
Police probed suspicions of Bowraville families

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Police investigating the unsolved murders of three children in Bowraville, northern NSW, initially put the families under covert surveillance and pursued suspicions that some relatives might have "sold" four-year-old Evelyn Greenup, court documents reveal.

The families of Evelyn and 16-year-olds Colleen Walker and Clinton Speedy Duroux said yesterday- they were unaware of the covert operation and were horrified to learn of it from *The Australian*.

Records of the surveillance, including photographs and -detailed notes of individuals' movements, are contained in files from the original police investigation, which the victims' families believe suffered from divisions -between the local Aboriginal community and police force.

A number of former police officers involved in the case have also said the failure to quickly identify the missing children as potential murder victims might have meant vital evidence was lost.

The files, contained in coronial records obtained by *The Australian*, show officers investigating Evelyn's disappearance in October 1990 initially pursued allegations that her mother was a heavy drinker and neglected her children.

"Parents have not been -approached by F.A.C.S (Family and Community Services) as yet. Possible they have got wind and removed Evelyn to another -location to prevent her being taken," one senior officer notes.

An alleged sighting of Evelyn in a town in far-west NSW led police to target the home of another family, who were related to two of the missing children.

During the February 1991 operation, police photographed several people at the property, -including children, before concluding: "There is no evidence that Greenup is or has ever been in (the far-west NSW town)." Residents have asked that the town not be named.

At about the same time, -detectives asked at least one witness "about the rumours concerning the selling of Evelyn by the family", the police files reveal. By this point, Clinton's skeletal remains had been found dumped beside a dirt road outside Bowraville. Evelyn's remains were recovered nearby in April 1991. Colleen's body has not been found. Both Evelyn and Colleen's families are related to the people put under surveillance in the far-west NSW town.

"It makes me quite angry and disgusted," said Evelyn's aunt, Michelle Jarrett. "It's just wrong for the police to assume something like that. If I thought my family had done something to my niece, I would have told police. I would not have covered it up." Colleen's mother, Muriel Craig, said: "I really think this is terrible. I'm lost for words, really, to think that (the police) would go to that much length when all of their

expertise should have been from somewhere else." The files reveal that detectives eventually began to focus attention on a Bowraville man, Jay Hart, subsequently tried and found not guilty of killing Clinton.

NSW police later reinvestigated the killings and charged Mr Hart over Evelyn's death but he was again found not guilty.

The force is now finalising a submission calling for Mr Hart to face a retrial over the murders, -arguing that evidence of his -alleged links to all three has not been heard together in court. Mr Hart has denied any involvement in the deaths.