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Police probe 'shoddy, unprofessional'



June and Fiona Smith in Bourke near the site of the tragic car accident where June's daughter Mona-Lisa and her cousin Cindy died over three decades ago.

By **ROSEMARY NEILL**

8:17PM NOVEMBER 28, 2023

A former senior police officer said that when he travelled to Bourke in outback NSW to investigate a road crash that killed two Indigenous girls, he was told by a local police inspector to “hop back in your car and piss off back to Sydney”.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/police-probe-shoddy-unprofessional/news-sto>

Indigenous girls killed in Bourke in 1987, inquest being held into 20/11/2028, 7:30am Australia

In a day of dramatic evidence at the resumed inquest into the girls' deaths, a second former police officer said the initial police investigation had been "shoddy" and "unprofessional".

In December 1987, cousins Mona Smith, 16, and Cindy Smith, 15, accepted a lift from 40-year-old excavator driver Alexander Ian Grant, and never returned home.

They were found dead beside Grant's wrecked ute on a highway outside Bourke, while Grant, who was found at the crash site drunk and unharmed with his arm across Cindy's exposed breasts, escaped conviction.

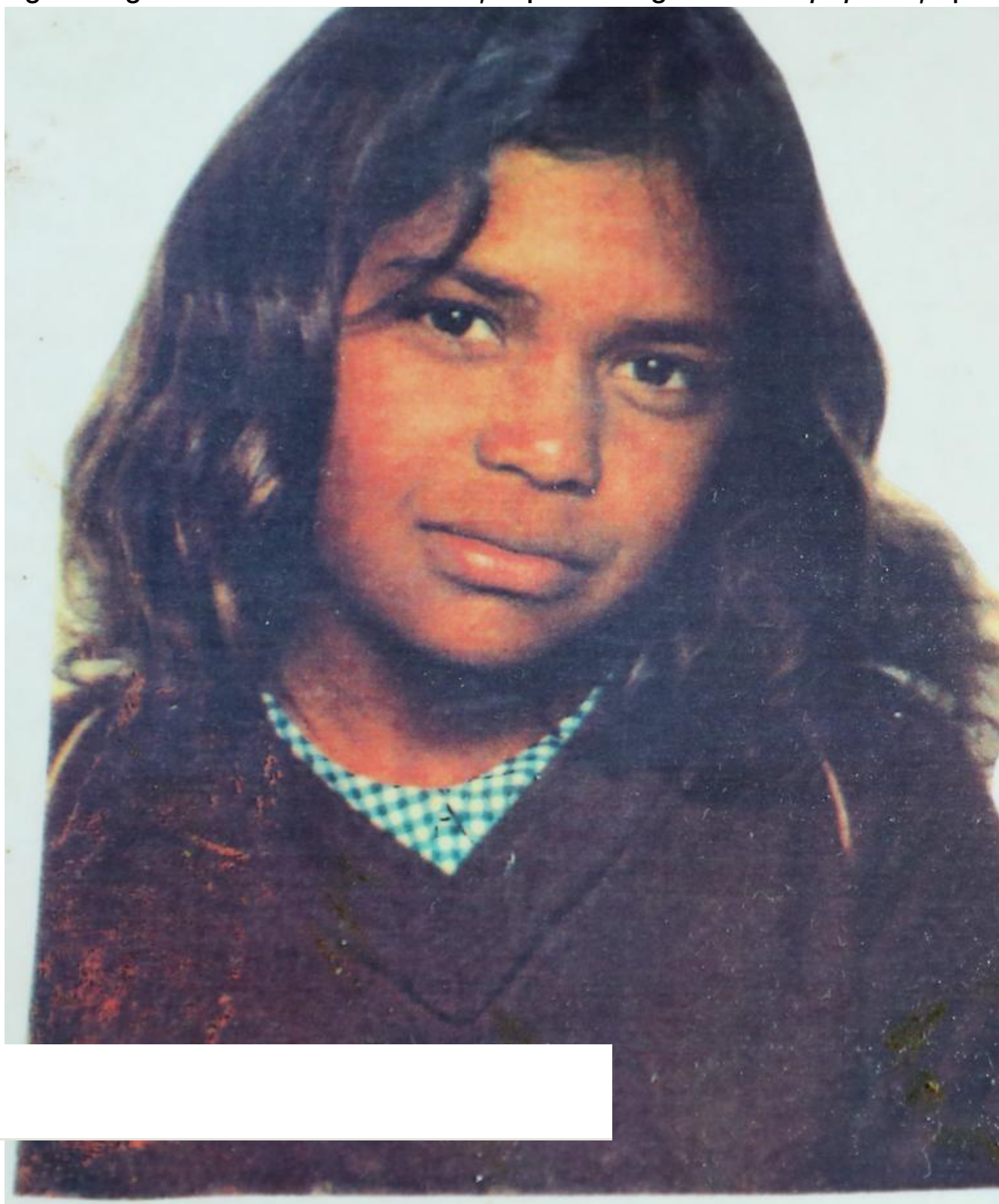
Raymond Godkin, then in charge of NSW's Accident Investigation Squad, told the inquest being held in Bourke that he "didn't get a very good reception" when he was sent to the town in 1988 to investigate the case.

