

## Hurley's Funeral

Dylan Welsh, January 30, 2007

Hundreds of mourners gathered in Glebe this morning to mark the passing of organised crime boss Michael Hurley, who died of cancer a week ago. Hurley, aged 61, had spent the last days of his life under police guard at the Prince of Wales Hospital. He was arrested early last year in connection with the importation of 10 kilograms of South American cocaine through Sydney Airport in 2004.

Spilling out the doors of the over-capacity St James Catholic Church on Woolley Street on a sweltering Sydney morning, the more than 400 friends, relatives and former colleagues of Hurley stood and sat through a 90-minute traditional Catholic service.

Old, heavily tanned women in animal print dresses fanned themselves with funeral programs. Old men - some wearing snakeskin shoes and signet rings, others sporting heavy gold chains with sunglasses on balding grey heads - patted the backs of their necks with handkerchiefs.

The service, officiated over by Father Colin Fowler and starting at 10am, included speeches by two of Hurley's children, his son-in-law Bruce Davis and family friend Michael Sharkey, who read out a prepared speech by Hurley's fiancée Genevieve Mullins.

"I've no idea how I'm going to live without him, everybody loved Michael," Mr Sharkey said on behalf of Ms Mullins. He had an extraordinary sense of honour ... no matter how rich or poor, everybody was treated the same."

Daughter Liza Colman praised Hurley as a wonderful, caring father in a tearful address that she struggled to complete.

"Goodbye daddy. I love you and miss you and I'll see you in the pub in heaven."

His youngest son James spoke of his father, nicknamed Mickel, as a man of whom rumour abounded.

"I know everybody has stories of him and you'd swear blind there were 10 of him the amount of stories there were."

The young daughter of Les Mara, Hurley's close friend and co-accused in the 2004 cocaine importation case and now in jail, read a fax from her father.

Hurley was born into a working class Pymont family in 1945. One of eight children, he left school at 14 and worked as a wharfie, where he joined the Painters and Dockers Union. His connections on the wharves helped him embark on a criminal career, beginning with thefts from the wharves. He later became an SP bookie. Over the past two decades Hurley moved into drug importation, including ecstasy, cannabis and, most notably, cocaine.

He was arrested in his Pymont backyard over the cocaine importation early last year. He had been awaiting trial in Long Bay jail when he died from the rare cancer metastatic paraganglioma.

By 11.30am today those willing to take the Eucharist had done so, and the crowd outside the sweltering church - having a smoke and a yarn about the infamous man - watched as Hurley's coffin was borne out by his sons and relatives to the strains of that most appropriate of dead gangster songs, Frank Sinatra's *My Way*.