

## Psychiatric Report

Martin Bryant, Date of Birth 7/5/66

I have prepared this report at the request of Mr Bryant's legal representative, Mr John Avery. It is based on interviews conducted on the 4 May 1996 at the Royal Hobart Hospital, lasting in total some 3½ hours. In addition I had access to extensive documentation which included:

Records of Mr Bryant's previous medical and psychiatric assessments and treatment including; the Royal Hobart Hospital case records, a copy of the report prepared by Dr Cunningham-Dax in February 1984, reports by Dr Bernard Mather and Dr Terence Craven prepared in October 1993 and additional material re-produced in the profile of Martin Bryant prepared by the Tasmanian police. The profile of Martin Bryant prepared by the Tasmanian police dated 6 August 1996. The report of Dr Bill Lucas based on his examination of Mr Bryant in May of this year. The extensive report and results of psychological testing prepared by Mr Ian Joblin in June 1996. The reports of Dr Ian Sale, dated 7 July 1996 and 6 August 1996. A transcript of the police interviews with Mr Bryant. Hearing the recordings of the interactions between Mr Bryant and the police negotiator on 28 April. This report is intended to clarify for the court why an insanity plea was not considered appropriate and to at least outline some of the factors which contributed to the dreadful actions of My Bryant.

In my interview with Mr Bryant, although he was initially anxious and somewhat reticent, he gradually relaxed as the interview progressed. He was receiving medication for pain but this did not produce any disorientation or obvious disorganisation in his state of mind. He gave the impression of attempting within his capacities to respond to my enquiries. As will be noted later in the report he initially denied memories of the offences but subsequently gave a fuller account.

Mr Bryant gives the initial impression of being a normal young man. Superficially his conversation is coherent, though his vocabulary is limited. It is only when you attempt to test Mr Bryant's comprehension skills and numeracy that the extent of his intellectual limitation becomes clear. He functions in the borderline range between intellectual disability and the dull normal individual. Mr Bryant's intelligence has been tested on a number of occasions between 1973 and 1996. The extensive testing carried out by Mr Ian Joblin revealed a full scale IQ of 66 with his attainments on the so called performance scales being somewhat higher than on the verbal tests. A range of other tests of intellectual function performed by Mr Joblin confirmed that Mr Bryant was functioning intellectually in the lowest 1 to 2 per cent of the population. A measure of intelligence is of less practical significance than functional capacities. In this regard Mr Bryant has functioned in the community, lived independently, albeit with assistance and financial constraints provided by a guardian. He can manage not only to function in his everyday and routine environment but also to cope with trips interstate and overseas, though as will be noted later these represent limited excursions. Mr Bryant, like many intellectually limited people, has problems with the temporal relationships and the sequencing of events. Thus he brings together occurrences which in fact were separated by considerable lengths of time and he will alter the order of events without being aware of the distortion. The good physical appearance of Mr Bryant paradoxically may have added to his interpersonal difficulties as it raised expectations of a level of interpersonal competence which in fact he does not possess and the disappointed expectations may have tended to make others withdraw from him.

Past Medical and Psychiatric History

Mr Bryant reports two previous hospitalisations. The first was when he was about 10 years old and required treatment for burns sustained while playing with fireworks. The second in October 1992 was following a road traffic accident in which he sustained a fracture of his cervical vertebrae, fractures of the ribs and a head injury. He is recorded as having remained unconscious for approximately an hour. He described severe headaches for some weeks afterwards. He was not aware of greater problems with memory or concentration following the accident nor of any change in his behavior. He has subsequently had a CAT scan to visualise his brain and an electroencephalogram to record the electrical activity in the brain and these do not suggest any brain damage.

