



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Stephen Raymond Carey, Coroner, having investigated the death of Byron Russell Hovington

Find That:

- (a) The identity of the deceased is Byron Russell Hovington;
- (b) Mr Hovington died in the circumstances described in this finding;
- (c) Mr Hovington died on 4 November 2014 at the Royal Hobart Hospital, Liverpool Street, Hobart;
- (d) Mr Hovington died as a result of hypoxic encephalopathy following cardiac arrest caused by acute methylamphetamine toxicity;
- (e) Mr Hovington was born in Hobart on 30 December 1986 and was aged 27 years at the time of his death;
- (f) Mr Hovington was a single man who was at the date of death unemployed, and
- (g) No person contributed to the cause of his death.

Circumstances Surrounding the Death:

Mr Hovington is the son of Cyril Hovington and Dianne Hall, however Mr Hovington's mother left soon after his birth and has had no known input or influence on his life and her current whereabouts are unknown. Mr Hovington was raised by his father and grandmother, Charmaine Hovington.

Mr Hovington moved to Queensland approximately 10 years ago and during that time it is believed that he either began or increased his use of illicit drugs including amphetamine and heroin. It is believed that Mr Hovington may have fathered a child whilst in Queensland, such child is now believed to be 8 years old; however there has been little contact between Mr Hovington and that child. Mr Hovington spent periods of time in prison in Queensland and on one occasion he was involved in a violent altercation with another inmate that resulted in him sustaining an injury to his jaw which required a wire splint to be implanted; he was also stabbed in the abdomen and underwent surgery to have his spleen removed.

Mr Hovington moved back to Tasmania on 13 October 2014 and resided with his great aunt, Donna Rose Hovington, at 14 Somerville Street, Sorell. After arriving back in Tasmania, Mr Hovington renewed acquaintance with Ms Kim Jackson, a friend of his. It is believed they met together on Friday, 31 October 2014 and Mr Hovington spent 3 days at an address believed to be 1 Sugarloaf Road, Risdon Vale where Ms Jackson is believed to have resided. During this time it is apparent that Mr Hovington administered a significant amount of illicit drugs via intravenous means.

On Monday, 3 November 2014, Mr Hovington made contact with his uncle, Ricky John Hasler, and his partner Belinda Jane Royle requesting them to collect him from 1 Sugarloaf Road, Risdon Vale. When they did this, they noted that Mr Hovington had numerous bruises on his arms. Mr Hovington requested to be returned to Ms Donna Hovington's residence and during the trip he complained of jaw pain. Ms Hovington also noted bruises on Mr Hovington's arms and legs which he would not explain to her. Mr Hovington, however, advised Ms Hovington that he had spent \$1,200.00 on "ICE" with Kim Jackson and that he had been "on it" from Friday to Monday. At this time Ms Hovington believed that Mr Hovington was still affected by the drugs as he was slurring his words and seemed very sleepy.

At approximately 5:30pm on Monday, 3 November 2014, Mr Hasler and Ms Royle collected Mr Hovington from Ms Donna Hovington's residence for the purpose of conveying him to the Royal Hobart Hospital due to concern as to his continued complaint of pain in relation to his jaw. It was the family's belief at the time that this may have been as a result of problems with the wire insertions in his jaw. In any event he arrived at the Royal Hobart Hospital Department of Emergency Medicine at 5:47pm. He was later collected by Mr Hasler and returned to his residence at Shoreline Drive, Howrah. Mr Hovington advised that he had been seen by medical staff; however records show that he left the Emergency Department prior to being seen and assessed by medical staff.

Shortly after arriving at the residence, Mr Hovington walked to the kitchen to get a glass of water and collapsed to the ground. Mr Hasler found him unresponsive lying on the kitchen floor and Ms Royle commenced CPR in accordance with instruction being provided after they had contacted 000. Tasmanian Ambulance Service Paramedics arrived at 10:57pm and continued CPR. Mr Hovington was noted as being unresponsive for approximately 30 minutes before paramedics were able to obtain a pulse. He was then conveyed to the Royal Hobart Hospital arriving at 12:05am on Tuesday, 4 November 2014. Mr Hovington was intubated, however tests conducted at that time revealed that he was brain dead. He was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit at 2:21am where he was monitored, continued on intubation and was subject to further testing. At approximately 2:00pm, after consultation with Mr Hovington's family, life support actions ceased and Mr Hovington was pronounced dead to 2:20pm.

Police investigation into the death of Mr Hovington has confirmed the likelihood that he had engaged in a "binge" in the use of illicit drugs during the period 31 October 2014 until 3 November 2014. Findings at post-mortem confirmed intravenous drug use in the form of multiple needle injuries to his arms and feet together with foreign crystals and foreign body giant cell reaction within the small blood vessels of the lungs consistent with the intravenous use of illicit drugs. Drug testing both ante-mortem and post-mortem identified methylamphetamine, amphetamine and cannabis. The forensic pathologist comments:

"Methylamphetamine frequently causes cardiac toxicity that manifests as cardiac arrhythmia and cardiac arrest. It is likely that jaw pain reported in the hours prior to his collapse was angina caused by methylamphetamine related heart toxicity."

Despite police endeavours neither Ms Kim Jackson nor Mr Cyril Hovington have been located for the purposes of providing information in relation to this investigation. Clearly police are interested in identifying the source of the drugs used by Mr Hovington, in particular the methylamphetamine that played a primary role in his death. Ms Kim Jackson and Mr Cyril Hovington are clearly persons of interest in relation to this aspect and have to date taken active steps to avoid location by police. I recommend that police endeavours in this regard are continued in order to ascertain the source of the illicit drugs obtained by Mr Hovington.

Comments and Recommendations:

The circumstances of Mr Hovington's death is not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to s28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

Unfortunately this tragic outcome was directly as a result of illicit drug use generally and more particularly the use of methylamphetamine or "ICE".

I wish to convey my sincere condolences to Mr Hovington's family.

Dated: 29th July 2015 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Stephen Raymond Carey
Coroner