

Two sides of the teen shot dead by police

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IN the hours after her 15-year-old son was shot dead by police, Shani Cassidy piled his clothes on to the bed.

There she surrounded herself with the smell of him as she lay exhausted and distraught

"*I have never cried so much as I cried that night,*" she said in the fourth and final statement she made to police earlier this month, 22 months after his death, and read to the Victorian Coroner's Court yesterday. "*My son was dead.*"

Two strikingly divergent representations of Tyler Cassidy have been made to the court.

Police have sought to portray him as a boy with an explosive temper, deeply disturbed by the death of his father four years earlier, unable to control his anger, expelled from his school, with a propensity for arming himself with knives when he was angry and a member of a skinhead group.

In her evidence yesterday, **Ms Cassidy described her son as a normal teenager and a typical 15-year-old, who was upset by the death of his father who was his "hero and inspiration", who was remorseful when his anger got the better of him, but who was also chivalrous and protective.**

His older brother, Blake, who tried desperately to contact him in the moments before he was shot, told the court yesterday he **did not recognise his brother in the descriptions contained in many media reports.** "*He was just a good kid,*" he said.

But Ms Cassidy told the court that when Tyler returned home at about 8.40pm on December 11, 2008, the night he died, he was upset and angry. "*I had never seen him so upset before,*" she said. He had been drinking, **he had blood on his knuckles and elbow and his shirt was shredded.**

In one of her earlier statements she described him as "*boiling and furious*" and recalled him saying, "*I'm messed up, my brain's f. . . ked*". He took two knives from the kitchen, which she retrieved before he left the house.

Ms Cassidy told the court yesterday that **when the family reached the scene of the shooting, police did not tell her that Tyler had been dead for two hours.**