Now retired, Mr Godkin said an inspector from the region told him: "You can hop in your car and piss off back to Sydney. My detectives did this job, and I'm content with what they did."

He added: "Sadly, I didn't get any co-operation at all ... They weren't happy that I was there."

Mr Godkin said he had never believed Mona Smith, an inexperienced driver, was driving Grant's ute when it crashed.





Cindy Smith who tragically died in 1987 on the Mitchell Highway just outside of Bourke when a car rolled killing her and her cousin Mona-Lisa Smith.

Grant, who died around 2017, was charged with culpable driving causing the girls' deaths and of interfering sexually with Cindy's corpse but he was acquitted at his 1990 trial after the defence successfully argued that Mona

Indigenous girls killed in Bourke in 1987, inquest being held into 20/01/2028, 7:30am
The Australia was driving the ute when it crashed.

Mr Godkin said he had no doubts that Grant interfered sexually with Cindy's body. "I am still astounded after 36 years that [this] matter was withdrawn," he said of the charge being "no billed" by the Director of Public Prosecutions shortly before Grant's trial.

In Bourke, he said found the crashed ute "hadn't been examined ... so much hadn't been done".

In a "really bad" development, he went to Wee Waa and found the steering wheel had been sent to Sydney to Grant. "The obvious reason it was sent to Sydney was to clean it up because of DNA and fingerprints. That was very disturbing," he said.

When he interviewed Grant six months after the fatal crash, "I didn't believe anything he was telling me," Mr Godkin said.

The inquest also heard from former police constable Kenneth McKenzie, one of the first officers to attend the crash, who claimed the police investigation before Mr Godkin's unit became involved had been "poor, shoddy and unprofessional".

Testifying from Auckland, Mr McKenzie said on the night of the accident, Grant initially said he was driving the crashed ute but when he realised the girls were dead, he changed his story, blaming Mona for the crash.

He said he was "absolutely" suspicious of this claim.

Mr McKenzie accused former Bourke detective Peter John Ehsman of "a gross miscarriage of justice the way that (he) investigated" the crash.

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Lawyer Stephen Russell, representing Mr Ehsman, accused Mr McKenzie of
“lying” about his claim that he informed the Bourke detective that Grant
had changed his story about who was driving the crashed ute.

The inquest heard Mr McKenzie had signed a 1987 report to a coroner
identifying Mona as the driver. Mr McKenzie said this reflected the findings
of Mr Ehsman, not his view.

The inquest will resume on Wednesday.

Mona’s mother, June Smith, is expected to testify this week.

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