# Episode 7 - Felicity Boyd - v1.mp3

**John Pratt:** [00:00:04] Hello and welcome to Tasmania Police's brand new podcast. This is Tas Police. I'm Inspector John Pratt and I'll be your host as we chat to a wide range of Tasmanian police officers about why they joined the job and why others should too. We're coming to you today from Lutruwita, Tasmania. And before we start our conversation, I'd like to respectfully acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land upon which we work and pay our respect to elders past and present. We recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of the rich cultural heritage of Lutruwita, Tasmania.

**John Pratt:** [00:00:48] Today on This is Tas Police we are going down the true crime path. Sergeant Flick Boyd has been investigating a long-term missing persons case since 2013. We're going to chat to her about what investigating a case like this entails and give you a sneak peek into the role of an investigator with Tas Police. Thanks for joining us today. Flick, before we get into the missing persons case, can you just give us a bit of an overview of your career within Tas Police?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:01:12] Yeah, of course. So for as long as I can remember, all I really wanted to do was be a police officer. I honestly can't say why. I certainly don't come from a police family. I certainly didn't grow up knowing a police officer, but it was just something that I really wanted to do. And I think a lot of it comes down to my parents and the way that they went about supporting family and generously volunteering their time to community groups as I was growing up and whilst they were retired now, they're still involved in volunteering. And I honestly think that this humanitarian focus is what really drove me to join Tas police when I was 23.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:01:50] So I joined in 2004 and have been in eight years. And insofar as a quick snapshot of my career, I've worked at Hobart and Bellerive uniform, also Launceston uniform. Spent a little bit of time in Northern Drug Investigation Services, then moved up to the beautiful north west coast and spent three and a half years at Ulverstone. Whilst I was at Ulverstone, I did some training in relation to investigations and then joined Devonport CIB and then I moved from Devonport back to Launceston where I spent about two and a half years and then was promoted to sergeant there. And after Launceston I moved down to the south of the state where I've spent some time in projects, also headed up the family violence unit down here in Hobart with another sergeant. And now I'm back in investigations where I really enjoy being.

**John Pratt:** [00:02:39] You've moved around a fair bit within the job. Is there anything in particular that drove you into the investigative side of things?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:02:45] It's just really more around, you don't really know what you're going to be coming into. Yes, you've got some reports allocated to you, but you can do anything in investigations from frauds, online crime, from the minorist of stealings right up to a murder and serious crimes like that. Unfortunately, you do see the worst of people and some people do do some horrible things. But it's really satisfying when you spend a lot of time and energy to investigate a crime, to support victims, and more so to just really hold offenders to account for their behaviour. And that's what I enjoy about investigating.

