy that he lured Sharron back to his Taxi by promising he would get someone to bring fuel. He lured her back to the taxi and invited her to sit in the taxi while he called on the radio. She sat in the back seat with the door open. "She slipped off her shoes and placed her handbag on the floor."¹¹⁶ She had been walking and standing for quite some time and her feet hurt". He then raped her.¹¹⁷ She started struggling and screaming so he hit her to shut her up.¹¹⁸ He stated that when Mr Seeley came to collect him, he told him that he had hit Sharron with his car while driving.¹¹⁹
85. Mr Seeley was alleged to have agreed to assist his father and helped place Sharron into the boot of Mr Seeley's vehicle.¹²⁰ He stated that, '*I shit myself when Ian heard the thumping and knew she was alive*'.¹²¹ Mr Mulvihill claimed that he told Mr Seeley that he had to dump her as he had too much to lose, so Mr Seeley dropped him off at home and disposed of Sharron.¹²² Mr Seeley later returned the shoes to the location Sharron's Datsun was found. At the time, Ms Clancy was unaware that Sharron was a missing person as she had been residing in Adelaide. She said that Mr Seeley found Sharron's shoes in his boot "days later in his boot and had no choice but to take them back to the car location so police wouldn't locate the taxi or him".¹²³
86. At the inquest, Ms Clancy described the relationship between Mr Mulvihill and Mr Seeley as 'pretty volatile'.¹²⁴

¹⁰⁹ T1-28

¹¹⁰ T1-28, lines 5-12

¹¹¹ T1-28 onwards

¹¹² T1-29, lines 5-18

¹¹³ Ex B6, [25]

¹¹⁴ Ex B6, [27]; T1-30, lines 29-35

¹¹⁵ Ex B6, [31]

¹¹⁶ Ex B6.1

¹¹⁷ T1-31, lines 9-17

¹¹⁸ Ex B6, [33]; T1-31

¹¹⁹ Ex B6, [35]; T1-31, lines 19-29

¹²⁰ Ex B6, [36]; T1-31, lines 20-35

¹²¹ Ex B6, [39]

¹²² Ex B6, [40]; T1-31, lines 20-35

¹²³ Ex B6.1

¹²⁴ T1-35, lines 1-5

Graeme Brown (friend of Mr Mulvihill)¹²⁵

87. In April/May 1986, Mr Brown acquired an Ascot Taxi licence. He advertised for drivers. Mr Mulvihill began working for him and they became friends. He recalled being at the family residence in 1987 when he overheard an argument between Mr Mulvihill and Mr Seeley. He said Mr Seeley mentioned that he was made to pick him up when there was someone in the boot of the car.¹²⁶ The conversation occurred in the context of both men having been drinking.
88. During the inquest, Mr Brown described Mr Seeley as becoming progressively more agitated before the confrontation.¹²⁷ In terms of the conversation, he recalled Mr Seeley saying something along the lines of *'that girl you had in the boot'* with a mention of shoes and a handbag as well.¹²⁸ He did not recall anything specific as to Mr Mulvihill's response.¹²⁹ He described Mr Seeley and Mr Mulvihill's relationship as volatile.¹³⁰
89. Mr Brown contacted Crime Stoppers in October 2017 to report the information.¹³¹

Patricia Pearce

90. Ms Pearce is the mother of Mr Seeley's son, who was born in 1992.¹³² She was in a relationship with Mr Seeley from early 1986 to early 1993. She confirmed that Mr Seeley would routinely take her to basketball training and would drive her home on Thursday nights. She recalled after Sharron went missing a televised police message seeking to locate a vehicle that was similar to Mr Seeley's Holden.
91. Mr Seeley told her he had seen the same thing on television and had already spoken to police about it. He said that he told police he frequented that area in his car. Mr Seeley also told her he knew Sharron's family through the Griffin family, but Ms Pearce never met that family.
92. Mr Seeley never told Ms Pearce that he had picked up his father from work at the time Sharron went missing. She said Mr Mulvihill would work long hours on Thursday nights and the weekend until the sun came up because those were the busiest times.
93. Ms Pearce recalled that there were two separate parties after her son's christening. She recalled going to Mr Mulvihill's home but has no recollection that Allison Clancy was present. She said that Ms Clancy would not have been welcome by any of Mr Seeley's family at the christening as she "used to cause a lot of trouble between the family".

