

Father retraces last steps of daughter killed by soccer goalposts

By Ellen Connolly, August 24, 2004



India Verity

William Verity has made a reluctant - and heart-wrenching - return to a suburban soccer field where he joined a coroner in watching a re-enactment of his daughter's death.

India, aged three, died on June 28 last year when a portable goalpost at Moss Vale toppled onto her as she walked alongside her mother, Caroline, during a family soccer day.

The 180 kilogram steel frame, which was not pegged down, crushed her tiny body, causing severe head injuries.

Yesterday, at the first day of the inquest into her death, the coroner was told authorities had failed to follow safety guidelines introduced by the world soccer federation and the State Government.

The Department of Fair Trading introduced guidelines in 1999 after an inquest into the death of Denis Malbasa, 10, at Bonnyrigg.

But Detective Glenn Lillie, who investigated India's death, said that these guidelines had not been followed. He said Wingecarribee Shire Council had received at least three warnings from the Local Government and Shire associations advising it of the dangers of portable goalposts.

But, Detective Lillie said, it appeared the council had taken little action, and neither had Moss Vale Soccer Club.

During a reconstruction Detective Lillie "used his index finger" to tip over the goalposts.

A witness, Stephen Manson, said he released India's mother from the nets, then realised she had a small child in her arms.

Detective Lillie said: "He rolled the child over and saw blood. The child was breathing, but shallow and gurgling. He checked for a pulse but was unable to locate one."

Ian Campbell, who organised the family soccer day, said he was aware that the posts had to be pegged down or the council would confiscate them.

Thomas Bates, of Soccer Australia, said the international federation introduced a new law to the official rules in 1996.

Mr Verity said: "It's not going to bring back our daughter, but we hope [the inquest] will prevent children dying and being injured on soccer fields by portable soccer posts in the future."

The inquest continues.