
FINDINGS of Coroner McTaggart following the holding of
an inquest under the *Coroners Act 1995* into the death of:

TRINTON JOHN HARMON

Table of Contents

Hearing Dates.....	3
Appearances	3
Introduction.....	3
Mr Harmon’s Background	6
Events Preceding Death	7
Circumstances Surrounding Death	10
Post-mortem Examination	12
Crash Investigation Evidence	13
Did Mr Harmon Intend Suicide?	15
Ms Bridges’ Account of Events.....	16
Mr Radosavljevic’s Account of Events	17
Analysis of Post-Crash Events.....	18
<i>Credibility of Mr Radosavljevic</i>	18
<i>Credibility of Ms Bridges</i>	20
<i>Ms Bridges’ manner of driving and attention</i>	21
<i>Reasons for continuing to drive</i>	24
<i>Suspension of licence</i>	25
<i>Conduct at home post-crash</i>	25
Summary of Findings	27
Formal Findings.....	27

Record of Investigation into Death (With Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Trinton John Harmon, with an inquest held at Hobart in Tasmania, make the following findings.

Hearing Dates

5, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 13 February 2020 with all submissions received 27 March 2020

Appearances

Counsel Assisting: E Bill

Counsel for Simone Bridges: D Marcenko

Introduction

At about 11.30pm on the evening of 8 July 2016, Trinton John Harmon, aged 43 years, was walking on the South Arm Highway. He was affected by drugs and alcohol. At a point approximately 1 kilometre south of the Mornington roundabout he was struck by a vehicle being driven by Simone Bridges, aged 51 years. Mr Harmon died at the scene as a result of his severe injuries. Ms Bridges did not stop her vehicle and render assistance but continued her journey home to her residence in Tranmere.

Ms Bridges remained by herself at her home, without contacting police or emergency services to assist Mr Harmon, until her partner, Mr Dragan Radosavljevic, returned home at about 1.30am. During his journey home, he passed the scene of the crash where, by this time, police and emergency services were in attendance. After arriving home to Ms Bridges, there was discussion between the two which resulted in both attending the Bellerive Police Station at about 2.00am to report Ms Bridges' potential involvement in the crash. During her police interview later that morning, Ms Bridges told police that she had not seen what she had hit, although said that it was a "big brown thing" which she believed must have been an animal. She claimed that it was not safe to stop after the crash. In all subsequent accounts during the course of the investigation and the inquest, Ms Bridges maintained that she believed she had hit an animal, notwithstanding that the object struck her

windscreen and damaged the front of her vehicle substantially. Her various accounts before inquest did not depart from this central proposition, although attended with significant credibility issues due to internal inconsistencies as well as inconsistencies with other evidence in the investigation.

After the death of Mr Harmon, police investigators referred the evidence to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions ('DPP') for determination regarding whether charges should be laid against Ms Bridges for the death and/or for failing to stop and render assistance. Counsel from the Office of the DPP advised that, in all of the circumstances, charges were not recommended.

Over the following period further investigation took place within the Coronial Division surrounding the circumstances of Mr Harmon's death, particularly in light of the difficulties associated with Ms Bridges' credibility. Ultimately, I determined that the inconsistencies could not be resolved, nor could the requirements for procedural fairness be satisfied, without an inquest.

I determined that the inquest should focus upon the following issues:

1. The sequence of events leading to the crash, including the state of mind, observations and attention of the driver, Ms Bridges, and her opportunity to observe Mr Harmon and avoid the crash;
2. Mr Harmon's movements, behaviour, intentions and state of mind prior to, and at the time of, his death;
3. The sequence and circumstances of events following the crash, including the failure of Ms Bridges to stop and assist Mr Harmon and/or immediately report the crash to police or emergency services;
4. The effect of the failure of Ms Bridges to immediately assist Mr Harmon after the crash or call emergency services to assist him; and
5. The veracity of the account of the crash given to police by Ms Bridges, and the veracity of her account of her movements over the following hours.

My role under the *Coroners Act 1995* is to make factual findings surrounding Mr Harmon's death, rather than attributing criminal responsibility for the death to any person.