**John Pratt:** [00:03:20] From what you've just told us, it's evident that you're clearly an inquisitive sort of person with strong moral backgrounds, which is very suited to working for Tas Police. We might now move on into a discussion about the long term missing person case you've been investigating for the past nine or ten years. Darlene Geertseema went missing in 1978 and has not been seen or heard from since. Unfortunately, at the time, the investigation into her disappearance didn't result in any answers, but the case was picked up again in 2013 by yourself and eventually led into an inquest in December 2021. Can you tell us a bit about the case and how you started your investigation into the Geertsema disappearance after such a long time?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:03:57] Yeah, of course. So in 2013, I was a Detective Senior Constable at Devonport Criminal Investigation Branch. I was allocated the missing person report relating to Darlene and I was asked to review it with a view of preparing a report for the coroner. Darlene hadn't been seen or heard from for 35 years at that stage, and it was presumed that she was most likely deceased. So as a result of that, Tasmania Police need to work with the office of the Coroner to get some clarity around the fact that the person is in fact deceased. And only a coroner can obviously make that determination, but also to to look at how that person may have died. So for Darlene, she was 30 years old at the time when she disappeared. She was a divorcee. She was a mother to six children. Her four eldest children were living with their father in Queensland at the time of her disappearance, which left Darlene to care for her two children who were five and eight at the time. To really understand sort of what happened back in 1978, it was necessary for me to revisit old witnesses. It was also necessary for me to identify new ones. And as I did this, it became very apparent to me that Darlene was a loving mother.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:05:10] She was described by her sister as the glue that held her siblings and her family together. She wasn't unwell when she disappeared. She didn't take any personal items with her either. And there really just wasn't an explanation as to why she disappeared. It was as if she'd just fallen off the face of the earth, leaving her children behind. And it was really that part of the investigation that never really made sense to anyone close to her. You know, the question was continually asked, why would a mother permanently abandon her two young children, particularly five and eight years old at the time? So as the investigation developed, it became increasingly apparent that Darlene was, in fact, deceased. We did a lot of checks to find her. These checks included using three different names so we can broaden our search. There's just simply no trace of her at all. There were no tax returns, no Medicare, no Centrelink, no bank records. There was just nothing. And as I continued to speak with her family and also her friends that she was with back in 1978, it also became increasingly apparent to us that her relationship with her partner at the time of her disappearance, that her relationship was characterised by family violence.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:06:24] So as the investigation evolved. I explored several alternate theories to try and actually really understand why Darlene disappeared. And basically, we ended up with a determination that the only reasonable conclusion was that she may have fallen victim to a crime at the time. So at the end of the investigation, my report, which was quite large, I must say, was sent to the coroner. And as a result, he decided to hold an inquest into Darlene's disappearance. And this was held in December last year. And on the 10th of June this year, the coroner handed down his findings, finding that Darlene actually died as a result of injuries inflicted upon her by her de facto partner at the time, on the evening of the 23rd of October, 1978.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:07:08] So now the investigation is with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. We've sent that report to them so they can examine the evidence and provide any advice as to whether or not there's sufficient evidence to charge anybody with a crime. Obviously, there's a lot more to the investigation, but that's pretty much it in a nutshell. And if listeners are interested, the findings are actually public and they can be found on the Tasmanian Office of the Coroner website.

**John Pratt:** [00:07:37] Flick, I would imagine investigating an incident that happened some 35 years previous would pose some significant challenges. Would you be able to tell us about a few of those challenges?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:07:45] Yeah, absolutely. First and foremost, I think the most important challenge, but it's a positive challenge is the fact that family violence is so much more recognised and responded to so much more in this day and age than it was back in 1978. Back in 1978, yes, family violence was reported, but it's certainly not reported in the manner that it is now. And there wasn't so much government oversight and law enforcement back in 1978 like there is now as well. So I think first and foremost is a priority.

[00:08:17] I think it's very important for me to say that another challenge, again, is the fact that in 1978 we didn't have DNA at that point in time. Fingerprints were certainly part of an investigation, but DNA hadn't actually been invented at that point in time. So thankfully, over a period of time, particularly in that 35 years, thanks to the evolution of science and technology, we've been able to progress the investigation in a forensic manner by obtaining DNA samples off Darlene's ex-husband and some family members. And what that's actually been able to create is an actual DNA profile of what Darlene's DNA would be. And so now we've been able to create that DNA profile. We've been able to put that on the national database, which is continually checked in case any human remains or any other evidence may be uncovered at any stage. And we're able to obviously test that against that profile. So, yes, there have been some challenges, but they're important and progressive challenges which actually help investigators do what we do.

**John Pratt:** [00:09:20] The case has been in the spotlight as a long term missing persons case, including interviews with national media outlets. Did that help the investigation at all?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:09:27] It did, actually, on a on a local scale. Last year, we announced a $500,000 reward for credible information to assist us in determining hopefully location for Darlene, but also credible information that might be able to assist us in the arrest of a person who may have been involved in Darlene's disappearance. We did receive some information and we acted on that information, which resulted in the examination of a couple of sites in the north, west and central, north west of Tasmania nationally. We also received some information about a possible sighting. However, all of those areas and particularly that possible sighting was very thoroughly investigated, particularly the possible sighting that we required some assistance there from Queensland Police at the time and we have completely discounted those sites as a possible location for Darlene and we're still very confident that she remains a missing person and hasn't been seen or heard from for 44 years now.

