



# 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 Truus De Vries

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Truus De Vries.
- b) Mrs De Vries was 84 years and lived independently in Ulverstone. She had held a full driver's licence since 1968, with a very good driving record. She was in a reasonable state of health for her age.

In the afternoon of 23 September 2021 Mrs De Vries was driving her car, a 2006 Honda Jazz, to her home after grocery shopping. The road and weather conditions were good. Her car was mechanically sound. Mrs De Vries indicated to turn left into her driveway and then stopped at the top of the driveway near her mailbox, likely for the purpose of checking her mail. She then alighted from the driver's seat of the car, probably leaving the engine still running, and walked around the rear of the car towards the mailbox. She returned to the driver's seat and, whilst the driver's door was still open, the car reversed unexpectedly in a clockwise semi-circle rotation out onto the street and then back over the curb on the same side. As the rear wheels mounted the curb, Mrs De Vries was ejected from the driver's seat and thrown onto the curb where, most unfortunately, her head struck the concrete edge and her torso impacted with a power pole as the car came to a stop on the nature strip in front of the property next door. Mrs De Vries was unconscious at the scene and taken immediately to hospital where, despite medical intervention, she was not able to survive her severe injuries, which included a traumatic brain injury. She passed away later that evening.

I cannot determine why the unfortunate accident occurred except to find that it was due to driver error. The car was found in reverse gear with the handbrake activated. Mrs De Vries may have well have placed the gear unintentionally in reverse as she

re-entered her car, whereupon it moved away unexpectedly in a semicircle due to the left steering lock from her previous turn into the driveway. She may have activated the handbrake in an attempt to stop the car.

- c) The cause of death was multiple (head, chest, pelvis and limb) injuries; and
- d) Mrs De Vries died on 23 September 2021 at the North West Regional Hospital, Burnie in Tasmania.

In making the above findings, I have had regard to the comprehensive evidence gained in the investigation into Mrs De Vries' death. The evidence includes:

- Police and hospital reports of death for the coroner;
- Affidavits establishing identification and life extinct;
- Medical records for Mrs De Vries;
- Opinion of the forensic pathologist regarding cause of death;
- Toxicology report of Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Attendance records of Ambulance Tasmania;
- Affidavit of Mr Andrew Johnstone, a neighbour who provided CCTV footage of the incident;
- Affidavit of a Transport Inspector regarding the condition of the car;
- Report and affidavit of qualified crash investigator, Senior Constable Sven Mason;
- Affidavits of Forensic Services officers attending the crash scene; and
- Photographic and reconstruction evidence.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

The circumstances of Truus De Vries' 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 her family and loved ones.

**Dated:** 17 June 2022 at Hobart Coroners Court in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
Coroner