In his childhood Mr Bryant was assessed on a number of occasions by psychologists and psychiatrists. He was noted soon after starting school to have both behavioral problems and learning difficulties. He was referred from the Friends School in September 1973 for assessment. He was noted to be aggressive, destructive and very difficult with other children. He was transferred to the New Town Primary School where again his behavior led to referral to a child guidance clinic. At this time he was thought to be hyperactive and placed both on medication and subsequently on a special diet which was then fashionable for the treatment of this condition. Mr Bryant's behavior at school and at home remained troublesome. He is noted in the records from New Town Primary School to lack friends, to be struggling scholastically and to be persistently disruptive in class. There are references to him stealing, to him having violent outbursts and to tormenting vulnerable children. There are also descriptions in this material of him taking delight in the discomfort and failure of other children in the class situation. In August 1977 he was suspended from the New Town Primary School and soon after was assessed at the Hobart Diagnostic Centre. In this assessment there are records of Mr Bryant torturing and harassing animals and tormenting his sister. He was still apparently having speech problems at this time. Considerable work was attempted to remedy Mr Bryant's problems and when in 1978 he returned to school there was noted to be a decrease in his aggressive and disruptive behavior, though he was apparently still teasing younger children. In 1980 on transfer to the New Town High school he was placed in the special education unit where at least initially he coped better both academically and behaviorally. There is however clear indications of deterioration in all aspects of his performance towards the end of his school career. Again in the material from this period are references to tormenting animals.

In February 1984 Mr Bryant was assessed by a very experienced clinical psychiatrist, Dr Cunningham-Dax. This assessment was initiated to consider Mr Bryant's eligibility for a disability pension. Dr Cunningham-Dax stated that Mr Bryant was intellectually handicapped and personality disordered. He also raised the possibility that he might be developing an illness of a schizophrenic type. On the basis of this report and subsequent assessments which relied upon it, Mr Bryant was granted a disability pension. There are subsequent references to Mr Bryant having a schizophrenic illness and of being a paranoid schizophrenic in the records of Dr Mather (December 1991) and Dr PM McCartney (December 1991). These diagnostic formulations, it transpired, were not the results of the doctors own conclusions, but based on the report of Mr Bryant's mother that he had been diagnosed by Dr Cunningham-Dax as suffering from this illness. This was a misunderstanding on Mrs Bryant's part and it is this misunderstanding which lead to an opinion by Dr Cunningham-Dax that Mr Bryant might develop schizophrenia being transmuted into a diagnosis of this severe mental illness.

Mr Bryant has had no contact with the psychiatric services since this time. He did, however consult his general practitioner, Dr Mather, with complaints of anxiety and problems sleeping. He was prescribed tranquilisers in January 1993 and August 1993. He took these tablets on three or four occasions per week. He denied using these medications in greater than the prescribed dosage.

## Family Background

Mr Bryant is the eldest of two children. Mr Bryant's father died three years ago and was described by the accused as a nice, quiet friendly man with whom he had a good relationship. He was aware that his father had killed himself and agreed that his father had been "down" before the suicide. Other information available to me suggests that Mr Bryant's father had had a depressive disorder for some time and had been receiving psychiatric treatment. Mr Bryant was not able to give a description of his mother other than as someone who washed his clothes and cooked him food. Despite this he considered himself to have a good relationship with her. Mr Bryant was more forthcoming about his younger sister, now aged 23. He said that as children he found her difficult because she was much brighter than he and seemed to have lots of friends, whereas he was painfully aware of the lack of such companions. He said though he was jealous of her as a kid, but their relationship greatly improved when she did so much to look after him following his road traffic accident in 1990. He knows of no history of mental disorder in his sister or his mother.

It was difficult to obtain any sense of the family environment from Mr Bryant's account other than his bland assurances that it was good, OK and nice. There are suggestions of problems in the family both when Mr Bryant was a young child and in the years prior to Mr Bryant Senior's suicide. The extent to which Mr Bryant's parents were a couple struggling to cope with an inherently difficult child and the extent to which they contributed to his disturbed development cannot retrospectively be ascertained. It is questionable that weight should be placed on the negative opinions expressed, particularly about Mrs Bryant, in some of the earlier records from the child assessment and guidance clinics.

## Personal History

Mr Bryant appears to have shown abnormalities in development from infancy and early childhood. He was slow both in attaining his motor milestones and in speech development. The extensive behavioral and social problems shown by Mr Bryant during his early school years have already been described. In summary his physical, emotional and intellectual development were slow. He had considerable difficulties relating to other children. His behavior was often aggressive and disruptive. The intellectual limitations impaired his capacity to learn and his behavioral difficulties alienated him from his peers and made him difficult to manage, both at school and at home.