¹²⁵ Ex B5

¹²⁶ Ex B5, [25] & [26]

¹²⁷ T2-34, lines 20-40

¹²⁸ T2-34, lines 40-45

¹²⁹ T2-35, lines 10-20

¹³⁰ T2-36, lines 40-45

¹³¹ T2-37 & 38

¹³² Ex B15

94. Ms Pearce recalled that Mr Mulvihill was a kind and caring man. She never saw or heard of him being violent or aggressive towards anyone. She maintained contact with Mr Mulvihill until the time of his death. Mr Mulvihill also maintained a good relationship with his grandson.
95. Ms Pearce also said that she never observed Mr Seeley and his father in a fight or be aggressive towards each other or another person. She had always known them to get along well up until 1993.

Further lines of inquiry pursued by Police & subsequent interviews with Mr Seeley

96. An additional statement by way of interview was also obtained from Sharron's sister, Donna Anderson, who had been estranged from her family for over 30 years.¹³³ Ms Anderson suggested that she suspected her father was responsible for Sharron's death, a theory she claims was shared with Mr Dallow years beforehand.¹³⁴
97. Following the further information received, particularly the conversation recounted by Ms Clancy, Police interviewed Mr Seeley again on 9 August 2017, putting to him the allegations made. He denied the content of the conversation as recounted by Ms Clancy and the information provided by Mr Dallow. Mr Seeley also voluntarily provided a DNA sample. He was warned before the commencement of the interview.
98. Mr Seeley stated the following during the subsequent interview:¹³⁵
 - He confronted his father on Sunday 11 May 1986 as to what was banging in his vehicle, and agreed that he was essentially putting to him, given the reporting in the paper about Sharron's disappearance, that it was related. He claims his father laughed it off.¹³⁶
 - He denied the information provided by Ms Clancy following her alleged conversation with Mr Mulvihill. Mr Seeley claimed he never saw Sharron in the boot.¹³⁷ He denied that he knew who was in the boot.¹³⁸ He also claimed that he did not know there was a person in the boot.¹³⁹
 - Mr Seeley claimed by this point Mr Mulvihill had "murdered before, numerous times".¹⁴⁰
 - Mr Seeley denied having any further involvement, apart from admitting to driving the vehicle with respect to Sharron's disappearance.¹⁴¹

¹³³ Ex B2

¹³⁴ Ex B2, pg. 27

¹³⁵ Ex G15 & G15.1

¹³⁶ Ex G15, pg. 45

¹³⁷ Ex G15.1, pg. 8 & 9

¹³⁸ Ex G15.1, pg. 14

¹³⁹ Ex G15.1, pg. 16

¹⁴⁰ Ex G15.1, pg. 10

¹⁴¹ Ex G15.1, pg. 21 & 22

Forensic Review

99. A full forensic review, including DNA sampling of certain exhibits was carried out which resulted in no identifiable DNA located.
100. In March 2018, Fingerprints from Shannon Phillips were matched to those located in photographs on Sharron's vehicle.¹⁴² Given Shannon helped move Sharron's car, this was expected. No other identifiable prints were located on the vehicle.
101. There were no fingerprints on file belonging to Mr Mulvihill for the purpose of a comparison. Mr Mulvihill had no criminal history.

Reports made to Police relating to Mr Mulvihill before 2016

102. In terms of Intelligence submissions received by QPS as to Sharron's disappearance, the following are relevant with respect to Mr Mulvihill:

2013 anonymous report – Crime Stoppers (CGX577)

103. On 30 September 2013, an Intelligence submission was created following Crime Stopper Report CGX577, during which an anonymous caller had nominated "Raymond Muldihill" (not Mr Mulvihill) as a person of interest in the 1986 murder of Ms Phillips.¹⁴³ On this date, the task was assigned to the State Crime Command Intelligence.
104. On 1 October 2013, the task was assigned to Homicide Intelligence.¹⁴⁴
105. It was not until 15 May 2015 that the task was assigned to Detective Sergeant Gray from Cold Case Investigation Unit.¹⁴⁵ On 26 May 2015, the details of the submission were uploaded to IMAC by Detective Senior Constable Jeremy Smith at the request of Detective Sergeant Gray, who then recorded the task as finalised on QPrime.¹⁴⁶

2014 report by Mr Seeley – Hendra Station

106. At around 9:00pm on 17 March 2014, Mr Seeley attended the Hendra Police Station asking to speak to Detectives.¹⁴⁷
107. Mr Seeley subsequently spoke to Detective Senior Constable Tara O'Donnell stating that he believed his father had killed Sharron Phillips.¹⁴⁸ While the conversation was captured on a digital voice recorder, the recording has since been lost.¹⁴⁹ Detailed handwritten notes and an intelligence report, which were prepared contemporaneously following the conversation captured the content of the discussion.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² Ex B12

¹⁴³ Ex B28, [11]

¹⁴⁴ Ex G13, [13]

¹⁴⁵ Ex G13, [14]

