



The children's father, Aaron Cockman (on May 13), who was raised by Jehovah's Witnesses, "was very forgiving of the whole situation," friend Ray Worrall tells WHO. "I take my hat off to him."

Police investigated the crime scene in Osmington, WA, on May 12. "This will be a very large-scale and detailed investigation," said WA Police Commissioner Chris Dawson.

## MARGARET RIVER MASSACRE

# A SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

*Does a troubled past hold the key to the murders of six members of a 'beautiful' family on a WA farm?*



Katrina Miles with her children (from left), Rylan, Taye, Kadyne and Arye. "She was a beautiful mum," says Janice Morris.

**'I'LL MISS HER HUGS'**

On their farm, the eco-friendly Miles family "would grow most of their food so they didn't have to buy much," says friend Janice Morris. And they always welcomed visitors. "I'll miss Cynda's hugs," says Morris.



Peter Miles (at a son's wedding in 2016). "I've never seen Peter in a rage," says Morris.



Cynda ran a small business making bags and other craft.

**W**hen his daughter's marriage broke down, West Australian grandfather Peter Miles got busy. Living with his wife, Cynda, on a "hobby farm" in Margaret River, a region prized worldwide for its stunning beaches and lush vineyards, the handyman transformed their shed into a sanctuary for daughter Katrina's four young children, all of whom had autism and were

home-schooled by their mum. According to the family's long-time friend Janice Morris, eldest son Rylan also suffered a disorder that often left him in crippling pain. "Peter built them an area for a school room on the property," Morris, 81, tells WHO. "They all had their own bedrooms. He made a bathroom, so if Rylan got too bad, it could be used with wheelchair access. He built the most beautiful cubbyhouse for granddaughter Taye. You couldn't find anyone better than Peter. He built them a little house."

But on May 11, for reasons that are an impenetrable mystery to all who knew him, police believe Peter Miles turned that haven into a scene of unthinkable horror. Early that Friday police arrived at the

farm in Osmington, 20km east of Margaret River, to find all members of the family slain in a horrific act of violence that has sent shock waves through the nation. Katrina, 35, and her children—daughter Taye, 13, and sons Rylan, 12, Arye, 10, and Kadyne, 8—were found dead inside the converted shed, while Cynda was found in the main home. Three firearms registered to Peter, 61, were found on the property dubbed "Forever Dreaming Farm," now the scene of Australia's worst mass shooting since the Port Arthur massacre. It is believed the gunman alerted police to the slaughter before turning the gun on himself. "They were all caring, loving people," says Morrison. "Nobody will ever understand it."

Desperate for answers, the children's grieving father, Aaron Cockman, paid tribute to his slain kids on May 13. Cockman was estranged from wife Katrina, had been on bad terms with her parents—and had been battling for access to his children for the past six months. "Taye is a beautiful girl, Arye—just an amazing kid," said Cockman, who last saw his children

"two weekends" ago, when he took them to see the movie *Avengers: Infinity War* before they all went to a park. "Just seeing Rylan and Kat walk off while the other two kids were on the little roundabout—that's the last time I saw them."

Two weeks later they were gone—without suffering, says Cockman. While at press time police had not released details of how the killing unfolded nor officially named the suspect, Cockman has revealed his children died in their beds—including the youngest, Kadyne, who had still been sleeping with his mum and was found cuddled up alongside her. "All the kids died peacefully," says Cockman, a carpenter. "The [officer] that went through and saw the kids, he's got kids himself, and he said, 'Aaron, I'm telling you straight up, they looked all peaceful.'"

Having also killed Cynda, the gunman called police at 5.15 AM in a conversation that lasted two minutes. When officers arrived, he was found dead outside. "Peter didn't snap," speculated Cockman, who said his father-in-law had once been like a "best

friend" to him. "He's thought this through."

But according to Janice Morris, a previous family tragedy could hold the key to the massacre. Peter, who had recently been looking for work as a handyman through website Gumtree, had been suffering since the loss of one of his three sons to suicide 15 years ago. "Peter had a breakdown," Morris, who met Cynda through a local quilting group, tells WHO. "He was having counselling and treatment for depression. Peter had just come to the thought that he was useless and he was in a bad place."

Further, his son Neil, 31, had been suffering a life-threatening kidney ailment and was awaiting a transplant. "I thought, 'If something happens to Neil, [Katrina] will not be able to lose another brother,'" said Cockman. "But I didn't think about Peter." Even so, adds Morris, "why it went this far and got this bad, I don't know."

**"He was having counselling and treatment for depression"**

—Janice Morris

Just as heartbroken and confounded is Stephanie Rozendaal, who knew Peter and Cynda for 30 years and tells WHO that Katrina and her father had a unique bond. "It remained through the years," she says. "Her kids had the same effect on both Cynda and Peter, bringing them happiness and joy."

For Morris, one nightly ritual sums up the man she adored, and who is now the focus of a multiple homicide investigation. Each night, Peter would go to Rylan and comfort him as he struggled to settle. "Who do you know that would go down and cradle his autistic grandson in bed every night because he was in so much pain—and talk to him until he had gone to sleep?" she says. "He was the most loving, gentle man you could meet. That's why we can't fathom what happened. It's just such a shock."

■ *By Melenie Ambrose and Michael Crooks*  
**Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14**



Police at the scene on May 11. "It's a shocking, awful tragedy," said WA Premier Mark McGowan.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: AAP (3); FACEBOOK (3)