Mr Bryant's memories of school are that he found it an unpleasant and distressing experience for virtually the whole of this attendance. He recalls frequently being bullied. He said "I was hazed and knocked around all the time, no-one wanted to be my friend". He only recalls one companion at school and this for a relatively brief period during his childhood. The predominant memory is of being by himself, ignored by the other children, or attended to in a bullying and frightening manner. Mr Bryant remembers both refusing to go to school because he was afraid and pretending to have various minor maladies to persuade his mother to keep him away from school. He described himself as having been "terrified" of going to school and of facing his tormentors.

Mr Bryant was a slow learner at school and was placed in special classes. Despite his learning difficulties he has acquired adequate literacy skills. He was able to read aloud from an article in a woman's magazine without making any errors. His difficulties were far more obvious when it came to simple calculations which were quite beyond his capacities. Mr Bryant's intellectual limitations were recognised both at school and when he finished school. He never entered regular employment and only managed to make a

little money be odds jobs gardening and tidying up.

It was while engaged in odd jobs of this kind that he met Miss Harvey. He describes Miss Harvey as having been his only real friend. He said from the outset they got on well together. He enjoyed being with her. They shared an interest in animals. This concern with dogs and cats does not appear to have extended to the effective care of these animals as the RSPCA removed large numbers of cats and dogs from Miss Harvey's care at various times. The relationship with Miss Harvey appears to have been that of a helpful and affectionate child. It was not a sexual relationship. It does, however, appear to have provided for Mr Bryant the one experience of effective human contact outside of his family. Mr Bryant said that he was surprised after Miss Harvey's death to learn that she had left him her money. He is still uncertain as to extent of his various inheritances having only the vaguest notions of his financial situation.

In November 1993 Mr Bryant was made subject to a guardianship order which placed the management of his money and property in the hands of the Perpetual Trustees, Tasmania Limited. This Order was made on the application of his mother and on the recommendations of Dr Tereance Craven and Dr Bernard Mather who both expressed themselves of the opinion that Mr Bryan was mentally impaired as the result of a low level of intelligence which rendered him incapable of managing his affairs and property. This arrangement ensured some order in Mr Bryant's financial affairs and though he apparently objected on occasion that he was not provided with even more funds, he accepted this arrangement. He also developed a trusting relationship with the Administrator of his estate who provided considerable additional support and advice to him.

Mr Bryant clearly had difficulty maintaining the property which he now owned, but did manage a semblance of an independent existence. In the last few years he has taken a number of trips overseas and interstate. The first of these occurred prior to Miss Harvey's death when he and his father accompanied Miss Harvey to New Zealand. In the last two years he has taken a number of trips usually alone, although on two occasions a 16-year-old girlfriend, Janetta Hoani, accompanied him. He described his various attempts at national and international travel as disappointing. He said he usually undertook these trips because "I wanted to meet up with normal people" but apparently "it didn't work". He travelled to such places as London, Los Angeles, Amsterdam and Bangkok and in these various cities tried to strike up conversations with people that he encountered. He said that he would to to, what he referred to as cafeterias, and sit down next to someone and try and engage them in conversation. He was distressed and enraged by the frequency with which people would move away from him or in other ways reject what he saw as his friendly advances. Mr Bryant stated that the best part of his international trips was the long plane journey. It transpired that the attraction of the long aeroplane journey was that he could speak to the people next to him, who presumably being strapped to their seats had no choice but to at least appear friendly. Mr Bryant became quite animated in describing some of what he regarded as the more successful interactions with fellow travellers on the journeys to and from Europe and the United States. This account is confirmed by statements obtained by the police from passengers who found themselves seated next to Mr Bryant. Next to the journeys themselves, Mr Bryant listed the sex video shops in Amsterdam as the greatest pleasure he had derived from world travel. He denied using brothels and prostitutes while overseas. Mr Bryant made the majority of this trips to Melbourne where he was fond of riding on the trams and of going to the Zoo.