¹⁴⁶ Ex G13, [15]

¹⁴⁷ Ex G13, [3]

¹⁴⁸ Ex G13, [4]

¹⁴⁹ T2-26, lines 25-45

¹⁵⁰ Ex G4; Ex G3 & G4

108. Mr Seeley told Detective Senior Constable O'Donnell the following:¹⁵¹
- Mr Mulvihill was driving an Ascot Taxi and was intoxicated on the evening.
 - He drove the Taxi down a small alley between two sets of shops and was heard to say, 'get in the boot, I'll kill you if you don't get in the car'.
 - While Mr Mulvihill was driving the vehicle, a banging sound could be heard from the boot of the vehicle.
 - Mr Mulvihill arrived home to collect a white shovel placing it into the car before driving off.
 - Days later a black handbag and a black pair of shoes were located in the boot, which enraged Mr Mulvihill.
 - Mr Mulvihill reportedly asked for advice if he were to get rid of a body where he should dump it.
 - Mr Mulvihill had indicated that a body may be buried at the Cascades.
 - Mr Mulvihill made a death bed confession to Mr Seeley.
109. The information received by Detective Senior Constable O'Donnell was provided to the Cold Case Investigation Unit.¹⁵² She recalled contacting Detective Sergeant Gray of the Homicide Squad and advising her what Mr Seeley had disclosed.¹⁵³
110. On 20 May 2016, the task was assigned to the Homicide Investigation Unit.¹⁵⁴ On 22 May 2016, it was reassigned to the Cold Case Investigation Team. On 14 June 2016, Detective Sergeant Scott Chapman opened the task.¹⁵⁵ On 17 July 2016, the details outlined in the submission were uploaded to IMAC by Detective Sergeant Craig Hickling. The task was subsequently finalised on QPrime.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion by Investigators

111. Investigators found that the recent review and further evidence obtained went towards confirming the findings of the original coronial inquest, that Sharron went missing on or about 9 May 1986 under suspicious circumstances and not voluntarily. The more recent investigations, however, linked Mr Mulvihill as someone who played a significant part in Sharron's disappearance. It was thought that Mr Seeley also played a role, however, the extent remained unknown.

EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY IAN SEELEY AT THE INQUEST

112. Mr Seeley was the last witness to be called during the inquest. Shortly before he gave his evidence, the Court was made aware that Mr Seeley had been involved in a podcast titled, '*The Evil Gingerbread Man*', the content of which had not been disclosed previously. The relevant portions of that podcast in relation to Sharron's disappearance are summarised below.

¹⁵¹ Ex G3, pg. 2

¹⁵² Ex G3, pg. 2

¹⁵³ Ex G13, [8]; T2-39, lines 40-50

¹⁵⁴ Ex G13, [18]-[22]

¹⁵⁵ Ex G13, [18]-[22]

¹⁵⁶ Ex G13, [22]

113. At the inquest Mr Seeley raised numerous matters that were not included in previous statements to Police. Relevantly, he stated the following during his evidence:

- He claimed Mr Mulvihill disclosed a number of acts of violence against people, which were calculated and involved entering people's homes.¹⁵⁷
- He denied he had pulled in front of the police to ensure that his father escaped being pulled over that evening.¹⁵⁸ When previous statements were put to him to this effect, particularly that contained in his sworn statement¹⁵⁹ he largely reframed the question claiming that his father was already gone when he started to slow down.¹⁶⁰
- He claimed that as he arrived at George Biedak's residence and pulled into the driveway, his father jumped out with his hands up and told him, *'I've got to get something in the car'*.¹⁶¹ He asked Mr Seeley to reverse the vehicle up the driveway. He could see the Taxi parked behind the residence at an angle, with no lights on. The doors and car boot were shut.¹⁶²
- To reverse the vehicle up the driveway, Mr Seeley had to first reverse the vehicle back out onto Wacol Station Road. He was spoken to there by the same Police Officers who had intercepted him earlier in the evening.¹⁶³ He claimed that he did not leave his vehicle on this occasion, and the officers approached his vehicle.¹⁶⁴ When his disclosures to Detective Senior Constable Tara O'Donnell were put to him, whereby he stated that he exited the vehicle and began to yell and swear at Police, he claimed that there was a third occasion.¹⁶⁵
- Mr Mulvihill approached him after the Police left the scene and reversed the vehicle up the driveway.¹⁶⁶ He told Mr Seeley to watch out for the police, which he suggested was a common occurrence.¹⁶⁷ He described Mr Mulvihill as becoming agitated although he did ask him what he was doing.¹⁶⁸
- Mr Seeley claimed that as he was waiting on the street for Mr Mulvihill, the same police officers that had spoken to him twice that evening returned for a third time while he was standing at the phone box.¹⁶⁹ They were asking a lot of questions and wanting to know why he was there.¹⁷⁰

