



# 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 Joan Peters

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Joan Peters;
- b) Mrs Peters born on 31 July 1937 and was 84 years of age when she died. She was widowed and lived in Upper Castra. She held current car and motorcycle licences. She was an experienced motorcyclist, having ridden many thousands of kilometres since young adulthood.

At approximately 8.20pm on 15 December 2021, Mrs Peters was driving her red 2014 Suzuki LS650 Boulevard motorcycle on Castra Road, Sprent, in a southerly direction. The road was bitumen, comprised one lane in either direction and has a speed limit of 100km/h. She had just negotiated a sweeping right hand corner, passing the intersection of Swamp and Castra roads. At the time, the sun was setting and was at a very low angle upon the horizon. When Mrs Peters rounded the corner, the sunlight caused blinding glare for her and for vehicles travelling in her direction. Mrs Peters was wearing sunglasses and a motorcycle helmet. She stopped her motorcycle in the middle of her lane for a reason unknown but most likely because she was blinded by the sun.

At the same time, Bradley James Williams, the holder of a provisional PI licence, was driving his 2002 Holden Rodeo utility at a distance on Castra Road well behind Mrs Peters. Mr Williams was not wearing sunglasses but, due to the lack of visibility ahead caused by the sun, he slowed to 40-50 km/h and used the road edge as a guide to drive forward. He had also slowed due to the proximity to his own driveway. The evidence indicates that he was travelling 73 seconds in time behind Mrs Peters and could not have seen her motorcycle at any time before the glare of the sun prevented him seeing the road ahead. At the location where Mrs

Peters was stopped in the middle of the road, Mr Williams crashed into the rear of her motorcycle. Mrs Peters died at the scene as a result of injuries sustained in the crash. She suffered several existing medical conditions which also contributed to her death. Her motorcycle helmet came off her head in the crash, and it appears that she did not have the chin straps fastened, or fastened securely.

In this case, the comprehensive investigation revealed that there were no contributory issues with the functioning of either vehicle, the road surface, speed, inattention or drugs and alcohol. A drive-through reconstruction confirmed that the glare of the low-setting sun prevented vision ahead for both vehicles. Mr Williams was travelling at an appropriately low speed for this situation and could not have expected a stationary vehicle to be present on the roadway. He was shocked and distressed when he crashed into Mrs Peters on her motorcycle.

- c) Mrs Peters died from multiple (head, thoracic spinal and pelvic) injuries.
- d) Mrs Peters died on 15 December 2021 at Upper Castra, Tasmania.

In making the above findings, I have had regard to the evidence gained in the investigation into Mrs Peter's death.

The evidence includes:

- Tasmania Police Report of Death,
- Affidavit of the Forensic pathologist regarding cause of death;
- Affidavits confirming life extinct and identification;
- Toxicology reports for Mrs Peters and Mr Williams regarding analysis of blood samples;
- Affidavit of Gareth Peters, son of Mrs Peters;
- Affidavit of Nicholas Mead, witness at the scene;
- Affidavits of nine attending and investigating police officers, together with photographs, 3D images, drive-through reconstruction video, and body worn camera footage;
- Affidavit and report of Senior Constable Damien Howden of Crash Investigation Services;
- Affidavit of Caleb Davies, transport inspector;
- Ambulance Tasmania attendance records;
- Penguin General Practice records for Mrs Peters;

- Tasmania Police interview with Mr Williams regarding the circumstances of the crash;
- CCTV footage of the vehicles before the crash captured by a home security system; and
- Crash history data for the road area from Department of State Growth.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

The crash causing the death of Mrs Peters was a most unfortunate incident caused solely by the inability of both herself and Mr Williams to see the road ahead due to the position of the sun. I cannot make any finding that Mr Williams departed from the standard of a reasonable driver in any relevant respect. The evidence was reviewed by the Director of Public Prosecutions who did not recommend that charges be laid.

The circumstances of Mrs Peters' death are not such as to require me to make any recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I am appreciative of the thorough work of crash investigator, Senior Constable Damien Howden, and the other police officers involved in this investigation.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Mrs Peters.

**Dated:** 1 February 2023 at Hobart Coroners Court in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
Coroner