

Man sues over wife's murder

Antique Koran goes missing

SUE HEWITT

A COURIER bungle is being blamed for the loss of a precious 400-year-old Islamic Koran.

John, who asked not to be identified, said his mother sent the gold-inlaid, handwritten book from Iran to Australia after a trial run proved safe.

He alleged that on the second time the courier gave his package to a stranger and it disappeared.

"This has been handed down through my family; it is very rare," he said. "My mother sent it to me to sell to help all of our family."

John said it was impossible to put a figure on the book's worth because he had not had it formally valued.

The manuscript was written in Arabic and Persian in the 16th century and had been hidden by the family for years.

His mother had sent the package on November 24 while he was interstate.

When he returned he asked the courier, transport giant Toll, the whereabouts of his package.

He claimed he was told Toll delivered it to him because a person had signed his name for it.

"But I wasn't even home; the driver just handed over the package in the street without asking for ID," John said.

His lawyer Tony Carbone, a principal of Nowicki Carbone, said John was "devastated" and that he was considering legal action.

"He's traumatised and has lost five kilograms," Mr Carbone said.

"Whoever has the Koran will find it is too hot to handle and what we want is to recover it.

"You may expect it to get stolen in Iran, but not in Australia."

A Toll spokesman did not respond to inquiries.

800 dogs drown in floods

MORE than 800 dogs were either dead or missing after their kennel was flooded when a river in southern Italy burst its banks yesterday.

The kennel housed more than 1000 dogs, but authorities were able to save only 270 when the Petrace River, close to the city of Reggio di Calabria, overflowed.

The wild storms battering Italy this week have killed three people.

The River Tiber, which runs through Rome and has risen to its highest level in four decades, was expected to reach its peak yesterday.

Residents living nearby were on alert in case the river's banks burst, while people in Ostia, southwest of the capital, were due to be evacuated.

Venice has also suffered serious flooding for the second time in two weeks, with the waters reaching 1.56m, the highest level since 1986.

AFP

Agent killed 'doing her job'

SUE HEWITT

THE former husband of a real estate agent raped and murdered during a home inspection is suing her employer.

Terry Makin claims he was financially dependent on his estranged wife, Lorelle Makin, when she was slain.

He alleges his wife was raped and murdered because of negligence by her employer, Tim Farnan Real Estate — an Elders agent.

Mr Makin's lawyer, Lee Flanagan, the principal of law firm Arnold Thomas & Becker, said his client was about to launch County Court action seeking damages.

Mrs Makin's body was found in a vacant house for sale in Melton four years ago after she failed to return from an appointment with a prospective buyer.

The murderer, Shaoyi Liu, recently lost an appeal against his conviction and must serve 22 years before parole.

Liu, a martial arts instructor and sexual sadist, lured Mrs Makin to a vacant Milverton St house and killed her.

He bashed, raped and strangled her then escaped in her car.

Mr Flanagan said it would be alleged Mrs Makin was killed while doing her job.

He said Mrs Makin was required to go alone to the house to meet the murderer posing as a potential buyer.

He said she was exposed to "unnecessary risk" and the agency failed to have an adequate system of screening would-be buyers.

He claimed the agency did not screen the murderer and did not provide adequate supervision of staff or warn them of the dangers.

Mr Flanagan said the employer failed to get expert advice to keep sales representatives, especially females, safe from the risk of sexual assault, rape, injury and murder on the job.

The case could have major ramifications for the real estate industry.

Her former employer, Tim Farnan, declined to comment.

Mrs Makin's death prompted real estate agents to review safety procedures.

The president of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, Adrian Jones, said female agents were



Legal action: Shaoyi Lui (above), who was convicted of murdering real estate agent Lorelle Makin (right) at a vacant property in Melton (left).



especially more cautious and many had removed their photographs from websites and business cards.

"We're all now more conscious of potential risks," Mr Jones said.

"My firm now insists on seeing photo ID at (home) inspections."

Some firms ordered staff to list all the details of client meetings in-

'We're all now more conscious of potential risks'

ADRIAN JONES, REIV

cluding when they were due back, he said.

Others had devised codes so they could ring the office and raise an alarm, while most agents no longer gave

out personal telephone numbers, he said.

He said the REIV and State Government prepared a code of conduct 18 months ago to improve employee safety.

Mrs Makin, 48, was a keen Saints fan who was described by the club as "a passionate member of the St Kilda family" at the time of her death.

Her funeral at the Melton Civic Centre was attended by 300 mourners including several wearing St Kilda jumpers.

The service celebrated a loyal, honest, loving, trustworthy and

helpful person who lived with her adult children, Samantha and John.

Mrs Makin joined the real estate agency in 2000 and worked her way up from the reception desk to the sales team.

At the time of her death, Tim Farnan said: "Lorelle has been a very much-respected and long-term employee who all staff certainly miss".