



Serial killer net tightens

By BRET CHRISTIAN

Detectives are making progress in their bid to solve WA's most baffling and sensational murder mystery, the Claremont serial killings.

Very promising leads have convinced senior police that the apparently un-solvable crimes that traumatised the western suburbs 19 years ago may now be solved.

A team of 12 detectives, separate from the original Macro task forces, has been committed to the inquiry over the past three years.

They have have narrowed their focus to other, possibly related non-fatal crimes and to new forensic evidence after



Sarah Spiers



Jane Rimmer



Ciara Glennon

an exhaustive review of the case, including hundreds of interviews.

Three young women disappeared late on three separate nights from Claremont after visiting central Claremont nightspots in the mid-1990s, the victims of horrific crimes.

Two were found murdered

and the third is presumed to have met the same fate.

WA's biggest and most expensive investigation followed, but it is now a very different inquiry with a different focus, the POST has been told.

The focus has moved away from taxis and Lance Williams, the innocent Cottesloe public

servant who once absorbed the vast bulk of police resources but led to dead ends.

Police now do not believe any of the three women got into a vehicle voluntarily but was subject to a blitz attack.

These separate incidents were by the same person. The motive was sexual.

It is now accepted that the early, intense focus on Mr Williams distracted them from the significance of other clues that might have pointed to the real murderer in the early days.

Police were inundated at the time with calls about possibly related abduction attempts and suspicious behaviour around the Claremont entertainment precinct.

But as the POST has previously reported, these were given scant attention because police could not connect them to Mr Williams.

The dismissed reports that might not have appeared significant at the time are now being revisited, with promising leads.

Other incidents may have gone unreported.

International criminologists say each massive investigation produces one person, and sometimes more than one, who appears to fit, but who in reality had nothing to do with the crime.

The re-investigation has completed interviews and re-interviews, eliminating 10,000 "persons of interest", including two men whose lives were severely damaged when their names became public during early inquiries.

These were Mr Williams and former Claremont mayor Peter Weygers, who are no longer of interest to police investigating the murders.

Police are now focusing on scientific lines of inquiry plus related "precursor" crimes in the western suburbs leading up to the murders, ranging from house break-ins to attempted abductions.

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Other deaths unsolved

Nobody in our society should get away with murder.

Every unsolved case is important, but the Claremont series stand out for several reasons.

It appalled and horrified the western suburbs, touching many lives including family, friends and those of innocent suspects, and became national news.

As well as justice for the culprit, public safety is another pressing issue.

A "safe" shopping area where young girls grew up shopping with their mothers suddenly took on a sinister air.

Though three victims were attributed to the Claremont serial killer, the killers of literally dozens of other murdered and vanished women in the same decade remain a mystery.

Are any of them connected? Did the horrific offences continue elsewhere?

The known victims had all been partying at local nightspots before they vanished in 1996 and 1997.

Sarah Spiers (18) of South Perth was the first to vanish. She was last seen in Stirling Road near Stirling Highway in January 1996.

Two months later, Jane Rimmer (23) of Shenton Park disappeared, evidently from Stirling Highway as she headed towards her home.

Her body was found months later in Wellard, inland from Rockingham.

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Self-belief a tall order for April

By DAVID COHEN

Even professional athletes like April Letton have struggled with self-belief on their way to the top.

"I never thought I was any good," April (24) said.

The 1.85m defender has settled in Subiaco and started a two-year stint with state netball team, West Coast Fever.

She was born in Nowra, lived at Heathcote in Sydney, and played three seasons with the NSW Swifts before heading west.

April is also looking to add to her one game with the Australian team, the Diamonds.

"I've been playing since I was in the womb: my mum played," April said.

"My two older sisters played, so I started.

"I was the kid who never really expected to go anywhere."

April got a shot of self-belief after she made the under-17 NSW team when she was 14.

"That was a big thing," she said.

"But after the first day of the two-day trials for the squad I didn't want to go back for the second day."

The Fever won only four games last year, five the year before and, until last month, hadn't won an away game for two years.

"I was looking for a change, and being part of a change," April said.

"I've never looked at Fever as a losing team, and never written them off."

"I talked with Brazz [Fever captain Ashleigh Brazill], who I knew from NSW, before coming here and had a good feeling."