Mr Bryant's first sexual encounters were with prostitutes and escorts. He apparently paid for an escort every month or so in the years prior to obtaining his inheritance. His first girlfriend was Ms Megiriam. Subsequently he had a relationship with Ms Hoani. This relationship which was a sexual one apparently



was allowed to continue with the knowledge and support of this young girl's family but ended when the young lady began to tire of the arrangements. Mr Bryant's only other girlfriend was Ms Willmot, a young woman of 20 with whom he was having a relationship at the time of the offences. He describes her as far brighter than himself and as someone who is currently pursuing a course in horticulture having failed to be able to find regular employment. They met several times a week and would go to restaurants and the pictures. The relationship was a sexual one and he claimed they had intercourse on a regular basis, the last being on the Friday night prior to the offences. Mr Bryant firmly rejected any suggestion that his relationship with Ms Willmot was becoming strained or in danger of ending at the time of the offences. Mr Bryant described his pleasure in life as watching the television, music and drinking. The music that he most favored was the soundtrack of the Lion King and records made by Cliff Richard. On direct questioning he acknowledged that he spent a considerable amount of time watching videos and going to the pictures. He listed as his favorite film, Babe, and his favourite videos the Steven Segal movie Under Siege and a film called the Protector, which he claimed to have watched at least a dozen times. These latter two videos are of the violent action variety. Mr Bryant was also in the habit of purchasing both erotic magazines and military type magazines about weapons, military tactics, survivalist activities, etc.

Mr Bryant has never been involved in competitive sports though when his father was alive they would regularly go scuba diving together. He has acquired a number of guns by private purchase. He apparently had no difficulty obtaining ammunition for these weapons. He has never acquired a gun license, partly because he was afraid of difficulty answering questions about safe gun usage. He acknowledged a fascination with weapons and demonstrated an extensive knowledge of guns. This interest in guns has been more intense in the last year or so. His access to large amounts of cash enabled him to purchase automatic and semi automatic weapons designed for military use.

### Alcohol and Drug History

Mr Bryant drank alcohol occasionally until the last year or so. During the 12 months prior to the offences his alcohol consumption rapidly increased. He reports that in the six months prior to the tragedy he typically drank every day. He would have his first drink in the morning and then drink more heavily in the afternoon and evening. He was uncertain of the exact quantities that he consumed, but estimated that he would drink half a bottle of sambuca, a considerable part of a bottle of Bailey Irish Cream and would sometimes add to this port and other sweet alcoholic drinks. Mr Bryant reported disturbed sleep in association with his alcohol consumption and occasional intense sense of dehydration. He did not, however, describe early morning shakes, marked amnesias for the the previous day's drinking or particularly intrusive hangovers. He did not report any gastro-intestinal disturbances of the kind often found in alcohol abusers. He said that he drank to fill in the time and to relieve his loneliness. Mr Bryant was not intoxicated at the time of the killings. Mr Bryant reports no use of illicit drugs, specifically denying using cannabis, opiates and amphetamines.

### Mental State

Mr Bryant's use of language showed the limitations in vocabulary one would expect from someone of low intelligence, but nonetheless there was a reasonable degree of fluency and on most occasions, a clarity in his use of language. Occasionally he would misuse words or mispronounce words, but these errors reflect ignorance rather than a disorder in the use of language. There were occasional sudden switches in the direction of Mr Bryant's discourse, but again, I suspect these reflect the changeability of someone of limited intellect who is easily distracted by irrelevant or chance circumstance.

Mr Bryant's mood was predominantly anxious and on occasion, frankly distressed. The changes in his mood were appropriate on most occasions to the content of the conversation. The occasional apparent emotional incongruity, I suspect, reflected the shallowness of Mr Bryant's understanding and capacity for sympathy.

