

"I've always believed one person can make a difference," says Mark Brimble (with Alma Wood, his ex-wife Dianne's sister, outside the NSW Coroner's Court on March 24, 2006).



### Cruise rape is alleged

NO arrests have been made following a claim an Australian man raped a New Zealand woman aboard a cruise ship in the Pacific, foreign affairs officials said yesterday. The New Zealand passenger made the claim. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said a NSW man, 37, had been accused of rape aboard the P&O Cruise ship the Pacific Star on



The eight men who would later be named as "persons of interest" in the Dianne Brimble case posed for a photo before the September 2002 cruise. Mark Wilhelm stands, far left; Leo Silvestri is squatting, second from left.

# THE DIANNE WILLI BE AN

Five years after the Brisbane mother's death, her ex-husband still fights to fix the cruise industry

Having witnessed the suffering his children have endured, Mark Brimble is now a man on a mission. The Brisbane real-estate executive is no longer as driven by sales and profits as he is by preserving the dignity of his former wife, Dianne Brimble, 42. The mother of Sebastian, 25, Aaron, 19, who are Mark's children, and Tahlia, 17, died of an overdose of the "date rape" drug gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) on the second day of a nine-day P&O cruise in 2002. Since then, Brimble, 48, has been determined that lessons are learned from his ex-wife's death. "I know the pain my children have had to go through," he says quietly. "I wouldn't want that pain to be suffered by anyone."

That heartache continues for the Brimble family. On July 26, 2007, after a 16-month coronial inquest that saw eight "persons of interest" subpoenaed, NSW deputy state coroner Jacqueline Milledge referred the case to the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions. Milledge said there was enough evidence to charge "known persons" over Dianne Brimble's death. The inquest heard how paramedics were called at 8.30 AM on Sept. 24, 2002, to a Pacific Sky cabin occupied by four men, including Mark Wilhelm, 34, and Letterio "Leo" Silvestri, 42. Both men, from Adelaide, had allegedly had sexual relations with Brimble. The circumstances that led to her death remain unknown. While Mark Brimble concedes to WHO there may never be an arrest in the case, "We're doing whatever can be done to ensure the truth is revealed about what happened to Dianne."

Brimble is not just focused on the case of his ex-wife. In 2005, he joined forces with



## THE BRIMBLE CASE

# WAS SHE EVER ARRESTED?

Ken Carver, a retired US insurance company CEO, to set up the International Cruise Victims Association (ICV). Carver's daughter, Merrian, 40, disappeared during a Royal Caribbean cruise to Alaska in August 2004. When a member of staff reported her missing, a supervisor told the crew member to "just do your job and forget it." It took another month before Merrian's family even learnt that she had taken a cruise. "[Royal Caribbean] got rid of most of her stuff," said Carver. "A gold wristwatch, all her clothes were gone, vanished." What happened to the former investment banker remains a mystery.

The ICV is lobbying governments to set up an independent authority to enforce tougher security standards in the cruise industry. "There is no maritime organisation that keeps records of reported crimes onboard cruise ships," says Brimble, who runs the Australian base of the ICV. "You may have a ship regis-

tered in Bermuda owned by a company registered in London, with a passenger from New Zealand who says she has been sexually assaulted by a person from yet another country. It's an absolute abyss when it comes to what laws apply."

Following Dianne Brimble's death, P&O says it has introduced a range

**"We're doing whatever can be done to ensure the truth is revealed"**

—Mark Brimble

of operational changes, including the installation of 24-hour surveillance cameras and providing staff with training in crime-scene management, and crew no longer receive commission on alcohol sales. "There is no doubt the inquest into the tragic death of Mrs Brimble put every part of this business under the microscope," says P&O spokeswoman Sandy Olsen. But Mark Brimble says any steps P&O takes are like "the fox looking after the hen house" because there is no independent authority ensuring such standards are upheld.



Dianne Brimble was "a fun-loving person," sister Phyllis Kirkman said on ABC-TV's *Australian Story*.

Meanwhile, the waters remain troubled. On Dec. 31, 2007, a New Zealand woman, 47, onboard the New Zealand-based *Pacific Star* told staff while the liner was docked in New Caledonia that a passenger had raped her. An Australian man was arrested, but he was released without charge. "There was insufficient evidence to justify criminal proceedings," says Auckland's Det Sen Sgr Scott Beard.

It's a familiar tale. When WHO contacted the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions regarding the Brimble case, a spokeswoman said there is no timeline or expectation of what the DPP might do at this stage. While Mark Brimble remains hopeful of a positive outcome, he continues to lobby for further change in the industry. "At the moment, the cruise companies are their own policemen in these floating cities," he says. "Who knows what people are getting away with?"

■ By Sarah Marinos

For more information and donations, go to [www.internationalcruisevictims.org](http://www.internationalcruisevictims.org)



The Pacific Sky docked at Darling Harbour, Sydney, in 2002. "Mrs Brimble's death was a blow to our core," said P&O spokeswoman Sandy Olsen.



The Pacific Sky's cabin 182, in which Dianne Brimble died on Sept. 24, 2002.