



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 Brieley Joyce Bruinewoud

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Brieley Joyce Bruinewoud;
- b) Mrs Bruinewoud was born Brieley Joyce Duke on 16 July 1984. At the time of her death, she was aged 36 years and was living in Loira with her husband, Martin Bruinewoud, and her twin boys (born in 2005 to a previous, deceased partner). Mrs Bruinewoud was employed as a theatre nurse at the Launceston General Hospital. She was physically healthy. There are indications upon the evidence that she was prone to suffering mental health difficulties. She attended a psychologist in 2017 as a result of distressing life events, reporting depression and some suicidal thoughts at that time. However, there is no evidence that she was contemplating suicide in the period before her death. On occasions, Mrs Bruinewoud engaged in episodes of drinking large quantities of alcohol, during which she would become argumentative and experience depressive thoughts.

In the late afternoon of 14 November 2020, Mrs Bruinewoud and her husband attended a party at Birralea where they both consumed alcohol over a period of approximately 12 hours. Mrs Bruinewoud consumed most of a bottle of vodka and was heavily intoxicated. She became aggressive towards other people at party and, at about 5.30am the following morning, her husband encouraged her to leave the party. The couple started to argue and Mrs Bruinewoud commenced driving home. The argument continued in the vehicle and Mrs Bruinewoud's behaviour continued to be highly erratic. Her husband then took over driving with Mrs Bruinewoud in the front passenger seat. Her husband

prevented her from trying to leave the vehicle at one stage and believed that subsequently she had become calmer. However, as the vehicle was travelling on Rookery Road, she removed her seatbelt and, without warning, jumped out of the vehicle before her husband could hold her or stop the vehicle. The vehicle was travelling at an estimated speed of 50km/h, less than the speed limit of 80km/h. Mrs Bruinewoud struck her head on a dirt mound causing a severe head injury. An ambulance was summoned, and she was transported, unconscious, to the Launceston General Hospital for treatment. A sample of her blood taken several hours after the incident revealed a high blood alcohol level of 0.150g per 100ml. I am satisfied, however, that her blood alcohol level at the incident time would have been considerably higher than the tested level.

Initial evaluation in hospital confirmed extensive head injuries which required transportation to the Royal Hobart Hospital and multiple neurosurgical interventions. Unfortunately, Mrs Bruinewoud developed no clinically significant neurologic improvement, and a palliative approach was adopted. She was transferred to the Whittle Ward for palliative care where she died on 12 December 2020.

- c) The cause of death was traumatic closed head injury.
- d) Mrs Bruinewoud died on 12 December 2020 in Hobart.

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- An opinion of the forensic pathologist who conducted the autopsy;
- The results of toxicological analysis of samples taken at autopsy;
- Affidavits of life extinct and identification;
- Affidavit of Martin Bruinewoud, husband of Mrs Bruinewoud;
- Affidavit of Stuart Eastoe, acquaintance of Mrs Bruinewoud;
- Affidavit of Lynette Bryans, mother of Mrs Bruinewoud;

- Report from Senior Constable Michal Rybka, Northern Crash Investigation Services;
- Affidavit of Transport, Safety and Investigation Officer, Barry Spencer;
- Records from Ambulance Tasmania;
- Records from the Tasmania Health Service;
- Records from the West Tamar Health Centre; and
- Forensic and photographic evidence.

Comments and Recommendations

I am satisfied that there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding Mrs Bruinewoud's tragic death. I am not able to determine her state of mind at the time she jumped from the vehicle. It is more likely that she did not intend to harm herself but, instead, made an irrational decision in a highly intoxicated state.

The circumstances of Mrs Bruinewoud'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 Brieley Joyce Bruinewoud.

Dated 8 February 2022 at Hobart Coroners Court in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart
Coroner