



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Christopher Stephen Stanley

Find, pursuant to Section 28(1) of the Coroners Act 1995, that:

- a) The identity of the deceased is Christopher Stephen Stanley;
- b) Mr Stanley died as a result of injuries sustained following a single vehicle motorcycle crash on 22 March 2018 at Grant Street, Smithton in Tasmania;
- c) The cause of death was multiple traumatic injuries, including blunt force head and neck trauma; and
- d) Mr Stanley died on 22 March 2018 at Smithton in Tasmania.

In making the above findings, I have had regard to the evidence gained in the comprehensive investigation into Christopher Stanley's death. The evidence comprises the police report of death; a detailed report by the crash investigator; an opinion of the forensic pathologist as to the cause of death; police and witness affidavits; medical records and reports; and forensic evidence.

Christopher Stephen Stanley was born in Burnie, Tasmania on 21 June 1992. He lived at 145 Roger River Road, Smithton in Tasmania. He was aged 25 years at the time of his death. His parents are Sarah Adelle Wilson and Glen Christopher Stanley. He has one child to his former partner. On sporadic occasions he worked as a dairy farm hand in the Smithton area in the North-West of Tasmania, but was for the most part unemployed.

Since he was young, Mr Stanley loved motorcycles. Affidavits made by family members in this investigation indicate that he was an experienced and capable driver, however, his extensive history of traffic offending also reflected his attitude towards road rules, his personal safety, and the safety of other road users. In her affidavit, Mr Stanley's grandmother, Julie Randall, stated that '*he was actually a really good rider, but he was so reckless*'.

A week prior to his death, Mr Stanley acquired a large sports motorcycle, a 1996 Yamaha YZF-1000, which had been unregistered since 18 June 2016. In the week leading up to his death, he stored the motorcycle at the address of his aunt, Sonya Stafford, at 2 Leemael Court, Smithton, where he was staying at that time.

On Thursday 22 March 2018, Mr Stanley spent the early part of the day at Ms Stafford's address. At approximately 2.36pm, he entered the Smithton Woolworths Supermarket on Nelson Street with a female believed to be his new girlfriend, Tamara Reeve. He then left the store alone at 2.42pm.

At approximately 2.55pm, outside 1 Gibson Street, police officers Sergeant Lee-Anne Walters and Senior Constable James Radford, intercepted a vehicle occupied by Ms Stafford and her son, Drew Jones. While speaking to them, they observed Mr Stanley travelling on his motorcycle from Nelson Street onto Gibson Street. Before reaching the police officers, he turned into Hellyer Street from Gibson Street and rode off at a high speed.

His precise route after this is unknown, however, at around this time, numerous witnesses indicated that a dark coloured motorcycle was travelling at extremely high speeds around the area of Havelock Street, Hellyer Street and Gibson Street. Witnesses providing affidavits, in this investigation generally stated that the motorcycle was reaching speeds of well over 100km/h on these streets, where the speed limit was 50km/h.

Mr Stanley then returned to Gibson Street. Whilst Sergeant Walters and Senior Constable Radford were still speaking to Ms Stafford on the side of the road, Mr Stanley travelled past them in an easterly direction at high speed, performing a wheel-stand on the motorcycle as he did so. In passing, he looked directly at Sergeant Walters, who identified him through the clear visor of his full-face helmet. Sergeant Walters described in her affidavit that based on her experience with Mr Stanley, he appeared heavily affected by methamphetamine at this time. Mr Stanley continued to travel east on Gibson Street towards Nelson Street before being lost to view.

At approximately 3.00pm, whilst stationary on Gibson Street and waiting to turn left onto Nelson Street, police officers observed Mr Stanley travelling towards them in a northerly direction on Nelson Street and making a right hand turn into Upper Gibson Street. He was observed to accelerate heavily, again lifting the front wheel of the motorcycle off the ground. Both officers again recognised him through his helmet and were able to obtain the registration of the motorcycle at this time. This was the last sighting of him by police officers before his death.

At 3.04pm, outdoor CCTV footage from the Circular Head Christian School, situated at the corner of Nelson and Grant Streets, shows what is thought to be Mr Stanley's motorcycle travelling on Grant Street in a westerly direction.