**John Pratt:** [00:10:25] As you mentioned earlier, there was an inquest held into the disappearance of Darlene last year. The coroner found that a key person of interest was responsible for her death and disappearance. After all the work you'd put in, that must have been an incredible feeling. How did it feel for you?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:10:38] A little surreal. I think that's probably the most concise way I can describe it. I've been a police officer for 18 years and I've dedicated half my career to this investigation. But really, it's about the family. And I'm just happy that they've got some answers now. But like I said earlier, the investigation is still open, still with the DPP to determine if there's sufficient evidence to charge anyone with a crime. And I know that the family would very much like to find Darlene and bring her home. And I think that would be just the icing on the cake for them to really just get that closure and to finally move forward with their lives.

**John Pratt:** [00:11:14] So if there's anybody listening that thinks they have any additional information about this case, what should they do?

**Flick Boyd:** [00:11:19] Well, we always act on information that's provided by the community. There are many avenues now that information can be reported to police. You can present to a police station, you can phone 131444, which is the non-emergency police contact number. And of course, there's Crime Stoppers. So you can elect to remain anonymous with this service. And you can either call one 1800 333 000 or hit the website at Crime Stoppers to accommodate you. I think it's really important to note here that every bit of information helps. Please don't hold on to it. Don't think it's insignificant. Don't think that police have got better things to do because that information that you have might just be the missing piece to our crime puzzle. So please just contact police with any information that you may have, whether it's in relation to Darlene or any other crime that's happening.

**Speaker1:** [00:12:09] Flick, I'm aware that you have put a considerable amount of effort in relation to this investigation and that those efforts have been rewarded by you receiving an award. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Speaker2:** [00:12:19] So I was nominated by Detective Inspector Kim Stephen of Devonport, Sir B for an award under the Australasian Council of Women and Policing. That's an organisation which was established in 1997 and continues to grow today. I'm very grateful for the nomination and it was for the most outstanding female investigator. I didn't come away with the prize, but just to be nominated was again quite surreal. It's certainly not something that I expected. It's certainly not something that I joined Tasmania Police for. I didn't join for accolades. I just wanted to really be part of something bigger than myself. And I was just fortunate enough to be allocated this missing person report and run with it. And the evidence is the evidence.

**John Pratt:** [00:13:06] Thanks for talking to us today about this case and your job as a sergeant within Tas Police and more specifically about the disappearance of Darlene Geertsema. Before we finish up, I was just hoping you could leave us today with some words of wisdom and advice for anyone that's interested in joining Tas Police.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:13:20] It's never boring. There is nothing better than coming to work and having no idea what you're going to do. You'll deal with many people in the community. You'll certainly see some things that you couldn't even imagine was possible. But you will be part of something bigger than yourself when you join. And I think one of the great things about Tas Police is the person that's been in 35 years still has to train the way you will as a newcomer. And we can't keep Tasmanians safe unless we're safe first. And I guess the main thing here is that we certainly ensure that you're trained well, that you're educated and more so that you're really and fully supported so you can go about your day keeping the community safe and you certainly make some long lasting friendships along the way.

**John Pratt:** [00:14:02] Flick, I certainly have to agree. You do, unfortunately at times see the worst of society. But having said that, I think at times you also see the very best of society. Your efforts in investigating this matter accord extraordinary. It's a great result. I'm sure the family definitely appreciate your efforts, as do the community. Thanks for joining us on the podcast today.

**Flick Boyd:** [00:14:20] Thanks for having me.

**John Pratt:** [00:14:21] If this episode brings up any issues for you, there are a number of services you can use, including 1800 respect on 1800 737732. The Safe at Home Family Violence Response and Referral line on 1800 633 937. Lifeline on 131114 or beyondblue on 1300 224 636. And of course, if you're experiencing an emergency situation, always call 000.

[00:14:53] So far on This is Tas Police podcast, we've chatted to our former commissioner Darren Hine, and our new commissioner, Donna Adams. We've also heard from our recruitment services team and some new recruits. There have been some interesting and inspiring conversations from people who have experienced everything Tasmania Police has to offer, and this is just the beginning. If you like what you heard today, please subscribe on your favourite podcast app and while you're there, consider leaving us a review or a writing to let us know how we're going. You can also stay up to date with podcast episodes on our website at recruitment.police.tas.gov.au/podcast.