



## **SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION**

**5 Woodside Place, Glasgow, G3 7QF**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**The Scottish Police Federation represents all police officers in the ranks of constable, sergeant, inspector and chief inspector, police cadets and special constables; over 18,500 people, 98% of all police officers in Scotland.**

**To: All media outlets**

**Date: Strictly embargoed until 00.01 on Saturday November 30<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**Subject: Statements from the families of Constables Kirsty Nelis and Tony Collins following Clutha determination**

David Hamilton, vice chair of the Scottish Police Federation, said: "We continue to provide support to the families of our two colleagues, Kirsty Nelis and Tony Collins, who were killed in the Clutha helicopter disaster.

"Our thoughts remain with everyone affected by this tragedy. After much reflection, both families have decided to release the following statements. "

Statement from Lucy Collins, widow of Constable Tony Collins:

"Like all the families involved in this tragedy, our loss will always be with us. Tony is loved by many and missed terribly every single day.

"I would also like to say how much he trusted and respected Dave Traill as a pilot, colleague and friend. Tony was an experienced air observer having worked as such for eight years.

"He trusted Dave implicitly as the hugely experienced and skilled pilot he was. I feel this is important information that Tony would have wanted me to share.

"I am not an expert in anything mechanical and I don't profess to offer any kind of expert knowledge on this, but I do know that Dave was trusted by Tony as a diligent and skilled professional.

"This statement was submitted to the FAI but I don't believe that it was used by the Sheriff Principal because he wanted the relatives' statements to be focused more on Tony's personal and family life.

"I felt very strongly that I wanted all those involved in the Inquiry to know that Tony had trust and confidence in Dave Traill.

"I did not want to participate in the Inquiry, which was largely about technical issues and I would have found extremely distressing, but with reluctance, I gave my statement on a confidential basis.

"However, I think it is important, now that the Determination has been made so very public, that I reiterate Tony's confidence in Dave. That is, after all, what Tony would have wanted.

"I felt that Tony's unwavering trust in Dave Traill was the most important and relevant information that we could contribute to the FAI.

"We have maintained our privacy since the accident and would ask that is respected by the media. We have nothing further to add at this time."

Statement from Mark Nelis, widower of Constable Kirsty Nelis:

"On behalf of our family, I would like to thank all of the emergency services who attended at the incident, putting their own lives at risk to try and save Kirsty and the others trapped within the Clutha.

"I would also like to thank our friends and colleagues for their support and help over the years.

"Kirsty loved her job within the Air Support Unit and spoke highly of the skill and professionalism of all those she worked with including the police air observers, the pilots and the engineers.

"She spoke particularly highly of Captain Dave Traill and her colleague PC Tony Collins whom she trusted implicitly and whom she regarded as friends as well as colleagues.

"Following the FAI Determination, we find ourselves deeply concerned and frustrated with both Principal Sheriff Turnbull's comments and the Air Accident Investigation Branch and its report(s).

"The Sheriff Principal, in his determination apportioned blame to Dave, which we found to be very disappointing.

"He has commented that the pilot 'took a chance' and made a 'conscious decision' to ignore the fuel warnings.

"We find these conclusions surprising given the surrounding evidence that the aircraft had numerous fuel reading issues prior to the incident and that a number of design changes have been made to this aircraft type since.

"No one knows, nor will ever know exactly what circumstances led Captain Traill to make the decisions he did and the Determination has not changed mine or my family's confidence and faith in him.

"We also have deep concerns with regards to the Aircraft Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) whom we believe should provide a fresh independent report in light of this Determination as well as releasing all forms of their report as it developed.

"The first draft report issued by the AAIB was sent to interested parties, including the Helicopter owners and manufacturers, prior to its publication.

"The report was finally released over four months late and had been amended on a number of key points. We have not been made aware of why it was changed or what contributions were made to it.

"We as a family have been left with a sense of frustration by the outcome of this inquiry, in particular with the AAIB report and with the Sheriff Principal's Determination and criticism of the pilot.

"We would ask that the press continue to respect our privacy and do not make contact."

ENDS

Note to editors:

The Scottish Police Federation would like to reiterate the wishes of the family to have their privacy respected and would ask that any supplementary enquiries be routed through ourselves.

Please contact the SPF on 0300 303 0027 or [media@spf.org.uk](mailto:media@spf.org.uk)

Thank you.