The standard of proof applicable to findings in a coronial investigation is the civil standard. This means that where findings of fact are made, a coroner needs to be satisfied on the balance of probabilities as to the existence of those facts. However, if an investigation reaches a stage where findings may reflect adversely on someone (potentially Ms Bridges in this case) the law is that the standard applicable is that set out in the well-known High Court case of *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*

(1938) 60 CLR 336, that is, that the task of deciding whether a serious allegation is proved must be approached with caution.

At the inquest hearing, 17 witnesses gave evidence, these being expert crash investigators, police officers involved in the investigation, eye witnesses at the scene, people who last saw Mr Harmon alive, Mr Harmon's former partner, Mr Harmon's general practitioner, a forensic pathologist, neighbours and work colleagues of Ms Bridges and Mr Radosavljevic.

In making my findings below, I am satisfied that this matter has been comprehensively investigated and the relevant issues have been fully explored. At inquest the evidence included:

- Report of Death to the Coroner;
- Affidavits of identification and life extinct;
- Toxicological analysis of blood samples taken from Mr Harmon and Ms Bridges;
- Post mortem report from the forensic pathology who conducted the autopsy;
- Records of Ambulance Tasmania;
- Mr Harmon's medical records;
- Affidavits of motorists, Eoin Knox, Kim Abel and John Alexandrellis, who witnessed Mr Harmon as a pedestrian on the South Arm Highway prior to his death,
- Affidavits of civilian witnesses, Kim Boscoe, Leslie Broadbent and Tracey Hoskinson, who attended Mr Harmon at the scene following the crash;
- Affidavits of attending police officers;
- Surveys, diagrams and maps of the crash scene and surrounding area;
- Report of the Crash Investigator, Sergeant Rod Carrick;
- Affidavits of the investigating officer, Senior Constable Kelly Cordwell;
- Affidavits of the Transport Inspector;
- Affidavits of police officers involved in performing a crash simulation;
- Transcript of a police interview conducted with Ms Bridges;
- Affidavits of Mr Harmon's ex-partner, Kylie Bennett;
- Affidavit of Mr Harmon's father, William Harmon;
- Affidavit of Mr Harmon's friend, Rachel Gordon, one of the last people to see him alive;
- Forensic photographs of the scene;
- Documentation relating to Ms Bridges' licence, registration and work roster;
- Affidavit of Ms Bridges' work colleague, Dermott Bowerman;
- Affidavit of Ms Bridges' partner, Dragan Radosavljevic;

- Crash history of the South Arm Highway; and
- Police documentation.

Mr Harmon's Background

Mr Harmon was born in Hobart, Tasmania on 13 April 1973 and was aged 43 years at his death.

Mr Harmon was the son of William and Gaylene Harmon. Mr Harmon has two sons, Tate Harmon (born in 2000) and Tex Harmon (born in 2001) with his previous partner, Kylie Bennett.

At the time of his death Mr Harmon was unemployed and in receipt of a disability pension. He suffered from chronic pain arising from a long-standing injury and mental health conditions, namely depression and anxiety. He struggled with abuse of alcohol and drugs. It is possible that he suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, which may have been partly attributed to an incident in 1998 when, as the driver of a car, he accidentally struck and killed his good friend, Mr Andrew Haas, on Pass Road in Howrah. Mr Harmon was not charged in respect of this incident although it seems to have had a lasting impact on his mental health.

Mr Harmon's regular general practitioner, Dr Peter Sexton, who treated him and assisted him to manage his substance and mental health issues, gave evidence at inquest. Dr Sexton took over Mr Harmon's care from 2012 and continued treating him until his death. He saw Dr Sexton on a monthly basis for the treatment of his chronic pain and consequent prescription of opioids. Dr Sexton also prescribed medication for Mr Harmon's mental health issues. Dr Sexton said that Mr Harmon's psychiatrists considered that he may have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr Sexton noted generally that Mr Harmon suffered heightened reactions (affect dysregulation) to particular events that he perceived as negative but did not recall Mr Harmon being focused upon the incident in 1998.

