

# EXHUMATION DENIED We may never know

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ONE of the state's most baffling mysteries will probably stay that way after a bid to exhume the body of a man found dead at Somerton Beach 63 years ago was refused by Attorney-General John Rau.

He said an application by an **Adelaide** University professor to exhume the body for modern DNA testing - to try and crack a case that has intrigued South Australians for decades - was not "compelling".

Despite years of international investigations and strong public interest, the identity of the "the unknown man" - as he was dubbed - whose well-dressed corpse was found resting against a seawall in 1948, has never been uncovered.

Professor **Derek Abbott** applied for an exhumation, believing fresh dental records and "autosomes testing" would determine the man's family grouping and could lead to his likely surname.

He said he believed the same arguments behind identifying men in unmarked graves from World War I and World War II should apply to determining who the man was and where he came from.

"I have amassed so much information on the case and have tantalising clues to his identity," Prof Abbott said.

"Examining the body will give vital information that will put the final pieces of the puzzle together."

In a statement to the Sunday Mail, Mr Rau said: "Given that I have not received an application from the police or the Coroner, I'm not convinced that I have been presented with sufficient reasons to approve the exhumation of the remains.

"Exhumation is a step which I would only approve in very compelling circumstances. The application before me offers only the possibility that DNA could be used to provide police with further leads to investigate the unknown man's identity.

"There needs to be public interest reasons that go well beyond public curiosity or broad scientific interest for the Attorney-General to approve an exhumation."

The case has been part of **Adelaide** folklore since the man's body was discovered.

Adding to the mystery were puzzling clues such as a tightly-rolled piece of paper found in his pocket with the words "Tamam Shud". It was discovered later the page had been torn from a copy of The Rubaiyet, by Persian poet Omar Khayyam, which had been thrown into a Glenelg doctor's car with an indecipherable code of letters scrawled in it.

The code triggered a "spy theory" because the world was still in the grips of the Cold War and there were suspicions the man may have been poisoned.

A former detective, Senior Sergeant Gerry Feltus, who wrote a book on the case after retiring, said he was still contacted by people in Europe who believed the man was a long-lost relative.

Mr Feltus said he didn't believe exhuming the body and uncovering the man's family grouping would provide answers to those people.

“During that period, so many war criminals changed their name and came to different countries,” he said. “I toyed with the idea of exhumation many years ago when I was looking into it. But the forensic pathologists told me there wasn't anything to gain.”

Mr Feltus said the case had aroused the interest of many people over the years who believed they could solve it and his book, *The Unknown Man*, had been bought in many countries.

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