Mr Bryant initially denied that he suffers from any depression or lowered mood. He attempted to portray himself prior to the incident as a cheerful individual whose pleasure in life was only frustrated by the unfriendliness and unsociability of his fellow humans. Later in the interview Mr Bryant became more frank. He talked of the extent to which he thinks about the distress and the rejections in the past. He said that he tries to live day by day, but acknowledges that frequently thoughts about past rejections, and what he recalls as his victimisation at school by bullies, intrude. He has become more caught up in these thoughts about past indignities over the last year. He said he became increasingly unhappy and angry because he had no real friends. He said "all I wanted was for people to like me". Their failure to respond to his overtures led him to feel "that I'd had a gutfull". This culminated in the months before the tragedy in a sense that there was no future for him, that he would always remain lonely and rejected and that he would be better off dead.

Mr Bryant does report a degree of sleep disturbance in the months prior to the killings. It was difficult to characterise this, but it seemed to be a combination of difficulty getting off to sleep, sleep disturbed by nightmares and occasional early morning waking. He does not however report any decrease in appetite or an interest in his usual pleasure and pursuits. There has been no decrease in his libido. The picture that emerges was not suggestive of a depressive illness. It was a pattern more reminiscent of an angry and distressed man having increasing difficulties coping with his social isolation and his various disappointments. Nevertheless in this context Mr Bryant came to the conclusion that life for him was not worth living. He began to consider suicide for the first time about a year ago. He said "about 12 months ago I decided I'd had enough". The thoughts of suicide became more prominent in recent months.

Mr Bryant acknowledged that he has always been somewhat self conscious and shy. He has throughout his adult life felt as if people looked at him in the street, talked about him behind his back and laughed at him. He feels that they make derogatory comments about his appearance and how he is dressed. This, in recent years, has been combined with a conviction that people wanted to hurt or harm him. He sometimes believes that particular individuals he sees in the street are bent on physically attacking him. These sensitive and persecutory ideas are not organised into any system of belief that there is a plot aimed against him. It amounts to a degree of oversensitivity and a general conviction in the malevolence of others rather than being suggestive of delusions of persecution.

Mr Bryant has believed for a number of years that the house he occupies is haunted. His main evidence for this haunting is, what he describes as "the vibes in the house". He has also on occasion, heard various noises, particularly at night, which he has interpreted as the ghosts moving around. These on the face of it appear to be the kind of bumps and bangs to which large empty houses are prone. Mr Bryant believes that the ghosts are the ghosts of two women, one of whom he suspects is Miss Harvey. He does not necessarily believe that these ghosts intend him any harm, but he is nevertheless frightened when alone in the house and these thoughts occur to him.

Mr Bryant describes, on rare occasions, hearing what he believes to be the voices of two women which he presumes are the ghosts speaking. These are brief episodes when he hears the voices saying short phrases such as "come on" or "here". This, he believes, has occurred two or three times in the last six months. It usually occurs when he is in bed or alone in the house at night. It arises in the context of his

fear of ghosts. These brief hallucinatory experiences are not in my opinion of any pathological significance and do not indicate a serious mental illness.

Mr Bryant gave no description suggestive of ideas of reference in that he does not believe that he has ever received messages coded or otherwise from the television or radio. He did describe feeling moved by radio programs to travel but this seemed indicative of impulsivity rather than of abnormal mental experiences.

Mr Bryant did not describe any phobias, generalised anxiety of an abnormal degree, or panic attacks. There was nothing to suggest that he suffers from obsessional symptoms. He does not have obsessive or eccentric concerns with any topics or activities. He does show, however, considerable persistence with regard to his resentments and anger about real or imagined insults many of which date back into his childhood. He also has a rigidity of character favoring the repetition of the familiar where possible and tending, once decided on a course of action, to persist in that plan almost irrespective of the effects on others or himself.

Mr Bryant's general level of intellectual functioning is low. There was at the time I examined him nothing to suggest that he was disoriented or that his consciousness was in any way disturbed.

### The Offences

Mr Bryant in the early parts of the interview referred to the tragic events at Port Arthur as "the accident". He claimed to have no memory of these events nor to have any memory for what may have led up to the shootings. The only account he provided was of waylaying the occupants of a BMW and then claiming to have driven this car at high speed. Later in the interview, perhaps as a result of becoming more trustful, he provided an account which at least in part may be relevant to the events. This account provided to me on the 4 May has later been confirmed and expanded in Mr Bryant's statements.

