



# MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

## CORONIAL DIVISION

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

*Coroners Act 1995  
Coroners Rules 2006  
Rule 11*

I, Robert Webster, Coroner, having investigated the death of Andrew Robert Young

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Andrew Robert Young (Mr Young);
- b) Mr Young died in the circumstances set out in this finding;
- c) Mr Young's cause of death was hanging; and
- d) Mr Young died between 13 and 14 January 2020 at Glen Huon, Tasmania.

#### **Introduction**

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits establishing identity and life extinct;
- Affidavit of the Forensic Pathologist, Dr Michael Burke;
- Toxicology and Analytical report prepared by the forensic scientist Mr Neil McLachlan-Troup of Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- report from Ambulance Tasmania (AT);
- Affidavit of Mrs Judith Young;
- Affidavit of Mrs Kim Jones;
- Affidavit of Ms Lisa Young;
- Affidavit of Mr Martin Howell;
- Affidavit of Mr Paul Redding;
- Affidavit of Senior Constable Richard Pascoe;
- Affidavit of Senior Constable Paul Edwards;
- Affidavit of Detective Senior Constable Michael Manning;
- Affidavit of First-Class Constable Sam Storer;

- Affidavit of Constable Nicholas Monk;
- Medical records of Mr Young obtained from his general practitioner;
- Medical records of Mr Young obtained from his psychiatrist;
- Medical records of Mr Young obtained from the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH);  
and
- Photographs and forensic evidence.

## **Background**

Mr Young was aged 61, he was single, he had no children and he was in receipt of a disability support pension at the date of his death. He had 2 sisters one who was older (Ms Jones) and one who was the younger than him (Ms Young). He had been in a few relationships over the years.

Mr Young was born in Sydney New South Wales. The family subsequently moved to Queensland where Mr Young attended Indooroopilly State High School. He completed year 12 and then he completed a Bachelor of Business Communication at the University of Technology in Brisbane. He then completed a Graduate Diploma in Teaching before enrolling in and completing a Diploma of Music at the University of Tasmania in 2002. He worked in journalism, teaching which included music teaching, as an outback tour leader and as a composer.

Mr Young's mother says she did not notice he had any mental health issues as a child. Mrs Young says he was generally happy, he was well behaved and he had high moral beliefs. He was a good student. Mrs Young says he always did the right thing.

Although Mr Young later told his mother he had an episode of depression at the age of 18 while he was at university, which she was unaware of, he spoke to her about his depression when he was about 40 years of age. Mrs Young says her son spoke to his GP and she prescribed medication which he took for couple of weeks. He didn't take medication after that point because it made him feel nauseous. He did not take any other medication because she says he was very anti-drugs.

Mrs Young says her son was physically fit and took care of himself. He did not smoke and did not drink much alcohol. He was very conscious of his diet. Both his mother and his sisters who

lived interstate had regular contact with Mr Young by telephone. Over the years they visited each other from time to time.

### **Medical history**

The records of the general practitioner Dr Cox cover the period from 2 January 2004 until 11 December 2019. Mr Young predominantly saw Dr Cox for physical ailments however in 2004 and 2005 he did see him for depression which he advised Dr Cox he had suffered from since he was a teenager. He did not think antidepressants would assist although he was prescribed antidepressants in 2004 and so therefore he took them for a short time. It was Dr Cox who referred Mr Young to the psychiatrist Dr Milford McArthur. When referred in December 2004 Mr Young was not taking any antidepressant medication. The referral letter says the following: “Since he graduated from University as a journalist in 1979 he has had several brief jobs, the longest being 18 months. His left all these jobs because of the stress of working full-time for an employer. He has mostly worked as a part-time self-employed guitar teacher since 1989. He has chosen to be self-employed because his illness has made it difficult for him to work with other people.”

