



Claremont: A Killer Among Us

When girls started going missing from Claremont, one of the wealthiest and safest suburbs in Australia, it sent shockwaves through Perth. Nobody had any idea what was going on. Then, bodies started being discovered... This was the start of Australia's longest running, biggest and most expensive manhunt. Yet for over 20 years, the perpetrator managed to hide in plain sight. How was he able to escape justice for so long? Through exclusive interviews with surviving victims, former police detectives, journalists, criminologists and the officers who sensationally cracked the case, we tell the inside story of the Claremont investigation, right up to its dramatic conclusion.

On Australia Day 1996, 18-year-old Sarah Spiers left Club Bayview in Claremont's popular nightlife strip. She walked to a nearby phone box and called a cab. By the time it arrived just minutes later, she was not there. Sarah was never seen alive again. Her disappearance marked the start of Australia's longest running and most expensive police investigation.

Five months later, another young woman, Jane Rimmer, disappeared. The circumstances were strikingly similar. Jane had been out with friends in Claremont and was last seen on CCTV talking to a man outside the Continental Hotel. Nobody knew what happened next. Her body was discovered by chance in bushland south of Perth. Police had no idea who the culprit was, but the discovery of a body presented forensic opportunities.

GENRE
Crime and Investigation

DURATION
3 x 60' / 2 x 90

BROADCASTER
Network 10

PRODUCER
Barking Mad Productions

YEAR OF PRODUCTION
2022

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SERIES OVERVIEW

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Then, in March 1997, Ciara Glennon, a 27-year-old lawyer, disappeared. She too had been out with friends at the Continental Hotel. After leaving the pub, she walked down Stirling Highway, presumably looking for a ride home. A witness spotted a car stop next to her and Ciara leant in the window to talk to the driver. When the witness looked back, the car and Ciara had gone. The discovery of her body 17 days later confirmed what everybody feared – a serial killer was on the loose in Perth.

Huge resources were poured into the case. At its peak, several hundred police officers were assigned to the investigation. Thousands of people who were in Claremont on the nights the women disappeared were interviewed. But the investigation turned up nothing. Then, the police had a breakthrough. They homed in on a man who had been driving around Claremont at night, often passing the same women dozens of times. His name was Lance Williams. He became the prime suspect and was under police surveillance for years. But by 2004, the police still didn't have the evidence to charge him.

The case appeared to have gone cold. To try and uncover new leads, a team of independent experts conducted a review. One of their recommendations was to pursue new forensic opportunities. Back in the 90s, when the crimes occurred, DNA testing was in its infancy, and it was discovered that material from under the fingernails of Ciara Glennon had never been tested. The samples were considered too small at the time and were put in storage. In 2009, the fingernails were sent to the UK, at the time a world leader in DNA technology. There was a result. The police now had the DNA of profile of the killer. They discovered it matched the DNA profile from the perpetrator of a brutal rape in Karrakatta Cemetery in 1995, a year before Sarah went missing. But that crime remained unsolved, and the police still didn't have a name.