Mr Bryant began by acknowledging "since I lost Miss Harvey things have slipped back on me, I just felt more people were against me. When I tried to be friendly toward them, they just walked away". He also became more caught up in ruminating on memories of slights and insults from the past. He said he began to think about these things a great deal and began to go over in his mind how he could get even. Initially he said he said he thought about strangling someone who was unfriendly to him, but then his thoughts turned to "shooting them". Mr Bryant said "I thought guns would be better, the more power, the better". Mr Bryant at this point began to talk about his various guns, in particular, a machine gun which he took to be repaired in March or February. I asked him whether he had intended to use this weapon, but he informed me that this type of gun is "too unstable". He happily discussed the virtues of various semi-automatic versus fully automatic guns.

He stated that about a year ago he decided he had "had enough". He was unsure exactly when the plan came to him for the massacre at Port Arthur. He said that he thought the plan first occurred to him a few weeks prior to the tragic events. When pressed he thought it might be either 4 or as long as 12 weeks ago that this first occurred. When asked why he selected Port Arthur he responded "a lot of violence has happened there, it must be the most violent place in Australia; it seemed the right place".

Mr Bryant spoke of this longstanding resentment against Mr and Mrs Martin. He described them as "very mean people" and as "the worse people in my life". The basis for this antipathy appears to be Mr Bryant's belief that Mr Martin bought the property which they occupied at their death with the expressed

intention of preventing his father from buying the same property. Mr Bryant appears to believe that this event broke his father's heart and led to the downfall of this family. It appears that this was indeed a family myth about their misfortunes and according to Mrs Bryant her late husband would often complain to Martin Bryant of the damage to the family inflicted by what was viewed as the double dealing of the Martin family.

Mr Bryant assumed that when he began shooting at Port Arthur he would himself be shot down. He stated in one interview "my power, so powerful and the guns and these magazines filled with bullets, I could just go bang, bang, bang". This plan to kill Mr and Mrs Martin and then proceed to Port Arthur appears initially to have been elaborated following the break up of Mr Bryant's relationship with Ms Hoani at a time when he was particularly despondent about his situation and his future. Although with the initiation of the relationship with Ms Willmot his mood improved and his suicidal preoccupations disappeared, nonetheless this dreadful plan appears to have been persisted with and eventually to have been put into awful practice.

I did not pursue with Mr Bryant any account of the actual killings as these can sadly be all too readily reconstructed from eyewitnesses and police investigations.

## Opinion

Mr Bryant is of limited intellectual ability, his measured IQ lying in the borderline intellectually disabled range. He does however function reasonably well in the community and has a degree of charm and of guile which enables him to perform in many areas at a far higher level than might be expected from his performance on IQ tests. The level of Mr Bryant's intellectual difficulties do raise at least a question about his fitness to plead. I discussed with Mr Bryant the nature of a trial and the various roles of the members of the court. He had a clear idea of the role of his legal representative, explaining it as someone to help him and speak for him. He had a rough idea of the function of a Judge. He knew what a Jury was, but was uncertain about its exact role. He could however easily understand when this was explained to him and when asked about it, an hour or so later, was able to give a reasonable account of the nature and function of a Jury. Mr Bryant knew what it meant to be guilty and to be not guilty. He was aware that there were things called crimes and those who are found guilty might be liable to punishment. He had a clear notion that there are rights and wrongs. In my opinion therefore this man is fit to plead, though he may require a little more assistance and a little more time in coping with the legal process than would a more intellectually able accused.

Mr Bryant has been a socially isolated and odd man throughout his childhood and later life. He has had considerable difficulty forming normal relationships with those of his own age. The social ostracism he suffered at school, and social rejection that has been his lot in adult life, have left him lonely, distressed and deeply resentful. He became so unhappy in the last year or so as to begin contemplating suicide. There must be some question when someone reaches this level of despair about whether a depressive illness has intervened. This possibility in Mr Bryant's case must be taken particularly seriously given the family history of such disorders. The description that Mr Bryant provides, however, of his state of mind and of his behavior does not support a depressive illness. His appetite and libido were not disturbed. He was constantly despondent but only intermittently unhappy. There were no thoughts of guilt and worthlessness, but rather the reverse, thoughts of how illused he had been and how unfair the world had been to him. In my opinion this was an angry, lonely and despondent man who came to contemplate suicide not one suffering from a depressive illness.