¹⁵⁷ T3-9

¹⁵⁸ T3-15, lines 30-50

¹⁵⁹ Ex B20, [20]

¹⁶⁰ T3-16, lines 5-30

¹⁶¹ T3-17, lines 1-5

¹⁶² T3-21, lines 1-10

¹⁶³ T3-17, lines 5-10; T3-21, lines 30-50

¹⁶⁴ T3-22

¹⁶⁵ T3-22, lines 19-40

¹⁶⁶ T3-23, lines 30-50

¹⁶⁷ T3-24, lines 4 & 5

¹⁶⁸ T3-24, lines 10-20

¹⁶⁹ T3-25

¹⁷⁰ T3-25

- Mr Seeley claimed that while the police were speaking to him on the third occasion, he heard the boot of the vehicle close and his father say something like, *'get the fuck in there, get the fuck in there or I'll kill you.'*¹⁷¹ He claimed the police officers would have also overheard what his father had said.
- Mr Seeley denied that he saw the boot of either vehicle was open.¹⁷²
- Mr Seeley denied that he ever told Mr Dallow that he saw Sharron in the boot, or that he assisted to remove her from the Taxi boot and place her in the boot of his Holden.¹⁷³
- When asked what he thought was happening at the time, Mr Seeley claimed he thought his father was stealing something.¹⁷⁴ When challenged about this given the comments allegedly made by his father about killing someone, Mr Seeley claimed he was tired and did not know what was going on.¹⁷⁵
- Mr Seeley admitted that while he knew 'something bad was happening', he denied he knew there was a woman in the boot of the vehicle.¹⁷⁶ When challenged further as to this belief, Mr Seeley made the following comments:
 - He drove the vehicle and heard the banging from the boot.¹⁷⁷
 - He told his father to 'get the fuck out' of the vehicle.¹⁷⁸
 - When he heard the banging, he claimed he initially asked what it was, however, his father turned the radio up.¹⁷⁹
 - His father was tapping a knife during the car trip.¹⁸⁰
 - At some point he stepped out of the vehicle. When asked why he did not walk away at this point, he could not explain why he did not and that he just gave up.¹⁸¹
 - When asked if his father had threatened him, Mr Seeley stated that his father said, *'it is not much harder to bury two instead of one.'*¹⁸²
- The following questioning then took place:¹⁸³

Counsel assisting: Well, you said your father killed people before. You've heard your father say, by your own evidence, while you were standing out on the road that, *"Fucken get in there or I'll kill you."*?--- Yep.

You've heard banging in the car. He's threatened you and said, *"It's not much harder to bury two instead of one."*?--- Yes.

¹⁷¹ T3-26, lines 20-50; T3-28; T3-29 & 30

¹⁷² T3-29, lines 23-30

¹⁷³ T3-30, lines 4-35

¹⁷⁴ T3-30 & 31

¹⁷⁵ T3-31, lines 1-10

¹⁷⁶ T3-31, lines 8-15

¹⁷⁷ T3-31, lines 40-50

¹⁷⁸ T3-31, lines 42-50

¹⁷⁹ T3-34, lines 1-10

¹⁸⁰ T3-32, lines 1-5

¹⁸¹ T3-33, lines 13-25

¹⁸² T3-33, lines 30-37

¹⁸³ T3-34, lines 35-50

And you knew someone was in the boot, didn't you?---Yeah, I - - - Yes?---/ *suspected someone was in the boot. Yes, yes.*

- He claimed he devised a plan to fight his father at home.¹⁸⁴
- He then claimed that while in the car his father had cut him under the chin.¹⁸⁵ He admitted that he had not previously told the police this had occurred.
- Mr Seeley described a new scenario where his father, having jerked the steering wheel after arriving around the corner from home, kicked him out of the vehicle and used the blade to hit his hand before driving off.¹⁸⁶ He did not go to Hospital for the injury inflicted, but still has a scar.
- Mr Seeley recalled that Mr Mulvihill had a white shovel.¹⁸⁷ Although he claimed that years later, he told Mr Seeley that he did not bury her that evening.¹⁸⁸
- Mr Seeley claimed he spoke to his mother the following morning about what his father had done the previous evening and mentioned there was something in the boot making a banging noise.¹⁸⁹
- Mr Seeley claimed when his father returned home, he had blood on his face and his mother was 'going off'.¹⁹⁰ He claimed that she begged him not to go to the police about Mr Mulvihill.¹⁹¹
- Mr Seeley admitted he knew someone was in the boot of his vehicle, and by that Sunday he knew that person was Sharron.¹⁹² However, when challenged about why he never went to police, he claimed the police did not want to know.¹⁹³
- When asked how this incident and Sharron's disappearance affected his relationship with his father, Mr Seeley stated that he started standing up to his father and '*didn't take his shit anymore*'.¹⁹⁴ They were estranged before his father's death in 2002.
- He recounted the death bed confession he claimed his father made,¹⁹⁵ whereby he indicated that Sharron was buried in the drain, and there were at least 10 other girls buried in the area.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁴ T3-32, lines 4-10

