

ARTICULATION LEFT



Daily Telegraph 07-Dec-2009 Page: 1 General News Region: Sydney Circulation: 369781 Type: Australian Capital City Daily Size: 1434.11 sq.cms MTWTFS-

EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

SWIM SEX ABUSE SCANDAL

Call to reopen secret police files

Adam Walters

THE Australian swim team has been rocked by allegations of a secret police investigation into the alleged sexual abuse of elite swimmers dating back to the 1960s. A three-month investigation by The Daily Telegraph has uncovered claims of sexual assaults by former Australian swim team coach and manager Terry Buck. A former Olympic medalist alleges he was repeatedly

abused by Buck from the age of 11 and that he was one of many emerging athletes preyed upon in Sydney's eastern suburbs. NSW police secretly formed Strike Force Solano at the end of the Sydney Olympic Games after being handed a list of 29 alleged victims and witnesses, including four Olympic swimmers. But the investigation was abandoned five months later.

Buck died in an accident almost five years ago. Swimming's national governing body yesterday said it had already launched its own investigation and would consider asking police to re-open Strike Force Solano.

Special report page 2



Daily Telegraph 07-Dec-2009 Page: 1 General News Region: Sydney Circulation: 369781 Type: Australian Capital City Daily Size: 1434.11 sq.cms MTWTFS-

Scandal cover-up

Olympic swim team sex abuse

exclusive

Adam Walters

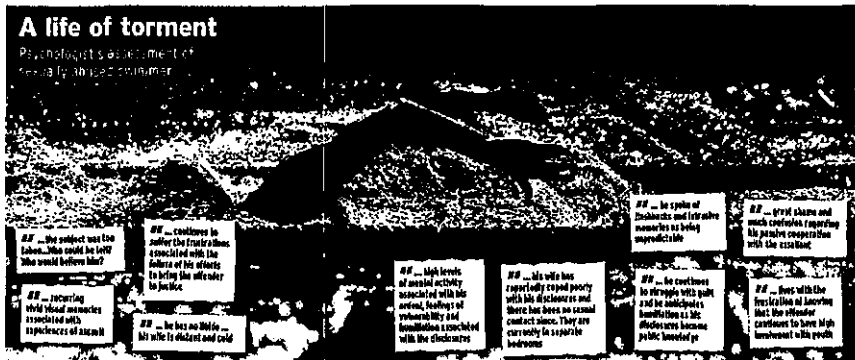
AN OLYMPIC medalist has blown the lid on what he calls "child sex abuse cover-up" at the highest levels of Australian swimming which spanned 12 Olympic Games. The former Australian swim team captain has spoken out in frustration after a police strike force set-up to investigate allegations against the late coach Terry Buck was wound up in mysterious circumstances. The explosive allegations were never destined to be made public until The Daily Telegraph began its own inquiries three months ago after a tip-off from a police informant involved in protecting children from predatory sporting coaches. He put The Daily Telegraph in contact with an Olympic and Commonwealth medalist who had been approached by detectives to detail his own experiences as a victim. He co-operated with police, handing investigators a list of 29 other victims, three of whom had committed suicide. A total of four Olympic swimmers, including a celebrated gold medalist, and two surfing champions were on the list. Strike Force Solano spent five months investigating the allegations after the Sydney Olympic Games but was disbanded in April 2001 with little explanation despite the willingness of the swimmer, his younger brother and a third man to testify. So secret was the inquiry that new Swimming Australia chief executive Kevin Neil said the organisation had no record of Strike Force Solano. But he said the nine member Swimming Australia Board yesterday agreed to co-operate with any reopened investigation. "Things need to be open and transparent," Mr Neil said. "Swimming Australia will provide any assistance to any authorities to investigate any allegations and ensure our child welfare policies are proactive and preventative. "The board members were surprised and were unaware of any investigation until Thursday of last week. We've searched our

archives and spoken to previous CEOs and there was no knowledge of it." Still deeply disturbed by the depth and pain of his disclosures, the whistleblower is demanding police reopen the investigation. "I poured my soul out to them and then there was nothing. They dropped me like a hot cake," he said. A spokesman for Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione has confirmed the original brief was not forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, even though senior detectives had "no doubt" about the honesty and integrity of those making the allegations. "The leading investigator Inspector Peter Yeomans had every sympathy for [the man]. He absolutely believed everything he said," the spokesman said. The strike force operated secretly, and in contrast to recent high profile "historic" cases — such as the scandal involving Knox Grammar School — police made no appeals for information to help inquiries. The commissioner's office said the decision to end the investigation was based on four short lines of advice from the police legal affairs branch in early 2001. "There is insufficient evidence to charge at this time in relation to the allegations made. The deciding matters in this case were the state of evidence. That is the age of the evidence, inconsistencies in the evidence and the failure of other victims to come forward. All of these matters were beyond control of the victims," the advice said. In a carefully worded written statement to The Daily Telegraph, Inspector Yeomans said police could not force other victims to co-operate with his strike force. "In this matter, like many others of a similar nature, some of those interviewed simply did not want to give any information or be involved in the investigation as a witness or a possible victim," Inspector Yeomans said. "Generally, it is a highly personal decision for anyone to pursue criminal charges against those who have



sexually assaulted them, whether historically or recently," he said.
"Many prefer to deal with it through other courses of action, such as counselling. Others do not want to re-live the trauma at all."
Terry Buck died in 2005 after a tractor accident. The praise at Buck's funeral was glowing but the police informant who initiated inquiries in 1998 tells a sordid story about Buck's involvement in "the dark side" of the sport.
Rearing repercussions for his children, who swim competitively, the gold medallist has told *The Daily Telegraph* he wants to protect his identity after being "left high and dry" by the police. He tells a harrowing story of being targeted by Buck as an 11 year-old at the

Clovelly Surf Club, and assaulted for the following seven years.
A detailed statement from his lawyer said he has since suffered depression, loss of libido, emotional distress, humiliation, headaches, shock, anxiety and mood swings.
"I was all set to testify but the police pulled the plug on the whole thing," he said.
In detailing the impact of the swimmer's disclosures to police, a psychologist's report noted "symptoms of mental disturbance."
He then prepared civil action, but the cost of "going it alone" was prohibitive, and within two years Buck was dead.
"Although he is dead there are other people with a lot to lose when the whole truth eventually comes out," he said.



Centre of allegations:
Terry Buck