

Police hit with death threats

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Staff writers

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TYLER Cassidy's fatal showdown with police was only days after the anniversary of his father's death, which had upset the troubled teen.

Tyler was armed with two knives when he was shot dead by police on Thursday night at All Nations Park behind [Northcote Plaza](#) shopping centre.

Now police have been bombarded with death threats and abused by angry youths in a rally outside Northcote police station.

Friends and family said yesterday that Tyler, 15, never recovered from the loss of his father, Ian, four years ago.

December 1 was the anniversary of Ian Cassidy's death from cancer - the man Tyler Cassidy listed on his MySpace page as his hero.

A teen friend said he knew the boy was struggling with a family issue, but he rejected suggestions he would ever hurt anyone.

"He wasn't like that, he was just having a s--- time," the friend said.

"It was the anniversary of his dad's death . . . and he wasn't coping very well, understandably."

Tyler's distraught mother, Shani Cassidy, said her husband's death had a huge impact on her youngest son. They had been inseparable.

"I have now not only had to bury my husband at such a young age, but now I have to bury my youngest child beside him," she said.

Tyler's uncle, Paul, said his nephew was "with his dad".

"This is a boy who lay for two hours on his father's body, begging him to wake up," he said.

As police and coronial inquiries continued yesterday, it was revealed:

TYLER was shot six times, including two shots in the leg.

POLICE refused to reveal whether the four officers involved in the deadly stand-off with Tyler knew Mrs Cassidy had phoned Northcote police station 30 minutes earlier, telling them about her "highly agitated" son and asking them to look out for him.

"On the night my son was killed he came home upset and left home upset," Mrs Cassidy said, referring to apparent trouble Tyler had been involved in on a train.

"I called the police 30 minutes before the incident and gave them a full description of my son's appearance, his age and in which direction he was heading and I also gave them my contact details to call me if they found him.

"That did not happen."

Acting Sgt Wendy Willingham said the matter would form part of the investigation and coronial inquiry.

Acting Sgt Willingham also said counselling had been offered to the four police officers who were involved in the stand-off with Tyler, as part of normal procedures.

Police sources said the officers involved were devastated. They said all four officers were parents.

Two male officers from Northcote and two female officers from Preston were involved in the shooting, which came after Tyler was twice doused with capsicum foam.

Three of the four officers fired their guns.

Mrs Cassidy, her son Blake at her side, and Tyler's step-father Greg Taylor lending silent support nearby, said the fair-haired, blue-eyed teen was "talkative, loved, opinionated and he would always stand up for himself".

"He was a great debater, knowledgeable, social and loving," she said.

She denied he was a member of a white supremacist gang, the Southern Cross Soldiers, who have been claiming the teenager as a member.

"Accusations that he was involved in a nationalistic group are far fetched," she said.

"He was a 15-year-old boy, his views still developing.

"He attended a multi-cultural school. Many of Tyler's friends have come to my house in tears. They are of all nationalities and we are all grieving."

The family was struggling to understand what sparked Tyler's violent confrontation.

"Something triggered my son to act the way he did on the night he was killed," she said.

"I do not know why he had a knife, but I can say in the honesty of my heart that my son was not a violent person.

"He would not of his own accord leave this house to cause harm. Something has fuelled his actions."

A stream of family, friends and neighbours arrived at the Zoe Circuit home yesterday to pay their respects.

Mrs Cassidy held back tears as she read from a statement at her home.

A Christmas tree and presents stood in the corner of the living room, the harrowing reality of a festive season shattered by tragedy.

- David Hastie, Ellen Whinnett, Shannon Deery and Liam Houlihan