¹⁸⁵ T3-32, lines 9-15

¹⁸⁶ T3-32, lines 15-35

¹⁸⁷ T3-35, lines 5-10

¹⁸⁸ T3-35, lines 15-35

¹⁸⁹ T3-36, lines 40-50

¹⁹⁰ T3-37, lines 15-50

¹⁹¹ T3-40, lines 1-15

¹⁹² T3-40, lines 18-25

¹⁹³ T3-40, lines 34-36

¹⁹⁴ T3-43, lines 4-17

¹⁹⁵ T3-44

¹⁹⁶ T3-44, lines 15-50

- Mr Seeley had no memory of his Aunt Allison Clancy attending his son's christening.¹⁹⁷ He refuted the content of the conversation allegedly had between Mr Mulvihill and Ms Clancy.¹⁹⁸
- When asked what other information he had in relation to Sharron's disappearance, he offered the following:¹⁹⁹
 - Mr Mulvihill told him that Sharron had approached him.
 - It was not premeditated, and he had not stalked her.
 - Mr Mulvihill killed her by strangulation, and "strangled all his victims".
 - Mr Mulvihill placed Sharron's body in the boot of an old car on Sinclair Road.
- During cross examination by other parties, Mr Seeley made the following relevant comments:
 - When asked why Mr Seeley had not advised Police or Mr Dallow that his father referred to himself as the 'Gingerbread Man', after Sharron's disappearance, he could not provide an explanation, although acknowledged that he had not mentioned it.²⁰⁰
 - Mr Seeley admitted that he had previously been diagnosed with "Grandiose behaviour" when he attended the Children's Court and this was further raised during his divorce proceedings.²⁰¹ He has previously been prescribed antidepressants when his daughter first moved out, in around 2004/2005.²⁰²
 - Mr Seeley told his boss at work that he was "there" when Sharron disappeared.²⁰³
 - Mr Seeley called Crime Stoppers every 6 months to see what was 'going on with it [the investigation into Sharron's death].' During these calls he provided his name but was eventually told to "*stop annoying them. They have looked into it and nothing further is going to happen*".

Further material obtained following the inquest hearing

114. In response to the evidence provided by Mr Seeley during the inquest, further records and statements were obtained, as well as information in relation to the Evil Gingerbread Man Podcast. Mr Seeley is the narrator of the Podcast. The Podcast essentially portrays Mr Mulvihill as a rapist, and a serial and contract killer.

¹⁹⁷ T3-46

¹⁹⁸ T3-46 & 47

¹⁹⁹ T3-48 & 49

²⁰⁰ T3-51 - 53

²⁰¹ T3-621-25

²⁰² T3-62, lines 28-32

²⁰³ T3-72, line 33

115. Relevantly, Sergeant Jones provided an addendum statement, dated 30 November 2021 in which he confirmed that he only had occasion to intercept Mr Seeley's vehicle on two occasions that evening.²⁰⁴ He did not hear anyone say words to the effect of 'get in the fucking boot or I'll kill you' and would have investigated further if he had.²⁰⁵
116. Mr Seeley told the inquest that the Evil Gingerbread Man in the podcast title is a reference to Mr Mulvihill. This came about because Mr Mulvihill called himself the gingerbread man after reading the paper the Sunday after Sharron went missing, saying "they can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man."
117. When asked about the podcast Mr Seeley said, "the only reason I started the podcast because no one would believe me what happened to Leanne Holland."
118. A copy of the transcripts relating to the episodes concerning Sharron Phillips' disappearance were provided to the Cold Case Investigation Team in February 2021 by Mr McLaughlin, who was responsible for producing the content with Mr Seeley.²⁰⁶
119. Mr Seeley's statement with respect to that evening as reported in the podcasts is similar to that which he provided during the inquest, and includes the comment made that a police officer was nearby when a thud was heard and the car boots were closed.²⁰⁷
120. Mr Seeley denied he knew a person was in the boot, which is contrary to the admission made during the inquest, and also stated that his father pulled a knife on him. Mr Seeley did not suggest that he was cut under the chin with the knife as he alleged in the evidence provided during the inquest hearing.²⁰⁸

