



# MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

## CORONIAL DIVISION

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### **Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)**

*Coroners Act 1995*  
*Coroners Rules 2006*  
Rule 11

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Nathan John Jones,

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Nathan John Jones;
- b) Mr Jones died accidentally as a result of self-injecting methamphetamine into his body;
- c) The cause of death was multiple organ failure and hypoxic encephalopathy due to cardiac arrest from injection of methamphetamine; and
- d) Mr Jones died on 17 December 2018 at Launceston, Tasmania.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the comprehensive investigation into Mr Jones' death. The evidence comprises:

- The Tasmania Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Life extinct and identification affidavits;
- Report of the Forensic Pathologist regarding cause of death;
- Toxicology reports;
- Affidavit of Karley Butwell, sister of Mr Jones;
- Affidavit of Adam Triffett, friend of Mr Jones;
- Affidavit of Dana Smith, casual partner of Mr Jones;
- Affidavit of Hannah Weate, associate of Mr Jones;
- Police video interview of Hannah Weate regarding supply of drugs to Mr Jones;
- Affidavits of five attending and investigating police officers, including CIB and forensics officers;
- Police information records;
- Court sentencing records in respect of Hannah Weate's supply of drugs to Mr Jones; and
- Medical records and reports.

## **Background**

Nathan John Jones was born on 4 November 1982 and was aged 36 years. He was unemployed and lived at Waverley.

Mr Jones was born to Cheryl Joanne Jones and he had two siblings. He grew up in the Launceston area and attended local schools. He did not know his father, and his mother died when he was a teenager. He became involved in criminal activity as a youth that led to several periods of detention at Ashley Detention Centre. He did not finish his high school studies and started to use cannabis, tobacco and alcohol. He found work as a labourer for short periods. He also spent periods of time in prison after he turned 18 years of age due mainly to car theft and driving offences.

In 2004, he met and commenced a personal relationship with Nina Kristinsson and two children were born – Lily in 2004 and Rose in 2009. Mr Jones and Ms Kristinsson used amphetamines recreationally during their relationship. Mr Jones' sister, Ms Karley Butwell, stated in her affidavit that Mr Jones and Ms Kristinsson increased their usage of alcohol and amphetamines and that family violence began to occur. In about 2010 Ms Kristinsson ended the relationship with Mr Jones.

Mr Jones subsequently moved in with his sister, Ms Butwell, who stated that she did not notice any real change in Mr Jones after the breakdown of his relationship apart from his further increase in drug usage. She stated that Mr Jones had a psychotic episode in 2015 upon the consumption of amphetamines in which he became delusional. At that time, Mr Jones expressed that he wanted to stop taking drugs. However, he was unable to do so. His doctor's notes indicate that he had a long history of taking drugs, specifically amphetamines, up to the time of his death. He was also diagnosed with depression in 2012 and prescribed medication for that condition.

It is apparent that the relationship between Mr Jones and Ms Kristinsson was rekindled intermittently, until 2014 when it finally ended. Mr Jones lived with Ms Butwell from 2010 to 2017, after which time he moved to a residence in Waverley.

In 2017, Mr Jones commenced a personal relationship with Ms Dana Smith and they had a son, Nathan, in 2018. According to Ms Butwell, this relationship had a strong focus upon drug use and Mr Jones' drug use increased significantly. However, she said that there was no serious changes to Mr Jones' mood at that time.

### **Circumstances of Death**

On Friday, 14 December 2018, Mr Jones was supplied by an associate, Ms Hannah Weate, with what she told him was three points (0.3 grams) of “old-fashioned speed” (amphetamine). Ms Weate gave him the drugs as a gift. Mr Jones did not consume any of the substance at that time.

Later that night, Mr Jones attended the Country Club Casino with friends, Mr Adam Triffett and Mr Mark Young. Mr Jones injected methamphetamine whilst there, which was not part of the substance given to him earlier. Mr Triffett and Mr Young both stayed at Mr Jones’ place overnight. Mr Jones did not appear to have ill-effects from the methamphetamine.

