

For immediate release 29/05/2018

### **Update: Three unsolved murders linked forensically**

Police say a forensic link between three unsolved South Australian murders has been detailed today by the head of the Major Crime Investigation Branch who revealed there has been a secret Task Force reviewing the cases since January.

Three separate Investigations – into the murders of Beverley Hanley, Phyllis Harrison and Stephen Newton – have been the subject of review and further inquiries by Task Force Resolute, established after police received fresh forensic evidence. The Task Force is made up of seven detectives assisted by an intelligence officer and forensic experts.

The involvement of a single suspect in all three cases has been considered previously, but due to forensic evidence and new information coming to hand, investigators are now confident the same suspect is involved in all three deaths.

Two of the cases involve the murders of grandmothers Phyllis Harrison in 1998 at Elizabeth South and Beverley Hanley at Elizabeth North in 2010. The third case is the murder of Mt Gambier man Stephen Newton whose badly decomposed body was found in his unit in 2011.

*“We now have proof that the same offender is responsible for all three deaths. There has been speculation in the past that the same offender was involved, but now I can say we have proof and we believe theft was the motive in all three matters.”* Detective Superintendent Des Bray, the officer in charge of Major Crime, said.

Detective Superintendent Bray said the man, a 39-year-old from the Riverland region of Victoria, knew all three victims and was aware of the police focus on him.

*“I would thank those people who have had the courage to come forward and provide fresh information and I would encourage others to do the same,”* he added.

Describing these types of attack as cowardly, Superintendent Bray said anyone who would do such a thing was not worthy of being defended. He asked people to consider their conscience and do the right thing now.

Detective Superintendent Bray said police were now urging those with information related to these matters to come forward and speak with police.

*“We know that there are people who have provided incorrect or incomplete statements and I would urge them to come forward and speak with us. We know that they may be feeling vulnerable, but we can help them.”* he said.

### **The murders:**

#### **Phyllis May Harrison**

The 71-year-old was found dead in her home in Harvey Rd, Elizabeth South on Tuesday 3 March 1998. She had suffered multiple stab wounds. Her house was ransacked, but it is unclear what was stolen.

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### **Beverley Ellen Hanley**

The body of the 64-year-old was found at her home address in Homington Rd, Elizabeth North on Wednesday 6 October 2010 and she is believed to have been killed earlier that day.

She had suffered severe head injuries, her house was ransacked and her handbag stolen.

### **Stephen Hugh Newton**

The decomposing body of the 55-year-old was found in his home on Davison St, Mount Gambier on Friday November 4, 2011. He died as a result of an assault.

A range of items including a TV, DVDs, a computer game console, and games were taken.

Police believe it is more likely that he was killed sometime between 23 and 29 September but not found until 4 November.

NOTE: A man was arrested, charged and convicted in relation to the theft of property. He was sentenced in 2012 to a period of imprisonment in relation to the matter.

A reward is being sought in relation to the death of Mr Newton, but \$200,000 is available in relation to the murders of both Mrs Harrison and Mrs Hanley where information leading to a conviction is provided.

Anyone with information that may be of assistance to police is urged to call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or report online at [www.crimestopperssa.com.au](http://www.crimestopperssa.com.au) – you can remain anonymous