CONCLUSIONS ON CORONIAL ISSUES

121. Pursuant to s37(1) of the *Coroners Act 2003*, the Coroners Court is not bound by the rules of evidence and may inform itself in any way it considers appropriate. This does not remove the requirement entirely for the Court to have some regard to the 'rules of evidence'²⁰⁹, particularly with respect to the receipt and weight of evidence during the inquiry.²¹⁰
122. The applicable standard of proof for coronial findings following at an inquest is the civil standard, which is the balance of probabilities. However, a higher level of satisfaction may be required for issues that carry adverse consequences for a particular person or party.²¹¹

²⁰⁴ *Addendum Statement of Sergeant Stephen Jones*, dated 30.11.21, [6]-[11]

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, [12] & [13]

²⁰⁶ Statement of Tara Kentwell, 29.03.21 (with annexures)

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 5

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁰⁹ *Rodriguez v Telstra Corporation Pty Ltd* (2002) 66 ALD 579, per Kiefel J at 585 [25]

²¹⁰ *Kostas v HIA Insurance Services Pty Ltd* (2010) 241 CLR 390, per French CJ at 396 [17]

²¹¹ See State Coroner's Guidelines, Chapter 9

123. In accordance with section 45 (1) and (2) of the *Coroners Act 2003* a coroner who is investigating a suspected death must, if possible, make certain findings. Consistent with the findings of the original inquest I am satisfied that Sharron Phillips is deceased.

Findings required by s. 45

Identity of the deceased –	Sharron Phillips
How she died –	The precise circumstances of the death are unknown. Sharron Phillips died in suspicious circumstances. Her death was caused by a person or persons whose identity cannot be established.
Place of death –	In the vicinity of Wacol Station Road, WACOL QLD 4076 AUSTRALIA
Date of death–	On or around 9 May 1986
Cause of death –	Undetermined

The circumstances of Sharron's disappearance

124. The circumstances of Sharron's disappearance, as known before the further investigation conducted by Police in 2016, were well established by the original police investigation and examined during the 1988 coronial inquiry.
125. I am satisfied that sometime after 10:30pm on Thursday, 8 May 1986, after dropping a friend off at Redbank Plains after shopping, Sharron's vehicle ran out of fuel on Ipswich Road, near the Wacol Migrant Centre. She called her friend, Martin Balazs, at 11:18pm that evening from a phone box on Wacol Station Road to tell him she had run out of fuel and asked him to collect her. Sharron made a follow up call at 12:08am on 9 May 1986 and spoke to Mr Balazs' flatmate, who advised that he had already gone to look for her. Sharron has not been seen or heard from since. Given the passage of time, and the lack of any positive evidence Sharron may be alive, I am satisfied that she is deceased. The circumstances surrounding her death are suspicious and indicate the involvement of a third party.
126. The purpose of the additional inquest was to consider the information provided by Ian Seeley (formerly Mulvihill) to Police about Sharron's disappearance, the subsequent investigation conducted in response, Operation Eject - Review, and to determine, if possible, whether Raymond Mulvihill was responsible for Sharron's disappearance or had played a significant role, given the circumstances already known.
127. In addition to the various accounts provided by Mr Seeley to the Police and the Court, evidence was sourced by investigators to corroborate relevant details he had provided to assess the veracity of the information. Having considered the information provided by Mr Seeley, and the further evidence obtained, it was the conclusion of investigating Police that had Mr Mulvihill been alive, he would have been charged with Sharron's murder.

