

News

Somerton Man's body could still be exhumed

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EXHUMING the Somerton Man – a move opposed by the State Government – could happen under a Liberal government.

Shadow attorney-general Stephen Wade has given a strong hint that the Liberals, if elected in March, would dig up the body of the mystery man found dead on Somerton Beach on December 1, 1948.

“Any incoming Liberal attorney-general would need to be briefed on the matter, but my reading of the case is it’s just the sort of case the exhuming processes are designed for,” he said.

“On the one hand it’s a cold case and on the other hand it involves issues of paternity.

“It looks like a prima facie case or reasonable case (justifying exhumation).” The Sunday Mail revealed last weekend that **Adelaide** woman Rachael Egan, who believes she may be the granddaughter of SomertonMan, wants his body exhumed in a bid to prove any paternal links.

Ms Egan is the daughter of Robin Thomson, a former ballet dancer, who is believed to be the child of the Somerton Man and **Adelaide** nurse Jessica Thomson – a suspected Russian spy who may have had a hand in his mysterious death.

Attorney-General John Rau has rejected requests to dig up the body, saying he was “not convinced that I have been presented with sufficient reasons”. Two inquests into the Somerton Man’s death were inconclusive.

The man, a suspected spy, was embalmed and buried at West Tce Cemetery in 1949. **Adelaide** University physicist **Derek Abbott**, an expert on the case, said recovering the body would allow him to compare the teeth against dental records and to do a bone isotope test, which looks at every atom in the bone and which would pinpoint his country of origin.

“In this case it would be a very powerful tool in trying to find out who he is,” he said.

Prof Abbott also wants to extract DNA to check on an international database in the hope it can be matched against relatives here and overseas.

He believes Robin Thomson and the Somerton Man could be related as they share a unique dental quirk. They also share a similar ear shape.

Jessica Thomson died in 2007 from a brain embolism, aged 86. Robin, 62, died from cancer two years later. Mr Rau – who in July 2011 rejected a similar application by Prof Abbott – said in a statement he was seeking advice on the latest request, but would approve exhumation only where “circumstances were more than just public curiosity”. “I have not received a request for exhumation from SAPOL or the Coroner regarding this matter,” he said.

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