Dr McArthur's records cover the period from 2004 until 2020. Over that 16 year period Mr Young consulted Dr McArthur in excess of 220 times. The notes at the first consultation confirmed that neither medication or cognitive behaviour therapy had helped his condition and Mr Young's symptoms of depression commenced when he was 18 years of age. Letters from Dr McArthur to Dr Cox in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2015 confirmed Mr Young had consistently declined antidepressant medication. Accordingly Dr McArthur treated Mr Young with supportive psychotherapy. The theme that runs through the notes is Mr Young suffers from a social phobia which he says has ruined his life and he was disappointed in how his life had turned out. He felt he was a failure and he felt shame for being disabled and unable to work in his various professions. He also suffered from insomnia. He did however enjoy being with his dog. Dr McArthur noted Mr Young's depressive illness “causes him to be pretty agoraphobic and reclusive.” In 2018 and 2019 Mr Young's depression was aggravated by constant back pain. He had engaged in exercise and karate over the years but by 2019 he was not able to participate in karate or perform garden maintenance. He was in pain and he was lonely as at 6 December that year as a relationship had recently ended. The notes for the consultation on 13 December 2019 record he had a broken heart, he was sad all day and he was taking medication for pain.

Mrs Young says her son suffered from arthritis and as a result he had to give up playing music. He had to that point written material and released 3 compact discs. She says he hurt his back at

home which required 2 surgical procedures the first which took place at St John's Hospital in the winter of 2018 which did not improve his pain. The second surgery took place a year later and there was some, albeit slight improvement in his pain thereafter. Mrs Young says Mr Young was very upset he couldn't regain his physical ability to continue with his karate which he took up for mental health and fitness reasons at the age of 50. She says the fact he could not participate in that activity anymore caused him great distress.

Mrs Young says there were 2 self-harming incidents she was aware of. The first occurred in Brisbane in 1992 when Mr Young took an overdose of sleeping pills. His housemates found him and he was transported to hospital. She says he would not seek help after this incident but promised her he would never hurt himself again. The second incident occurred on New Year's Day 2020. Mrs Young had been trying to get in contact with her son but could not raise him so she phoned police. Meanwhile Ms Jones managed to speak to him and had him call 000. He had overdosed on prescription painkillers.

The records of the RHH contain details of the admission on New Year's Day 2020. Mr Young reported increasing symptoms of depression after the second bout of back surgery in 2019 and the breakdown of a relationship but that he was seeing Dr McArthur and had seen him last week and was due for review on 3 January 2020. On waking on 31 December 2019 Mr Young said he felt "lousy" and he made a plan to intentionally overdose. He took medication and consumed alcohol. He woke on 1 January 2020 with ongoing suicidal intent and took more medication. He said he had poor appetite, poor sleep and he was socially isolated. He felt "*like I don't have any other option.*" He was assessed and treated and with his permission Mrs Young was spoken to and further history was obtained. Mrs Young advised her son was very proud and highly unlikely to reach out. His family had visited him in November and things seemed okay but they were well aware of increasing depression which was exacerbated by a poor outcome post the back surgery. On discharge Mr Young had improved medically, was remorseful taking an overdose and wished to return home and to the care of Dr McArthur. Although he wished to be discharged on 2 January he was assessed as requiring further assessment and treatment and therefore he was detained until the next morning.

Dr McArthur visited Mr Young in hospital on 2 January 2020 and drove him home when he was discharged the next day. He did not see him thereafter principally because Mr Young was unable to drive to Hobart due to back pain. Dr McArthur did however call or text Mr Young on 4, 8, 11, 12 and 14 January 2020.

### **Circumstances of Mr Young's death**

On 2 January 2020 Mr Howell who is a counsellor with Rural, Alive and Well (RAW) was asked to attend Mr Young's home, on behalf of his mother, who was concerned for his welfare. Mr Howell was advised Mr Young was not eating, he was depressed and was suffering from back pain. Mr Howell went to Mr Young's home but he was not present. He telephoned him and determined Mr Young was still in hospital and they arranged to meet after he was released.