128. However, there were significant inconsistencies in the evidence provided by Mr Seeley, as well as the late disclosure of vital details in the varied accounts he gave after initially speaking to Police in 2014. Those became strikingly apparent during his testimony at the inquest hearing, seriously undermining his credibility and reliability.
129. One of the primary examples of this was evidence Mr Seeley provided that he had been spoken to by Police on three occasions on the evening of 8 May 1986, and that police were within 20 metres while his father was making audible verbal threats to kill Sharron.
130. This was the first occasion since his interview with Police in 2014 at the Hendra Station that he had made such a suggestion. This was reliably refuted by Sergeant Jones, who had only intercepted Mr Seeley on two occasions that evening and did not hear any such comment. While such a threat may have been made by Mr Mulvihill, as Mr Seeley disclosed in his sworn witness statement and the re-enactment in 2016, I am unable to accept that Police were present at the time or heard those comments.
131. The submissions from Sharron's sister, Ms Anderson, highlighted other evidence Mr Seeley either gave for the first time at the inquest hearing or was not consistent with his prior statements. This included:
- That he knew Darren Phillips fairly well, and on one occasion after Sharron's disappearance he told Darren to "*send the police around*" to speak to him in relation to Sharron's disappearance.
 - Mr Mulvihill had killed people before, was not violent when he attacked, raped or killed someone, and there were more than 10 girls buried in the drain with Sharron.
 - Mr Mulvihill showed the Inala Scout group how to choke a person to death with a scout scarf.
 - Mr Mulvihill stabbed Mr Seeley under his chin in an altercation which occurred when they returned to their home on the night Sharron disappeared.
 - Mr Mulvihill did not bury Sharron that night.
 - Sharron hit Mr Mulvihill in the head with a tyre iron causing a split in his forehead.
 - Mr Mulvihill placed Sharron's body in the boot of an old car on Sinclair Road.
132. Ms Anderson submitted that I would find that Mr Seeley was neither a reliable nor credible witness, and that little to no weight should be given to the whole of his evidence. In addition to matters of recent invention and inconsistent statements, Ms Anderson pointed to the following features:
- Mr Seeley trusted Detective Sergeant Chapman. If he was truthful, he would have told Detective Sergeant Chapman all of the detail he says occurred at the time of the drive around interview in May 2016 or when his statement was taken later in 2016.
 - Mr Seeley had a potential motive to lie. The evidence clearly has the capacity to raise for consideration whether Mr Seeley's commercial interest associated with his direct involvement with the 'Evil Gingerbread Man' podcast casts significant doubt on the veracity of his evidence.

- Mr Seeley did not advise investigating police of the existence of the podcast. Mr Seeley claimed in the Podcast that his father was directly involved in several other unsolved homicides. His response that he did not tell police about those matters because he was not specifically asked about that aspect strains credulity.
 - During cross examination Mr Seeley accepted that he is a good story teller.
133. Some of the details provided by Mr Seeley about events that transpired the evening Sharron disappeared were corroborated by reliable evidence. Such relevant evidence includes the actions of Police in pulling Mr Seeley's vehicle over earlier in the evening while his father allegedly drove away, and again when he was in the Wacol area near Sharron's last known whereabouts.
 134. It has also been established that Mr Mulvihill worked driving a Taxi based at the residence behind the phone box Sharron used. He would have returned the vehicle to the residence some time that night, placing him in the area and giving some weight to Mr Seeley's account that he collected his father from that location. This objectively credible evidence potentially places both Mr Seeley and Mr Mulvihill in the area when Sharron was last seen.
 135. In addition, Mr Seeley was largely consistent in his account of his father reversing his vehicle up the driveway, while he waited near the roadway, and hearing noises that sounded like the boots of two vehicles being closed.
 136. Mr Seeley admitted, and consistently maintained, that he drove his vehicle home that evening and could hear a thud or banging coming from his boot. It was not until the inquest hearing that Mr Seeley admitted that although he knew while driving that there was a person in the boot of the car, he continued to drive.
 137. It is unclear whether Mr Seeley stopped and exited his vehicle at some point before arriving close to home, although he seemed to suggest that this was the case and Mr Mulvihill threatened him with a knife.
 138. Mr Seeley described at the inquest as 'surrendering' at this point, and also claimed his father slashed his chin. It is significant as to the reliability of this fresh allegation that Mr Seeley only suggested an assault had taken place after he had admitted that he knew someone was in the boot but continued to drive.
 139. It can be inferred that while Mr Mulvihill may have had a knife that was used to intimidate Mr Seeley (a feature of the accounts he had provided consistently to police) the alleged assault was invented to minimise Mr Seeley's culpability after making such a significant admission.
 140. Of particular relevance was Mr Seeley's evidence that his mother was present at the family home on the morning after Sharron's disappearance and she begged him not to speak to the police about his father's actions. The notes from the RBH from 10 May 1986 established that Mr Mulvihill's wife had left him eight weeks earlier. She was recorded to be living in New Farm and working in a coffee shop.

