

Shocking catalogue of botches and bungles

13/5/2006

By Bret Christian

Vital video tapes that could have told exactly what happened on the night Phillip Walsham died eight years ago are blank or missing.

And botched attempts to collect forensic evidence at the crime scene would be enough to make the police team from the television series CSI weep.

One of six video cameras in and around Stirling station could have recorded what happened around the footbridge and put the result of the trial of three men beyond doubt.

They would have shown who came and went, and at what times.

They may even have recorded Mr Walsham receiving his fatal injuries.

But two of the tapes were blank, police told the court. What happened to the other four is a mystery.

On the night of Mr Walsham's death, eight video tapes recorded the activity at McDonald's restaurant in Tuart Hill.

The three convicted men said that at about the time Mr Walsham met his death, they were at this McDonald's.

One of the tapes is missing.

Police originally said that a Ford Laser car owned by a man called Joe, who the three convicted men said they met at the McDonald's that night, was not shown on the tapes of the drive-through.

But a painstaking search of the tapes by the defence proved that Joe's Laser was there.

On television, the CSI team treats crime scenes like sterile operating theatres.

While Mr Walsham lay dying on the roadway near Stirling station, police took photographs of him and the surrounding scene.

These photos would have been vital evidence to show whether Mr Walsham came off the bridge or was hit by a car, as suggested by the defence.

After the photos were taken, the road was re-opened to traffic.

But police told the court there was no film in the camera.

Police later photographed and videoed the scene in daylight.

One photograph shows a police car parked right on the spot that would have been the point of impact had Mr Walsham been hit by a car.

From evidence given in court, it was not until the fourth day after Mr Walsham's death that it occurred to police, via a forensic pathologist, that Mr Walsham's death might have been caused by a car.

But by this time the crime scene had become old and hopelessly contaminated with passing traffic.

No attempt was made to collect and test samples from what appeared to be blood spots where the police car was parked.