

Special Operations Group officer says theories Tasmania Police shot fugitive Robert Greig are 'absolutely incorrect'



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NEWS

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Highlight: A Special Operations Group officer tells a coronial inquest that allegations Tasmania Police shot a fugitive and destroyed his car with fire to destroy evidence are "absolutely incorrect".

Body

A Special Operations Group officer has told a coronial inquest that allegations Tasmania Police shot a fugitive and destroyed his car with fire to destroy evidence are "absolutely incorrect".

Coroner Olivia McTaggart is examining the death of Robert George Greig, who died in October 2022 after a major manhunt was initiated for his arrest.

Mr Greig was found dead in his burnt-out ute in thick bush in Nugent after being pursued by a helicopter and the Special Operations Group (SOG), which is a Tasmania Police tactical group.

The inquest has previously heard firearms, a blowtorch and **gas** bottles were found in the car, which was in the vicinity of a bush camp where Mr Greig had been hiding out.

His father Gary Greig has alleged his son was shot by police and his car left to burn to "destroy any evidence", based on information he was given by a Hobart lawyer.

Robert Greig had been on the run for two weeks after firing multiple shots at two police vehicles in New Norfolk after a serious family violence incident.

The inquest on Wednesday heard from an SOG member, who cannot be named for legal reasons, who was one of the first officers at the scene of Mr Greig's burnt car.

He told the court he was pursuing the vehicle through the bush but was about 10 minutes behind him.

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His team searched for Mr Greig on foot after their vehicles could no longer go any further in the harsh terrain, but by the time they reached his ute it had already been engulfed, the court heard.

Mr Greig's vehicle had travelled through what was described as a "boulder field" and was close to a cliff.

"Frankly your honour, I'm surprised the vehicle made it to where it was," the officer said.

The SOG member said before he reached the vehicle he heard a single gunshot.

"It did sound like it came from the direction we were heading towards where the vehicle was resting," he said.

The court heard a single shell casing was found on the ground at the driver's side door.

He was asked if its placing would be consistent with Mr Greig firing a weapon while sitting in the car.

"Where the shell casing was located is consistent with where a shell casing would fall had it been fired from the driver's side of the vehicle," the officer said.

It was put to the officer that Mr Greig's father believes police shot him and burnt his car using a flash bomb.

The officer replied "that's absolutely incorrect".

He confirmed he was carrying a flash bomb, but said it would be an "exceptionally unreliable method" to try and destroy a car with fire.

The inquest heard on Tuesday that Mr Greig's cause of death would likely be inconclusive due to the burnt state of his body, but a gunshot wound to the head or asphyxia due to a fire would be canvassed by the inquest.

Father's absence 'disrespectful'

Mr Greig's father did not attend the inquest on Wednesday, which raised the ire of Coroner Olivia McTaggart.

"I find it somewhat disrespectful that he's not here given he's made these allegations," she said.

"I am trying to conduct what I must — an independent and transparent investigation — and I can only emphasise to him that's what this is and it's his opportunity to listen to the evidence.

"He is depriving himself of this."

Pilot's account of pursuit

The inquest also heard evidence from the helicopter pilot tasked with locating and pursuing Mr Greig's vehicle.

Chris Crouch told the inquest no weapons were fired from the aircraft, but a police officer on board did ask if he could shoot from it.

Mr Crouch said he told the officer he did not have authorisation to fire from the aircraft.

The pilot also described taking "evasive action" when there was belief Mr Greig was going to shoot at the helicopter.

"I actually did manoeuvre the aircraft away from him in case he was potentially going to fire at us," he said.

Mr Crouch said when Mr Greig's vehicle began to burn the nearest SOG team was about 1 kilometre away.

He was asked by counsel whether he had any suspicions about the police operation.

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"I would share the information if there was anything untoward," he said.

The inquest is expected to wrap up on Thursday after hearing evidence about how the car fire may have started and from a pathologist about Mr Greig's likely cause of death.

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