Last Saturday, Fever made it three wins out of three this season when they beat Southern Steel 67-60 at HBF Stadium.

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It's tough getting past the Fever's April Letton. Photo: Paul McGovern



Do you qualify as a PGW?

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These suburbs are shown on the map on page 2. Extra copies are delivered to other selected riverside suburbs.

Serial killer net tightens

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Police have not identified the murderer but are now targeting high-priority persons of interest "based on a number of factors".

The Special Crime Squad has identified and prioritised the remaining persons of interest after reviewing Macro's 65,000 files while conducting interviews and re-interviews, which are still continuing.

Squad members have made more than seven trips to the UK to take advantage of the most recent breakthroughs in DNA analysis, using a private forensic science company.

One of its founders, Dr Jonathan Whitaker, a senior forensic scientist, has visited Perth and worked on the Claremont case.

In UK cases Dr Whitaker has used familial techniques to track down the culprits of unsolved murders up to 30 years old, with one-in-a-billion accuracy.

Familial DNA testing depends on the fact that each human

gets half his or her DNA from each parent, and share a chunk of that DNA with other blood relatives.

Police believe that by using some of the best scientists in the world and samples collected back in the 1990s, they can crack the case, but remain tight-lipped about the latest scientific results.

They are hoping to use new computer software that compares the long strings of numbers generated by DNA profiling results, an operation now done manually.

Police do not believe at this stage of the inquiry that a coroner's inquest into the deaths of the three young women would achieve anything.

They are optimistic that by the end of this year there will be more concrete developments.

Officers have been frustrated in following thousands of "low-quality" leads, but have investigated each one.

Information can be provided to police via Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Other deaths unsolved

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In 2008 police released a video of Jane Rimmer outside the Claremont Hotel the night she disappeared. At the time they appealed to the pub crowd to identify a man in the picture, apparently without success.

Ciara Glennon (27) of Mosman Park was evidently abducted from Stirling Highway opposite Hungry Jack's in Claremont as she made her way home after a St Patrick's Day, 1997, celebration at the Claremont Hotel.

Witnesses saw her crouched with her hands on her knees apparently talking through a car window to the occupant.

The witnesses looked away. When they looked back both the car and Ms Glennon had disappeared.

Her body was found in bush north of Perth two weeks later.

No trace of Sarah Spiers has ever been found.



Hale School vice-captain of swimming Luke Sangster and captain Alex Chin.

Hale school's pool hat-trick

Swimmers at Hale school pulled off a hat-trick by winning the 110th private schools' association tournament.

It was the third year in a row the school team has won.

Records fell at the carnival at Challenge Stadium with swimmers achieving personal best times.

Joshua Edwards-Smith broke the PSA record in the Under-13 50m backstroke with 32.8s.

Braga Verhage broke the Open 50m butterfly record in the 2nd division race with 25.72, only to be broken by Alex Chin in the A-division race that followed Braga's race. Alex swam 25.58.

The boys U14 Medley Relay (Harry Saggars backstroke, Zac Chan breaststroke, Henry Cook butterfly and Joel Hill freestyle) broke the PSA record,

swimming 2.10.64.

The Open 4x50m freestyle relay (Luke Sangster, Tim Ryall, Hayden Stockley-Smith and Braga Verhage) smashed the old record by more than a second, swimming 1.40.63.

Chris Guard, head of swimming at Hale, said: "We are immensely proud of the team and their success. A lot of hard work went in at training sessions so the boys deserve to finish the season on a high."

Much of this year's success was attributed to the many training sessions the boys attended at Hale's new Aquatic Centre.

This coupled with the pre-season swimming camp and numerous in-house events throughout the season saw the team's hard work pay off.

Hale won 40 of a possible 74 races and beat Trinity College by 362.5 points.

Pond to be fenced in face of protest

• From page 5

A boy about three years old slipped in about five months ago while he was playing with his six-year-old brother.

Ms Bache said their mother had been in another part of the park talking to someone.

"Sometimes the mothers sit on a blanket having a glass of wine while the children run around," she said.

Ms Bache said the rocks were slippery and the young boy had fallen in.

"I grabbed him by the arm," she said.