Dr Sexton said that Mr Harmon's substance abuse was of ongoing concern, although he did appear to have periods of being 'clean' in an attempt to obtain work. He was aware that Mr Harmon used amphetamines and 'ice' (methamphetamine). Dr Sexton appears to have been vigilant in respect of Mr Harmon's drug-seeking issues. Dr Sexton engaged with both Alcohol and Drugs Service and Pharmaceutical Services Branch to ensure that his prescribing was as safe as possible. For example, Dr Sexton noted at a consultation on 25 March 2014 that Mr Harmon had recently had an overdose of heroin and told him that he could no longer prescribe him Hypnodorm. In 2015, Dr Sexton terminated Mr Harmon's Endone prescription and commenced prescribing Tramadol, being a synthetic opioid and of less "street interest".

Dr Sexton gave evidence that Mr Harmon did not, at any time, communicate suicidal ideation to him. He said that he believed that Mr Harmon was forthcoming in his communications and would likely have told him if he had such thoughts or plans. Dr Sexton said that he would have recorded it in writing and taken further steps in treatment. It is clear that Dr Sexton did not have any concerns that Mr Harmon presented as a risk of suicide.

Mr Harmon's last consultation with Dr Sexton before his death occurred on 6 July 2016, where Mr Harmon requested a prescription for diazepam as he had said that he had lost his existing prescription. Dr Sexton did not replace the prescription, advising Mr Harmon that he should have an adequate supply of prescribed diazepam.

For several months before his death, Mr Harmon had been living with his son, Tex, in Risdon Vale. However, Mr Harmon was required to move from that residence and subsequently stayed with his cousin. He was looking for a new property at the time of his death. Tex resumed living with Ms Bennett. It is very clear that Ms Bennett, who had known Mr Harmon since high school, played a very supportive role in his life, notwithstanding their separation. They maintained a close friendship and shared parenting responsibilities. Ms Bennett described Mr Harmon as a loving and involved father to his sons.

Ms Rachael Gordon had been in a relationship with Mr Harmon for nine months, this relationship ending about two weeks before his death. Ms Gordon gave evidence that Mr Harmon was always a positive person. Mr Harmon told Ms Gordon that he had accidentally caused the death of a friend in the past, that he suffered post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of it and was reading books to try and deal with the issue. She did not consider that this event caused him to have serious mental health issues. She further indicated that he was prone to becoming abusive when intoxicated. She said that he was physically violent to her on one occasion, also when he was intoxicated, but that he was not suicidal.

Events Preceding Death

The events in the hours preceding Mr Harmon's death, prior to the crash, were the subject of oral and documentary evidence and were not contentious.

On the afternoon of Friday 8 July 2016 Mr Harmon was picked up by Ms Gordon and two other women from Clarendon Vale and driven to a friend's house in Claremont where they arrived at about 6.30pm. Mr Harmon took an already opened 700ml bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey with him

and continued to drink in the car. He appeared to Ms Gordon to have already consumed alcohol. During the evening his behaviour deteriorated and he became argumentative and verbally abusive.

On the return trip to Clarendon Vale, Mr Harmon sat in the back seat of the car and continued to be verbally abusive towards all four people in the car. He commenced hitting the back of both front seat headrests and yelling that he wanted to get out of the car. In evidence, Ms Gordon said that these actions occurred near Rosny. Fearful for their safety, the driver, Ms Karen Moore, stopped the car to let Mr Harmon out on the South Arm Highway ('the highway') near the Bunnings building site between Mornington and Howrah. He got out of the car unassisted and walked away, carrying the bottle of Jack Daniels. He had consumed more than half of the bottle by that time. Ms Gordon stated that Mr Harmon was not staggering but the extent of his intoxication was apparent from his gait. She said that it was between 8.30 and 9.00pm when Mr Harmon exited the car. However, Mr Eoin Knox, a passing motorist, saw this event occur at just before 10.00pm, which I find more accurately accords with the evidence. Mr Knox said he witnessed others trying to restrain Mr Harmon from leaving the vehicle and I accept that one or more occupants tried to do so.

