

Sex worker murder: Man arrested

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A 31-year-old man has been charged with the murder of Christchurch sex worker Renee Duckmanton.

Detective Inspector Darryl Sweeney said investigators had gathered enough evidence by yesterday to make an arrest and lay the murder charge.

"While this arrest will not offer any solace for the loss of Renee, it's an important step for her family as they continue to grieve," he said.

"The CIB and forensic specialists have also seized a number of motor vehicles across Christchurch and have begun detailed examinations of those, as well as four residential addresses. This work will continue for a number of days."

Mr Sweeney said he was unable to go into any details ahead of the court process, but police had reason to believe Miss Duckmanton's death was related to the sex industry in central Christchurch.

"It is important that we acknowledge the continued victimisation of the women working on Manchester St, and police will be working with other agencies to consider what measures can be put in place to address this."

Miss Duckmanton was last sighted at about 9pm on Saturday, May 14, walking near the intersection of Manchester and Peterborough Sts in Christchurch, where prostitutes operate at night.

About 24 hours later, her body was found burned and dumped on the roadside verge of Main Rakaia Rd, 500m from State Highway 1, by a member of the public driving past at 7.40pm on May 15.

The location was about 60km away from where she was last seen. Miss Duckmanton's home in Cashmere, and mother Tracy's Housing New Zealand house at nearby

Kowhai Tce, St Martins, were the focus of intense forensic scrutiny last week.

Police are now appealing for sightings of a silver Audi car in the Manchester St area from 8pm on Saturday, May 14.

The vehicle may have travelled to Templeton via Riccarton Rd during the evening.

Police are also seeking sightings of a silver Audi in the Rakaia area of Christchurch the following day, between 6pm and 8pm.

Police last night released a photo of a vehicle similar to the one being sought.

Investigators are also seeking sightings of a light-coloured vehicle seen on Main Rd in Rakaia at about 7.40pm on Sunday, May 15. It may also have been in Leeston township about 10 minutes later. Miss Duckmanton's family has been informed.

"We have been in contact with Renee's family this afternoon to advise them of this arrest," Mr Sweeney said.

"I would like to thank them for their assistance and patience over the last 12 days as police have worked through their investigation.

"I'd also like to thank the community for the huge amount of support and information provided during the investigation into Renee's death. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the dedicated and professional investigation team that have worked hard to get us to the point we are at today."

Miss Duckmanton's family has asked for privacy, but issued a statement paying tribute to her.

"Renee was a bright, bubbly, goofy young woman, who was very kind and trusting. Renee was deeply loved by her family and many friends and she will be greatly missed," the family said. Police would not comment further while the matter was before the courts.

Last week police said they were unsure if her work in the sex industry had any relation to her death, but it formed part of their inquiries.

"We do, however, have to remember that Renee is first and foremost a daughter, a sister, and a much loved member of a family, and police will continue to work tirelessly to bring this to a resolution," Detective Inspector Darryl Sweeney said.

Miss Duckmanton's father, Brent McGrath, told the *Herald* he was "very, very devastated" at the loss of his "adorable" daughter. Ms Duckmanton's cousin, Tracey Lee McGrath, 40, described Ms Duckmanton as being "really bubbly, really happy, a lovely girl".

"We are all devastated. It doesn't feel real," she said.

"We're a pretty small family.

"She was pretty much a kid herself. Even though she was 22, she was still young."

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