The crash itself was not witnessed by any persons, however, several witnesses were able to hear the hard acceleration of the motorcycle from inside their homes, followed by the sound of an impact. A witness, Megan Evans, describes looking out of the window and observing Mr Stanley lying motionless on the roadway moments after hearing the impact. This prompting her to dial '000', the call being received at 3.06pm.

At 3.13pm an ambulance arrived on the scene and performed a rapid recovery of Mr Stanley's body. However, during transportation Mr Stanley was officially declared deceased at 3.23pm.

Other police resources attended the crash scene and commenced an investigation. In his investigation, Senior Constable Adam Lloyd of Western Crash Investigation Services, determined that the motorcycle was navigating a straight section of road with no identified obstructions that contributed to the loss of control. The crash occurred directly outside the Smithton Primary School confines on a school day.

Grant Street is a straight, level, residential street which generally runs east to west. A speed limit of 50km/h normally applies, but includes a lengthy 40km/h section at school times due to the presence of both the Circular Head Christian School and Smithton Primary School.

Crash reconstruction and analysis indicate that Mr Stanley was travelling between 103 and 117 km/h around the time he lost control of the motorcycle. Based on scuff marks left by parts of the motorcycle and clothing on the roadway, Senior Constable Lloyd concluded that Mr Stanley appears to have fallen off the rear of the motorcycle, possibly as a result of performing a failed wheel-stand, and that both motorcycle and Mr Stanley continued to travel in a westerly direction on Grant Street after separating. Mr Stanley slid approximately 60 metres along the road surface before his body collided with a sign post outside the Smithton Primary School. It appears that his head then impacted the concrete edge of the footpath. It is apparent that his full face helmet came off prior to the impact occurring, with Senior Constable Lloyd noting the lack of marks left by straps around the throat area which suggested that Mr Stanley's helmet was likely not correctly secured.

The motorcycle was inspected by Transport Inspector, David Quinn, who concluded that prior to, and at the time of impact, the motorcycle would have been classified as un-roadworthy due to inadequate tread depth on the rear tyre. However, Senior Constable Lloyd concluded in his report

that while tread depth can play a significant role in loss of control on wet roads, the road in this instance was dry and, in his view, the inadequate tread depth did not contribute to the crash. I accept his opinion.

An autopsy was conducted on 26 March 2018 by forensic pathologist, Dr Donald Ritchey. Dr Ritchey concluded that Mr Stanley died as a result multiple traumatic injuries sustained in a motorcycle crash. Internal examination shows that he had suffered severe head injuries and that these injuries would have caused 'near instantaneous death'. I accept Dr Ritchey's opinion as to cause of death. Toxicological testing of Mr Stanley's blood showed that methamphetamine was present in his blood. Alcohol was not detected.

As a result of Mr Stanley having driven past police just prior to the crash occurring, and considering allegations levelled at attending police officers by family members, the matter was reviewed by Tasmania Police Professional Standards Unit. Investigations into the actions of Sergeant Walters and Senior Constable Radford were conducted by Sergeant John Toohey and reviewed by Inspector Matthew Richman, both of the Professional Standards Unit. The review concluded that neither officer had acted outside of the directions or guidelines of the Tasmania Police Manual, and that no pursuit of Mr Stanley's motorcycle had occurred at any point. That conclusion is consistent with the evidence as a whole.

In summary, I find that Mr Stanley lost control of his motorcycle in an episode of highly reckless and irresponsible driving at a speed twice the posted limit. I am satisfied that no other vehicle was involved. At the time he decided to drive in this manner, he would have been impaired by the methamphetamine he used. This substance is a stimulant that can increase confidence and cause hyperactivity and unpredictable behaviour. Motorists under the influence of methamphetamine place themselves and other road users at risk. In this case, it is fortunate that children were not in the vicinity at the time Mr Stanley crashed near the primary school.

Findings, Comments and Recommendations

I extend my appreciation to investigation officer Senior Constable Christian Schriever for his investigation and report.

The circumstances of Mr Stanley's death are not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I convey my sincere condolences to Mr Stanley's family and loved ones.

Dated: 20 August 2019 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart

Coroner