



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Rod Chandler, Coroner, having investigated the death of Jackson Nate John Daniel Weedon

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Jackson Nate John Daniel Weedon;
- b) Jackson was born in Launceston on 30 June 2000 and was aged 16 years;
- c) Jackson died on 9 March 2017 at Riverside in Launceston; and
- d) The cause of Jackson's death was abdominal injuries sustained in a single motorcycle crash.

Background

Jackson was the only child of Tamira Weedon and Nicholas Hubbard. He resided with his mother and was a student at Launceston College. He enjoyed good health. He had been riding motorbikes since he was 3 years old and was an experienced and competent rider. He held a learner's licence to use both motor cars and motorbikes. Since January 2017 he had owned a 2007 Suzuki DRZ400 motorcycle (registration number B135A).

Circumstances Surrounding the Death

At about 11.30am on 9 March 2017, Jackson was riding the Suzuki in a southerly direction on Greenfields Drive in Riverside when it collided with the kerbing on the left hand side of the roadway, causing Jackson to fall to the ground and then slide into a roundabout warning sign pole. It was immediately evident that Jackson had sustained injuries and an ambulance was called. He then became unconscious and died at the scene despite attempts at resuscitation.

Investigation

This included a post-mortem examination undertaken by State Forensic Pathologist, Dr Christopher Lawrence. He reports: "*Autopsy reveals substantial injuries to the abdomen without much in the way of head injuries apart from cerebral oedema. There is a small cardiac contusion but the liver laceration appears to be the major injury.*"

Toxicology tests were negative for both alcohol and illicit drugs.

In Dr Lawrence's opinion, the cause of Jackson's death was abdominal injuries sustained in a single motorcycle crash. I accept this opinion.

The crash and its surrounding circumstances was comprehensively investigated by Constable Nigel Housego of Tasmania Police's Crash Investigation Services. It establishes that:

1. Jackson and Benjamin Vote were longstanding and close friends. They both had an interest in motorbikes and often rode together.
2. At around 10.55am on 9 March 2017 Jackson and Benjamin rode their bikes a short distance from Benjamin's home to Greensfields Drive arriving at around 11.00am. It was their plan to spend about 30 minutes riding up and down the street practising 'wheelies' or wheel stands.
3. After about 25 minutes riding Jackson and Benjamin stopped to check the time. Jackson said: *"It's not quite 11.30 yet, there is still time for one more run."* Jackson then rode off in a southerly direction towards a roundabout. Benjamin followed him.
4. Benjamin says that Jackson quickly accelerated his bike and drew approximately 45 metres in front of him. He estimated his speed to be *"roughly just over 100km/h"*.
5. Benjamin says that he then observed Jackson turning his head to the right and look backwards over his right shoulder. At this point Jackson's bike started to veer left towards the gutter.
6. A reconstruction of the crash has been made by Constable Housego, based upon data collected at the scene. It indicates that:
 - The Suzuki was travelling at 100km/h.
 - When the Suzuki was 1.3 metres from the left edge kerb its brakes were applied.
 - The Suzuki then skidded along the road for 40.2 metres before impacting with the kerb.
 - The impact has caused Jackson to be separated from his bike. He then tumbled and slid south along the footpath for 28 metres and then collided with the roundabout sign.
7. Greenfields Drive was subject to a 50km/h speed limit.
8. The road surface in the area of the crash was dry and in good condition.
9. The weather was fine with no rain or wind.
10. The Suzuki was in a roadworthy condition and did not have any defect which caused or contributed to the crash.

In his helpful report Constable Housego expresses the view that Jackson's loss of control of his bike and subsequent crash was probably attributable to his action in turning right to look behind him. He explains:

"I believe that to enable Jackson to rotate his head over his right shoulder enough to look at Ben following him, Jackson may have pushed the left handlebar of the Suzuki forwards, applying right hand steering to the handlebars. The application of right hand steering on a motorcycle handlebars, travelling at speed, has the effect of causing the motor cycle to counter steer to the left."

“This is due to the gyroscopic effect caused by the rotating wheels of the motorcycle. As a wheel’s rotation speed increases, the wheel builds forward momentum and becomes more stable. Greater force is required to move it from the vertical and angular planes. Therefore, the faster a motorcycle travels, the harder it is to steer it from a straight path. When force is applied to the left side axle of the rotating wheel attempting to turn the wheel right, the rotating forces of the wheel try to maintain a straight path of travel and this will cause the wheel to lean left over the axle. This causes the motorcycle to lean left and counter steer to the left. Applying right steering on the front wheel balance basically unbalances the motorcycle and it compensates for this by leaning to the left.

“Once he has been steering towards the curbing, Jackson has looked forward, realised his error and locked his brakes, before impacting with (the) curbing.”

Findings, Comments and Recommendations

Sadly, Jackson has died as a consequence of his injuries sustained when he failed to maintain control of his motorcycle and crashed. Despite evidence that he was an experienced and competent rider, it seems likely, as postulated by Constable Housego, that the crash has occurred because of the Suzuki’s speed coupled with Jackson’s action in momentarily looking behind with its effect upon the bike’s course of direction and its controllability.

I convey my sincere condolences to Jackson’s parents, his family and loved ones.

I have decided not to hold a public inquest into this death because my investigation is sufficient to disclose the identity of the deceased, the date, place, cause of death, relevant circumstances concerning how his death occurred and the particulars needed to register his death under the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1999*. I do not consider that the holding of a public inquest would elicit any significant information further to that disclosed by the investigation conducted by me. The circumstances of the death do not require me to make any further comment or to make any recommendations.

Dated: 23rd day of April 2018 at Hobart in Tasmania.

Rod Chandler
Coroner