



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Commission report has lessons for police and health professionals

The Corruption and Crime Commission hopes its report into the police response to a domestic violence episode resulting in the tragic death of a toddler in Broome three years ago will help other police and health professionals faced with similar situations in the future.

The purpose of the report is to raise awareness within the WA Police when dealing with domestic violence in the future and underline the need to follow the good policies WA Police have in place, relating to handling incidents involving domestic violence. There are also important lessons for health professionals treating domestic violence victims and interacting with police in the critical hours following an assault.

The *Report on the Response of WA Police to a Particular Incident of Domestic Violence on 19-20 March 2013* was delivered to State Parliament today and details a sequence of ineffective and inadequate responses to the vicious bashing of Broome woman, Tamica Mullaley and the abduction and death of her baby, Charlie.

The perpetrator was Ms Mullaley's partner, Mervyn Kenneth Bell. He was subsequently convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 27 years. In September 2015, he took his own life in prison.

Whether a more rapid response may have saved baby Charlie is impossible to know but the report emphasises that Mr Bell alone was responsible for the child's death.

Nonetheless, the Commission's review does establish there was a series of instances when individuals who were involved in different elements of events that night and following day, failed to make the right observations, ask the right questions or reach the right, reasonable conclusions, and the focus was not on the child or the assault on Ms Mullaley.

Though no individual action constituted serious misconduct, collectively, there was a failure to deal with the incident as it should have been dealt with. The report also recognises that Ms Mullaley's behaviour was a contributing factor. Ms Mullaley, who was abusive towards police on the night of her assault, was found guilty of assaulting police. Her father, Edward Mullaley, pleaded guilty to obstructing police. She was given a 12 month suspended sentence and Mr Mullaley was fined \$300.

The work of the Commission builds on the comprehensive investigation undertaken by WA Police, looking more broadly at what should have been the system's holistic response to the domestic violence incident.

The report was made available to WA Police and Ms Mullaley for comment before being finalised and delivered to Parliament, and will be made available at <http://ccc.wa.gov.au>

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