At about 7.30-8.00am on Saturday, 15 December 2018, Mr Jones was at his home address with Mr Triffett and Mr Young when he injected a quantity of the drug that he had been given by Ms Weate. Ms Weate was not present at that time. He used a filter mechanism for the substance before injecting it. Mr Triffett and Mr Young warned Mr Jones not to use the drug, due to its age and unusual odour and texture.

Two or three minutes after the injection, Mr Jones complained of “burning up” and having an itch, with his skin turning red. He immediately took off his clothing and got into the shower, where he subsequently collapsed and became unresponsive. Mr Triffett called the ambulance and he performed CPR upon Mr Jones while waiting for the paramedics to arrive. Tasmania Ambulance Service attended 30 minutes later and recovered a pulse. Substantial medical intervention occurred before he was transferred to the Launceston General Hospital. He was stabilised and monitored in the Intensive Care Unit. Over the next day, his liver failed and all his organs were noted to be failing, such that his prognosis for survival was poor. Mr Jones was provided with palliative care after consultation with his family. Mr Jones died in hospital on 17 December 2018.

A full coronial investigation into Mr Jones’ death then took place.

Whilst Mr Jones was being treated by ambulance personnel, Mr Triffett gave a small bag of drugs to Ms Butwell, who arrived at the scene shortly afterwards. While Mr Jones was in hospital, Ms Butwell received another small plastic bag that contained the drug residue, which according to Ms Butwell, appeared to be from the same batch.

Shortly after Mr Jones died, Tasmania Police officers recovered from Ms Butwell the two bags, which I am satisfied contained the remainder of the substance given to Mr Jones by Ms Weate. Subsequent analysis found the substance in both bags to contain methamphetamine, amphetamine and a cutting agent. The syringe used by Mr Jones was not located.

Dr Donald Ritchey, Forensic Pathologist, performed an autopsy upon Mr Jones. Dr Ritchey had regard to a toxicological sample of blood indicating the presence of a fatal quantity of methamphetamine, as well as the presence of amphetamine. There was no alcohol detected in his body. In Dr Ritchey's opinion, the cause of death was hypoxic encephalopathy and multiple organ failure caused by an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest due to injection of methamphetamine. I accept his opinion as to the cause of death.

Ms Weate was interviewed by Tasmania Police and admitted to supplying the methamphetamine. She stated she had used the same batch without issue by snorting the drugs into her system as opposed to injecting them. She also stated that the drugs from the same batch had also been supplied to two or three other people and there was no issue with it.

Ms Weate was charged with the offence of supplying methamphetamine to Mr Jones. She pleaded guilty to the charge and, on 23 March 2020, was subsequently discharged with conviction by Magistrate Stanton. I note that the facts placed before the Court specifically did not refer to the supplied substance causing Mr Jones' death, as the prosecutor proceeded on the basis that the methamphetamine ingested by Mr Jones on the previous evening may have caused his death. However, upon the full evidence before me in the coronial investigation, I am satisfied that this was not the case and that the substance supplied by Ms Weate caused death. I have previously given Ms Weate written notice of this proposed finding and have invited comment from her. However, she has chosen not to respond.

I have no reason to suspect that Mr Jones' death was the result of an intentional act of suicide. Mr Jones had not given his family members any indication that he was unhappy, withdrawn or suicidal. I am also satisfied that Ms Weate did not intend to harm Mr Jones by giving him the drugs. It seems that she believed that the substance was amphetamine (not methamphetamine) of reasonable quality which Mr Jones, to her knowledge, was accustomed to taking.

Upon all of the evidence, I am satisfied that Mr Jones died accidentally as a consequence of voluntarily injecting himself with a fatal dose of methamphetamine, which was contained in the substance gifted to him by Ms Weate.

**Comments and Recommendations**

This investigation highlights that a particular danger of illicit drug use is the absence of quality control, so that knowledge of the dose for consumption is essentially impossible.

The circumstances of Mr Jones' 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 the family and loved ones of Nathan John Jones.

**Dated:** 20 May 2021 at Hobart Coroners Court in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
**Coroner**