Mr Howell met with Mr Young at his home on 7 January 2020. Mr Young advised Mr Howell he was suffering from ongoing back pain and depression. He advised Mr Howell he had contemplated suicide but decided he would not go through with it because there would be nobody to look after his dog. Mr Young advised Mr Howell he had decided to sell his house as it was too big for him to live in alone and the yard was impossible to maintain. He felt there would be more activities in Hobart for him to be involved in which would enable him to meet new people and form friendships. At the end of their meeting Mr Howell felt confident that he and Mr Young had put some coping measures in place and Mr Young was no longer a suicide risk. In particular Mr Howell says Mr Young appeared to be in a positive frame of mind, he was future focused and had no suicidal plan. A subsequent appointment was made to meet at a local cafe on 13 January 2020. That meeting did not take place because Mr Young did not feel comfortable in a public place. The appointment was rescheduled for 10:30 hours the next day at Mr Young's home.

Mr Young did however meet his friend Mr Redding at a cafe on 13 January 2020. They spent approximately an hour and a half together during which Mr Young was agitated and upset over his back pain and the loss of his relationship with his previous partner. Towards the end of their time together Mr Young became more agitated and was crying. Mr Redding went to work and he believed Mr Young went straight home.

It was subsequent to this police believe Mr Young tidied his home, deleted all information from his phone and wrote notes to both Mr Howell and Dr McArthur. A note Mr Young left on the door for Mr Howell directed Mr Howell to the kitchen table where he had left the notes for Mr Howell and Dr McArthur. Both notes say his body and heart were broken beyond repair. Mr Young then went into a shed in his backyard where he had some gym equipment and a punching bag set up. Once inside he has used a rope and a ladder to hang himself. He remained there until approximately 10:30 hours on 14 January 2020 when Mr Howell went to the shed and located him. Mr Howell then contacted police.

## **Investigation**

Police arrived at Mr Young's home at approximately 10:50 hours on 14 January 2020 and spoke to Mr Howell who provided a history of his involvement with Mr Young. Police entered the shed and observed Mr Young hanging by blue rope which was affixed to a central beam. There was a stepladder lying in the closed position at his feet. The view of attending police after examining both Mr Young and the scene was there did not appear to be any signs of a struggle or outside interference which contributed to Mr Young's death. Paramedics from AT attended and completed a cardio monitor test which indicated Mr Young was in asystole. Accordingly there was no attempt to resuscitate him.

Mr Young's phone was seized by police and examined. It was noted all text messages, call logs, emails and browsing history had been deleted. Police examined the notes which Mr Young had left and which were addressed to Mr Howell and Dr McArthur. Mr Young's home was searched and found to be in a very tidy state. On the dining room table were the notes to which I have referred along with Mr Young's phone and keys and some medication for his dog which were neatly arranged. Officers from CIB attended and were briefed by Senior Constable Pascoe. They examined the scene, Mr Young and they searched his home and his vehicle. Nothing suspicious was found. Constable Monk attended and he also examined the scene, Mr Young and his home. All officers came to the conclusion as a result of their inspections and searches that Mr Young committed suicide without the assistance of any other person. I agree with that conclusion.

Dr Burke performed a post-mortem examination on 15 January 2020. Samples were taken for toxicological testing. No alcohol or illicit or prescribed drugs apart from the main active metabolite of diazepam was detected. That drug can be prescribed in the treatment of anxiety disorders. As a result of conducting the post mortem and after considering the toxicology results Dr Burke concluded Mr Young's cause of death was hanging. I accept his opinion.

## **Comments and Recommendations**

Mr Young's mental health conditions were treated by a very experienced psychiatrist over a very significant period of time. This treatment was supplemented by a very experienced general practitioner. Because Mr Young declined, as is his right, to take antidepressant medication Dr McArthur was only able to use supportive psychotherapy techniques which, on their own, were not successful in treating Mr Young's symptoms. Having examined all the medical records

carefully I find Mr Young was, at all times, appropriately treated by Dr McArthur, Dr Cox and the Royal Hobart Hospital.

The circumstances of Mr Young'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 extend my appreciation to investigating officer Senior Constable Richard Pascoe for his investigation and report.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Mr Young.

**Dated:** 29 November 2022 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

**Robert Webster**  
**Coroner**