141. It is likely that Mr Seeley's evidence about the role of his mother on 9 May 1986 was a fabrication. There was also no evidence in the RBH medical notes of the injuries to Mr Mulvihill's face that Mr Seeley reported. It is unfortunate that those inconsistencies were not addressed in the interviews of Mr Seeley by police.
142. The accounts provided by Mr Dallow and Ms Clancy were in some ways consistent with the evidence of Mr Seeley, with respect to Mr Mulvihill's actions and the placement of Sharron in the boot. However, both accounts, which Mr Seeley denied during his interview with Police and at the inquest, significantly escalated the role Mr Seeley played in Sharron's disappearance. According to Mr Dallow, Mr Seeley told him he had seen Sharron in the boot and helped to place her there.
143. Ms Clancy claimed that Mr Mulvihill had obtained Mr Seeley's help to place Sharron in the boot of Mr Seeley's Holden. She claimed Mr Seeley then disposed of the body as Mr Mulvihill had 'too much to lose'. However, neither Ms Pearce or Mr Seeley had any recollection that Ms Clancy was present at the post christening gathering of the Mulvihill family at Mr Mulvihill's home in 1992, calling into question the veracity of her account. Mr Mulvihill had separated from her sister many years earlier. Ms Clancy also acknowledged she had garnered information about Sharron's disappearance from media reports.²¹²
144. The inconsistencies and the deliberate omission of crucial details by Mr Seeley calls into question the reliability of his evidence, and the weight that can be placed on it in relation to a finding that Mr Mulvihill was responsible for, or played a significant role in the murder of Sharron Phillips as he alleged.
145. The central narrative of the events that evening according to Mr Seeley has remained consistent. The discrepancies relate primarily to his own culpability and knowledge of what was taking place. In particular, whether he knew Sharron Phillips was in the boot, had actively assisted in placing her there, and subsequently disposed of her body after dropping his father at home in the early hours of the morning.
146. The evidence is largely circumstantial, and Mr Seeley's account is crucial to my being satisfied to the requisite standard that Mr Mulvihill and Mr Seeley played a role in Sharron's disappearance. In order to make such a finding the evidence required on the balance of probabilities must be of a high standard.
147. Given the inconsistencies and lack of credibility that can be afforded to Mr Seeley, and the absence of any further reliable evidence supporting the story he has told to the Police and the Court, I accept the submission of Counsel Assisting that I am not able to conclude that Mr Mulvihill played a role in Sharron's disappearance to the necessary standard.
148. It is possible that both Mr Mulvihill and Mr Seeley had some involvement in Sharron's disappearance. However, in the absence of further evidence, the evidence of Mr Seeley does not provide sufficient, credible or reliable information for me to make any positive finding as to who caused her disappearance and death.

²¹² For example, Courier Mail, Q Weekend, 9-10 July 2016

149. It is also difficult to reconcile without further corroboration the evidence provided by Mr and Mrs Lockett about seeing a man who resembled Mr Mulvihill, driving an orange or yellow Taxi, leaving the bushes at Johnson Road, Forestdale on an evening after 8 May 1986. I accept their evidence was reliable, but it is not clear whether this incident was connected to Sharron's disappearance.
150. In that respect I accept the evidence of Detective Sergeant Chapman that while the information provided by Mr and Mrs Lockett corroborated parts of Mr Seeley's version, the area identified by them was not more thoroughly searched because the information they provided was not "specific and credible enough".
151. I am satisfied the investigation conducted by Police following the account provided by Mr Seeley in 2016 was generally thorough. It is understandable, given the state of the evidence as it stood at that time, that the conclusion was reached that there was a circumstantial case for Mr Mulvihill to answer for Sharron's murder had he been alive. However, the further evidence provided at the inquest by Mr Seeley significantly diminished the strength of the circumstantial case.
152. While the focus of the inquest was not on the adequacy of the police investigation it is disappointing that the September 2013 contact with Crimestoppers, and Mr Seeley's March 2014 disclosure to DSC O'Donnell, were not uploaded to the QPS Information Management and Control System until May 2015 and July 2016 respectively.
153. I recommend that the Commissioner of Police ensures that the investigation into the death of Sharron Phillips remains with the Cold Case Investigation Team for the timely investigation, review, and monitoring of any new information.

Concluding Remarks

154. I acknowledge Sharron's family, who have lived with continual and unresolved grief for over 38 years. The ambiguous loss experienced by the family of a missing person is considered to be the most traumatic kind of loss, and most unmanageable form of stress.
155. I conclude with the words of the eldest of Sharron's eight siblings, Donna Anderson. Donna described Sharron as "*pretty, vivacious, rebellious and cheeky*". Her bubbly personality was contagious and she was a joy to be around. Sharron had only moved from home a few months before she disappeared. Donna said that Sharron's disappearance broke apart an already fragile family.

"Along with the wonderful memories of Sharron there is this darkness that haunts us all, of the suffering and pain Sharron may have endured in her last hours and moments of life. Sharron was only 20 years old. On what would have been her 21st birthday we planted a tree for her at the city park. It was a cold, wet, miserable day, and very appropriate for such an occasion.

I have been blessed with a wonderful family of my own, however I know a bright light is missing in my life and the life of my family, and that light is my little sister Sharron. My wish is that someday her remains may be recovered and Sharron's family, loved ones and I can lay her to rest as my parents had wished".

156. I close the inquest.

Terry Ryan
State Coroner
BRISBANE