



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Simon Cooper, Coroner, having investigated the death of Christopher Darren Dodd

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Christopher Darren Dodd;
- b) Mr Dodd died from injuries sustained in a motorcycle crash;
- c) The cause of Mr Dodd's death was head and chest injuries; and
- d) Mr Dodd died on 14 February 2021 at Trowutta Road, Smithton, Tasmania.

Introduction

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

- Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits establishing identity and life extinct;
- Affidavit – Dr Christopher Lawrence, Forensic Pathologist;
- Report – Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Medical Records – Ochre Health Medical Centre, Smithton;
- Records – Ambulance Tasmania;
- Affidavit – Mr Allan Fitzpatrick, Transport Inspector, sworn 5 March 2021;
- Affidavit – Ms Christina Kingston, sworn 24 February 2021;
- Affidavit – Mr Michael Sheehan, sworn 23 February 2021;
- Affidavit – Mr Daniel Holmes, sworn 24 February 2021;
- Affidavit – Ms Melissa Holmes, sworn 24 February 2021;
- Affidavit – Mr Shayne Ling, sworn 1 March 2021;
- Affidavit – Ms Judith O'Halloran, sworn 23 February 2021;
- Affidavit – Senior Constable Wayne Stanley, sworn 13 April 2021;
- Affidavit – Senior Constable Hayden Barnard, Crash Investigation Services, Tasmania Police, sworn 24 March 2021;

- Affidavit – Senior Constable Sven Mason, Crash Investigation Services, Tasmania Police, sworn 8 May 2021 (and crash investigation report);
- Affidavit – Senior Constable Caroline McGregor sworn 12 May 2021 (and photographs); and
- Affidavit – First Class Constable Mark Johnson, Forensic Services, Tasmania Police, sworn 10 March 2021 (and photographs and drone footage).

Background

Mr Dodd was born in Burnie, Tasmania on 30 August 1965. At the time of his death, he was aged 55 years and was living at Wiltshire, Tasmania. The evidence is he was an experienced motorcyclist. Broadly speaking his health was reasonable.

Circumstances of Death

On Sunday 14 February 2021, Mr Dodd took part in a fundraising motorcycle ride on the North West Coast of Tasmania. His was one of around 37 motorcycles involved in the event.

The ride started at Circular Head before travelling to Stanley and the Marrawah area for lunch. On the final leg of the ride (returning to Circular Head, on Trowutta Road, Smithton) Mr Dodd, was travelling far too fast the road, lost control of his motorcycle and crashed.

His motorcycle left the road, flipped and rolled before launching into the air and coming to rest 2 metres above the ground in a clump of tea trees, along with Mr Dodd. Shortly after the crash Mr Dodd fell to the ground. Essentially, he died almost instantaneously.

Investigation

After formal identification an autopsy was carried out by experienced forensic pathologist, Dr Christopher Lawrence. Dr Lawrence provided a report which, in summary, indicates that Mr Dodd had suffered massive traumatic injuries to his thorax with a complete transection of the thoracic spine, multiple rib fractures, a skull fracture with traumatic injury to the brain – all of which were untreatable and all of which were unsurvivable.

A toxicological analysis of samples taken at autopsy showed the presence of both alcohol and cannabis in Mr Dodd's body at the time of his crash.

The motorcycle he was riding – a 2009 Kawasaki ZX 1400 – was subsequently examined by a Transport Inspector. The evidence from the Inspector was that the motorcycle showed no evidence of any mechanical deficiencies which could have caused or contributed to the happening of the crash.

A comprehensive crash investigation carried out by Senior Constable Sven Mason leads to a conclusion that the minimum speed at which Mr Dodd was travelling immediately prior to the crash was 124 km an hour, in excess of the lawful speed limit and significantly in excess of a safe speed to negotiate the curve where the crash occurred.

Witness accounts confirm that Mr Dodd was travelling at an excessive speed immediately prior to the crash.

The evidence is that the weather conditions at the time of the crash were dry, sunny and clear. The road surface was dry and in good repair.

Conclusion

Mr Dodd died when he crashed his motorcycle, one of the most powerful motorcycles commercially available. He crashed because he was travelling too fast. His reactions are likely to have been impaired by the alcohol and cannabis that were in his system at the time of the crash.

Mechanical defect, road or weather conditions played no role in the happening of the crash.

No other person was involved in the crash which claimed Mr Dodd's life.

Comments and Recommendations

The circumstances of Mr Dodd'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 the family and loved ones of Mr Dodd.

Dated: 16 May 2023 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper

Coroner