Mr Bryant describes some odd experiences and beliefs with regard to the house he lives in being haunted. These, in my opinion, are the produce of a simple man who copes poorly with being left alone in a large, empty house. In my opinion though there were probably occasionally brief hallucinatory experiences, these taken in context are not indicative of serious mental illness.

Mr Bryant was an oversensitive individual who attributed aggression and malevolence to many of those around him. This in my opinion is not as a result of persecutory delusions or of morbid experiences, but a product of the very real rejection and distain which Mr Bryant has experienced through much of his life, largely as a result of his intellectual limitation and his peculiarities of personality. Mr Bryant is a selfabsorbed individual, with a markedly egocentric view of the world. He has high expectations of others and a sense of entitlement which are both constantly being disappointed. The disappointment of his hopes is usually explained by Mr Bryant in terms of the insensitivity and illwill of others.

In my opinion though Mr Bryant was clearly a distressed and disturbed young man he was not mentally ill. There is no evidence to support the notion that this man has a schizophrenic illness. The use of this diagnostic term in association with Mr Bryant by Dr Mather and Dr McCartney was based on the report of Mrs Bryant who had clearly misunderstood the opinion of Dr Cunningham-Dax. She had come to the conclusion that her son had been diagnosed with this condition. Neither Dr Sale, Dr Lucas nor myself found evidence in Mr Bryant of his ever having had schizophrenia. Similarly, in my opinion, he does not have evidence for a major depressive disorder. There was no other in his history to suggest that he has ever been manic.

Dr Sale, in his report of the 6 August 1996, indicates that in his opinion Mr Bryant manifested severe developmental problems during childhood and that he could be regarded as having shown a mixture of conduct disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity and a rare condition known as Asperger's Syndrome. I am in agreement with Dr Sale that the records indicate that Mr Bryant was grossly disturbed from early childhood. He can certainly be fitted within the criteria for conduct disorder, but all this amounts to in the diagnostic manual is a list of a range of aggressive destructive and deceitful behaviors during childhood and as such does not advance understanding to any degree. Asperger's Syndrome is a condition which could explain some of the abnormalities in Mr Bryant and in noting this possibility Dr Sale raises a potentially important question. The section from the text on Forensic Psychiatry concerning Asperger's Syndrome appended to his report by Dr Sale though providing a good account of the forensic implications does not adequately describe the critical clinical features (as one of the authors of the chapter I can perhaps be allowed this criticism). Mr Bryant craves the attention of others. He desires relationships but fails to effectively communicate with others unlike the patients with Asperger's who are blandly indifferent to others. Mr Bryant also lacks, in my opinion, the central features of this condition which are repetitive activities, unusual skills with all absorbing obsessive interests and problems with motor coordination. He also showed marked delay in the acquisition of language skills and required remedial therapy for this language deficit which is contrary to the picture found in those with Asperger's Syndrome.

The enormity of Mr Bryant's crimes call out for some explanation equally dramatic and extraordinary. It is not to be wondered at that the media have either attempted to portray Mr Bryant as afflicted by a dramatic mental illness, such as schizophrenia, or to be some kind of evil genius. In my opinion the origins of this terrible tragedy are not to be found in a single dramatic and sufficient cause, but in the interaction and combination of a range of influences and events. We may never know fully the intentions and state of mind which led to the killings, but a number of the contributions are apparent.