Ms Gordon said she did not see Mr Harmon use methamphetamine that day, but that she was aware that he was a user of that substance.

Specifically, Ms Gordon said that Mr Harmon was not in a low mood or expressing any intentions to end his life. He was angry, she said, but not in a state where he did not care whether he lived or died.

The evidence overwhelmingly allows me to find that Mr Harmon was affected by alcohol and drugs to the point where his intoxication would have had a severe impact upon his judgement, cognitive function and actions. Mr Harmon's post-mortem blood alcohol level was recorded as being in the vicinity of 0.150 g/100mL and he was found to have a highly elevated level of methamphetamine in his system. These results assist me considerably, together with the witness evidence, in finding that these substances were in his system at high levels at the time of his death.

On the evidence of the civilian witnesses who saw Mr Harmon just before his death, I am satisfied that he was walking on the roadway in a southerly direction (towards Clarendon Vale) likely close to the white line representing the edge of the lane. The highway is a dual-carriage highway, travelling from Mornington through Howrah and towards Rokeby. The speed limit for the highway around the area of the Mornington roundabout is posted at 60km/h, but changes to 100km/h shortly after the Mornington Road turn off. The majority of the stretch between the Mornington roundabout and the Shoreline Hotel roundabout is divided by a raised pavement and brifen fencing.

At 10.05pm, Mr John Alexandrellis saw a person (not known to him but who was Mr Harmon) walking in a southerly direction along the highway on the eastern side of the south-bound lanes. Mr Harmon was facing the centre of the road and already in the lane when he saw him. Mr Alexandrellis was not driving but he stated that the driver of the car that he was in had to swerve to the right to avoid hitting him. In evidence he described the swerve as a “near miss, within centimetres”. Mr Harmon did not react to this near miss and kept walking. Mr Alexandrellis believed that Mr Harmon was walking slightly inside the left hand lane. He said that there was fog at the top of the hill where he saw that the man “just appeared”. He described the top of the hill being “misty”. In evidence, he clarified that the man could be seen easily despite the mist. He said that he was five or six metres away when he first saw him. As will be noted from the following discussion, it must have been the case that the driver of Mr Alexandrellis’ car perceived Mr Harmon on the road from a greater distance than five or six metres in order to react by swerving. Mr Alexandrellis gave credible, unchallenged evidence regarding the sighting of Mr Harmon, which I accept.

At 10.20pm Ms Kim Abel, who gave evidence to the inquest, was driving her vehicle in a southerly direction opposite the Bunnings site. At a point just past the 100 km/h zone, Ms Abel said that she saw a male person leaning on the embankment, just off the road, sitting with his legs out. I am satisfied that the person she saw was Mr Harmon. She said that he was not moving. His chin was against his chest and he was looking down. I cannot make a precise finding as to Mr Harmon’s location at this time. However, there is clearly a lengthy embankment extending for a distance close to the edge of the southbound lane in the area described by Ms Abel.

Ms Abel said that the male was wearing dark clothing. She gave evidence that she almost did not realise it was a person until she travelled past. It was dark and traffic was light. She said that she travelled on the road frequently, and it was not unusual on weekend nights to see pedestrians walking on the left side of the road. I note that several witnesses gave evidence describing having seen pedestrians walking in the middle of the road upon a raised path part of the median strip/island dividing the lanes. The highway verges are clearly not designed for pedestrians, although the middle island of the road incorporates concrete pathways adjacent to each lane where pedestrians have been observed to walk between Mornington and the suburbs of Howrah and Rokeby.

Mr Harmon’s movements after being seen by Ms Abel are not known but I infer that he remained walking or stationary along the same section of the highway, and had the intention of making his way to the house of his cousin with whom he was staying in Clarendon Vale.

Circumstances Surrounding Death

At about 11.30pm Ms Tracey Hoskinson, having finished her work shift at a nearby aged care facility, was driving southwards on the highway. As she drove over the crest of a hill she saw something on the side of the road and, as she came closer, realised it was a person. Ms Hoskinson stopped the car and put her hazard lights on. She noticed that there was glass and debris all over the road and from this assumed that a car had hit the male person. She could see that he was not breathing and steam was rising from his body. She then dialled 000 for emergency services.