She said she had also seen big dogs jumping into the water after the turtles.

Council chief executive Greg Trevaskis said the fence was for the safety of both the public and the turtles.

"It is a turtle sanctuary," he said.

He said there had been wide consultation with residents in the area with 100 letters dropped to homes around the park.

The council also responded to a query from the POST, he said.

He said the council had not had any complaints since.

A woman who lives in Vincent Street said she had not received a letter.

"I live only two blocks

away," she said.

Mr Trevaskis said: "The City has received reports of dogs attacking the turtles and older children interfering with the turtles."

The council is waiting for the delivery of gates to be installed with the fence.

"There are safety concerns for the public and unsupervised children including concerns about the proximity of the playground and the sight lines to the main pond entry which is obscured by vegetation, making it difficult to keep an eye on children playing in the area," Mr Trevaskis said.

"An elderly woman slipped into the pond. This highlighted the difficulty of getting out of the pond and reinforced the need for adult supervision for children.

"On Wednesday, March 4, a Riley Road resident reported that an eight-year-old child fell off the rocks, into the pond, twice whilst she was there."

Mr Trevaskis said the council was waiting for parts and the \$12,000 fence was due to go in in about three weeks.

He said: "The foreshore will not be fenced off as it is a natural feature. Mason Gardens is a built environment and the City has a duty of care in this respect."

Grove doubts over the PGW

• From page 25

called himself The Peppermint Grove Wanker but Instagram's character limit on user names meant he had to adopt Peppy Grove instead.

"I don't like it but I have no choice," he said.

The POST asked Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club members if they knew of

any 20-something Christ Church old boys who lived in Peppermint Grove, but no one had any ideas.

The PGW said: "I won't discuss RFBYC any further; it's too small a pond for me to give any additional clues."

When asked whether he had been honest in his interview with the POST, the

PGW said he was deliberately general and vague to ensure his anonymity.

In a bid to prove he lived in Peppermint Grove, the PGW said he "adored the Cliffe renovation" and "despised the red bear on View Street".

"And lament the days when bin service was a two-way affair," he added.

Tree loppers in trouble again

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to ensure all future contracts complied with the terms of the original undertaking.

Ms Driscoll said the firm had also offered to use new quotation forms, which would help them to comply with the terms of the first undertaking.

The flyers would also be reviewed to ensure those that refer to council garden waste collections were distributed in areas where the collection services were offered by councils.

"I want the terms of this new undertaking to finally see a change in the behaviour of this business and its em-

ployees," Ms Driscoll said.

"Consumer Protection has had a long history with this business and we hope this latest agreement will see an end to the long list of complaints received over many years."

The enforceable undertaking can be seen at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/undertakings.

Self-belief tall order for April

• From page 1

April said she looked forward to match days and they changed her.

"I'm normally chilled, but on game day I come out of myself a little bit," she said.

"I really like the feeling; I love the vibe and the team.

"Everyone is on the same energy and you feel the buzz."

Her favourite netballers include Kiwi Casey Kopua, who has played 87 times for her country.

"I get in trouble when I say a New Zealander is one of my favourites," April said.

"At the moment Casey is injured; she's older, but she keeps

re-inventing herself - a bit like Madonna."

April said being tall was great.

"I don't like it when people are ashamed of being tall: be proud," she said.

"Sometimes in the goal circle I wish I was taller, especially against the big Jamaican girls."

Off the court April is busy organising her November wedding in Sydney to fiancé Jason.

Family members have also moved to Perth.

"My brother Paul moved here after getting a job and sister Donna moved here after her husband got work," April said.

Barnett gets tough

• From page 7

Police called in experts to cut him free in an operation that lasted several hours.

At the time Foreign Minister and Curtin MP Julie Bishop said legal and peaceful protests were all well and good, but not this.

"I am troubled by this demonstration at the Premier's home, as it was an appalling invasion of his family's privacy," she said.

"It is deeply disturbing that any protester believes it is acceptable to trespass on the private property of a public figure."

In the Legislative Council on Tuesday, Labor's Sue Ellery warned the new laws could be used against a wide range of people, including the Christian group leaders who staged a sit-in and prayer session in Ms Bishop's Subiaco office last year.

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