

# Shot teen Tyler Cassidy a member of 'white pride' group

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**3:32pm UPDATE:** TYLER Cassidy joined the "white pride" anti-immigration group Southern Cross Soldiers four months ago.

Members of the Southern Cross Soldiers, who admit having criminals and neo-Nazis in their ranks, are among those who have left tributes to 15-year-old Tyler Cassidy on his MySpace page.

Tyler [died after being shot in the chest by three police officers](#) in a skatepark at the All Nations park near the Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre.

[A witness to the shooting, Hariet Stewart, said she heard seven shots fired.](#)

One of those who knew him, and attests to his violent temper, told the Herald Sun that unless the police shot Tyler, he would have made good on his threat to kill the officer.

Tyler fell in with the wrong crowd and had befriended a group of skinheads, the former friend said.

He said Tyler was known for his sporadic violence, but other than an assault charge had no significant criminal history.

"Minor things such as randomly attacking people he did not like the look of or acting tough and starting fights with anyone he could," the former associate said.

"He was always angry and after trying to help him out for longer than anyone else I know more than anyone I know he was beyond help.

"His poor mother would always try to help him and do her best as a parent and he would only ever respond with anger and hatred towards her.

"Since he joined the SCS and started hanging out some mates he called "skinhead mates" he started drinking excessively and getting much more violent.

"The officers that shot him most definitely had good reason with the way he was and if they didnt do what they did he wouldnt have stopped."

The Northcote location where he was shot - The All Nations Park - appears to have been a gathering ground for like-minded racists, possibly because of its name.

A sticker for the Creativity Movement - another white supremacist group - is plastered beneath the All Nations sign. Similar stickers have been bobbing up throughout Melbourne.

The Southern Cross Soldiers Brisbane wrote on Tyler's MySpace page: "R.I.P Tyler Cassidy, Fallen SCS we ae(sic) going to miss U heaps brother"

"Greatly missed and forever rememberd(sic) ... we will live on so that ur(sic) memory lives on"

SCS member Gazza wrote on his MySpace page: "honour and pride forever my brother. smile upon us favourably up in Heaven. much love my little brother."

Today Tyler's distraught family described their heartache at the death of their "beautiful boy".

They claim a witness can confirm the boy was "pursued to the skate park, surrounded and hunted down".

But police insist they did everything they could to avoiding shooting the youth dead.

Assistant Commissioner Tim Cartwright said the youth could not be subdued by two bouts of capicum spray and continued to advance towards four officers with a pair of knives as a warning shot was fired into the ground.

Tyler, from Northcote, was shot dead by police last night at a Northcote skate park after up to seven shots were fired by three officers at the All Nations park, near the Northcote Shopping Plaza.

His [family released a statement this afternoon](#) lamenting the loss of Tyler "in the prime of his life".

The family said Tyler had just started at a new school and was a "popular student with high expectations and a good network of friends".

They said they were appalled at the actions of police.

"Their heavy-handedness, and lack of negotiating skills at the scene of the shooting, contributed to the untimely death of our beautiful 15 year old," the statement said.

"We look forward to a serious and thorough investigation and inquest into why Tyler was killed and to the serious nature of the attending officers' actions.

"It should have been dealt with differently and more compassionately, but tragically resulted in Tyler's death that should have been avoided. "

Police said Tyler yelled: "Kill me, I'm going to kill you," as officers warned him to put down his weapons and capsicum spray twice failed to subdue him.

Police today rejected family claims they were "trigger happy" after the teenager's

death.

Police say Tyler had threatened them with kitchen knives stolen from a Kmart store before they were forced to fire.

Ms Stewart, 29, who lives close to the All Nations Park in Northcote where the shooting happened, was walking home from the shops when she saw the teen running around carrying two knives.

"I'm not easily scared and I quickly went into hiding myself, having seen him, but he was just a kid," she said.

"From what I could tell, he looked like he was either incredibly angry or on ice or something.

"I thought perhaps he had a vendetta."

Police have strongly defended their handling of the drama and said they were left with no choice.

"I don't believe that police are trigger-happy," Assistant Commissioner Tim Cartwright told reporters this morning.

"This is a dreadful tragedy to lose a young man, both for police and the community."

The entire incident took less than three minutes to unfold, but police had done everything possible to avoid his death, he said.

"They've ultimately had no choice," Mr Cartwright said.

He said this morning that a female constable from Preston was among three members who fired their guns. The others were a leading senior constable and a senior constable from Northcote.

Police have refused to say whether the use of tasers might have saved Mr Cassidy's life, but their [union has renewed calls for permission to use the devices](#).

Mr Cartwright said police followed training that taught them to aim for the "central body mass" of an attacker.

"In the movies you can shoot to disarm people, but that's not what happens in our experience," he said.

He also discounted suggestions Tyler was on drugs or mentally disturbed, saying he had no information to support those claims.

He did confirm the boy was in trouble with police for a minor assault.

He revealed one of the police officers was apparently backed into a stairway at the height of the drama as he tried to calm the situation, before the officer and others

opened fire.

"The suggestion is that he backed off and he came to the stairs where he couldn't back off any further.

He said Mr Cassidy was apparently yelling "Kill me, I'm going to kill you," as officers warned him to put down his weapons.

Officers involved in the shooting were still being interviewed by the homicide squad 12 hours after the incident, as authorities launched a probe into the handling of the incident.