Mr Bryant is an intellectually limited man who from early childhood showed marked impairment in his capacity to cope with interpersonal and social relationships. He responded to frustrations with aggression toward others and towards property. From an early age his behavior was characterised by an unfortunate tendency to take delight in the discomfort of others and in the tormenting of people and creatures weaker than himself. This probably reflected in part the struggles of a child who felt buffeted and helpless in the face of the demands of the world and who sought to gain some sense of power, and restore some sense of self-esteem, through ridiculing and hurting others. Mr Bryant received considerable support from his father and there are indications in the record during his later adolescence that a degree of stability and more effective social integration was beginning to emerge in this young man. The relationship with Ms Harvey for all its eccentric features probably added to Mr Bryant's increasing sense of having some place in the world. The death first of Ms Harvey and then the suicide of his father stripped away from Mr Bryant the two main sources of support and stability in his life. The acquisition of a level of wealth, which even with the intercession of the Public Trustees was beyond Mr Bryant's capacity to comprehend, let alone manage, may well have contributed to the subsequent increasing disorganisation in his existence, rather than forming a basis for stability as presumably had been hoped by Ms Harvey and his father when they bequeathed him this wealth.

One troubling characteristic of Mr Bryant which was apparent in our interview, and is attested by a number of the statements, is his capacity to entertain grudges and to keep alive resentments about real or imagined injuries over long periods of time. The family myth about how Mr and Mrs Martin had blighted the hopes of his father appears to have become a central element in Mr Bryant's understanding of the world and of his resentment against others. Mr Joblin, in his interviews with Mr Bryant, uncovered a number of childhood memories of being, in Mr Bryant's eyes, humiliated by staff at Port Arthur. These trivial events in combination with the longstanding resentment of Mr and Mrs Martin may have been enough to give the specific direction to Mr Bryant's explosion of resentment against the world. The specific plan to kill the Martins and to proceed to Port Arthur to engage in a general slaughter appears to have emerged some months prior to its terrible realisation. At the time Mr Bryant was isolated and despairing. The improvement in his life situation and the establishing of the new relationship with Ms Willmot, one would have expected to have deflected him from this dreadful plan. In the event it appears that it is the rigidity in Mr Bryant's character which led to the activating of his plans hatched when despairing but carried out when his actual circumstances had greatly improved. Mr Bryant stated in one of his interviews that "it was set in my mind, it was just set that Sunday ... I wasn't worried about losing my property or never seeing my girlfriend again, it was just in my mind to go down and kill the Martins and kill a lot of people".

Mr Bryant's limited intellectual capacities and equally importantly his limited capacity for empathy or imaging the feelings and responses of others left a terrible gap in his sensibilities which enabled him not only to contemplate mass destruction, but to carry it through. There also has to be acknowledged that Mr Bryant took delight and gained excitement from tormenting others. This reaction of the frightened child to their own sense of powerlessness emerged in the adult as the desire to assert himself through the killing and maiming of others. He was an individual capable of taking delight not only in the fantasies of such destruction but, in the event, to delight in acting out these dreadful daydreams. There is in Mr Bryant an apparent sense of guilt, albeit truncated about his actions, but equally, on occasion, he almost revels in the memories of his awful acts.

Mr Bryant often experiences fear and a sense of inadequacy when confronted by other people. In part he compensated for this sense of weakness through a fascination with weapons and through the possession of weapons. With his ready money came access to weapons of enormous potential power for destruction.

The obsessive concern with weapons and the exhilaration he attained from handling and using guns added yet another element to the tragic mix.

It would be more satisfactory if one could point to some simple and direct cause of the tragedy at Port Arthur. This would not only help all of us in our attempts to make sense of this national disaster, it might at least raise the hopes of preventing a recurrence. Understanding of these tragic events in terms of a complex interaction between a number of abnormalities of mental state, personality deviations and a series of chance events, all finding a dreadful expression thanks to the availability of powerful weapons for killing, is less satisfactory and perhaps less useful, but in my opinion comes closer to describing the elements that went into making this tragedy.

Mr Bryant currently does not have the signs and symptoms of a mental illness. He is, however, by virtue of his personality and intellectual limitations both of reduced coping ability and of increased psychological vulnerability. It is possible that under the combined stress of lengthy incarceration and of having to live with the memories and consequences of his awful acts that he may, in the future, break down into frank mental illness. It will be necessary to continually monitor his state of mind during his future containment and initiate appropriate treatment if, and when, it is required.

[signed]

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