In her evidence in court, Ms Hoskinson said that, at a distance of about four metres travelling at about 70-80km/h, she recognised an elongated human form on the road and veered to the centre of the road. Again, taking into account reaction time, I find that she must have been aware of an object on the road at a greater distance from it than she described. Ms Hoskinson said that it was not difficult to avoid the body and she was able to pull over onto the shoulder of the road quite easily. Responsibly, she took action to protect the scene. She made the decision not to commence CPR but was very vigilant in assessing for signs of life. She said that blood was coagulating and there were no obvious signs of life. She noted that the male person had dark clothing. She said that his legs below his knees were on the travelled portion of the road. She said that a nurse also arrived at the scene and also made the same decision not to commence resuscitation.

In her evidence, Ms Hoskinson described the male's body as being located on a "blind crest". Having the benefit of having travelled on that road and considering the diagrammatic evidence in the inquest, I would not describe the corner as "blind" but visibility is certainly more limited in this area than in the preceding stretch of highway. She described the weather as clear and not raining with visibility being good. She stated that she was a regular traveller on this road and that she almost always encounters kangaroos, both alive and dead, some of them large.

Other motorists arrived at the scene shortly afterwards, including Mr Leslie Broadbent and Ms Kim Boscoe. All three, commendably, took steps to restrict traffic around the crash site and to provide what assistance they could to Mr Harmon.

At 11.40pm Ambulance Tasmania paramedics and police officers (Constable Tracey Smith-Rees and Constable Vanessa Lea) arrived separately at the scene. A second ambulance crew arrived at 11.45pm. The paramedics at the scene assessed Mr Harmon as having no signs of life. Nevertheless, they engaged in full resuscitation efforts for 27 minutes attempt to revive him. They noted that there was copious amounts of blood leaking from his mouth and nose despite multiple suction attempts.

Mr Harmon was pronounced deceased at the scene at 12.08am on Saturday 9 July 2016. Mr Harmon had not yet been identified and none of the witnesses or officers at the scene knew his identity at that stage.

The crash location was closed to traffic at the Mornington roundabout. At 12.40am crash investigators, Sergeant Rod Carrick and Senior Constable Kelly Cordwell, attended the scene to conduct a thorough examination for the purpose of reconstructing the crash. They marked debris and physical evidence, measured distances, and a forensic services officer photographed the scene with Mr Harmon *in situ*. From the debris and marks at the scene it was clear that Mr Harmon had been struck by a vehicle.

Mr Harmon had come to rest on his back on the edge of the sealed road. His face was covered in blood and some of his teeth had been damaged. He had a compound fracture to his lower right leg just above the top of his boot. The boot for his left foot was located on the eastern grass verge about five metres south of where Mr Harmon lay. At the time of the incident, Mr Harmon was wearing blue jeans and a khaki green jacket.

Mr Harmon's body was conveyed by mortuary ambulance to the Royal Hobart Hospital where his father formally identified him.

Investigation continued at the scene throughout the early hours of the morning. No motorist had made themselves known to police as being responsible for striking Mr Harmon until approximately 2.16am when Ms Bridges, accompanied by Mr Radosavljevic, presented at the Bellerive Police Station in relation to Ms Bridges' possible involvement. She told police officers at the station that she believed that she had hit an animal but understood that a fatality had occurred in the same vicinity as where she believed she had struck the animal. I will comment further upon her presentation to the police station below.

From the information received regarding the driver and vehicle involved, Sergeant Carrick and Senior Constable Cordwell attend Ms Bridges' address at Oceana Drive in Tranmere at around 3.00am to examine the vehicle driven by her. It was a white Pajero four-wheel-drive vehicle, registration FB3601. They saw extensive damage to Ms Bridges' car and, in particular, damage to the left (passenger) side of the windscreen, most of which had been smashed on that side. There was significant damage to the left corner of the front vehicle and bumper, including a shattered headlight and heavy denting in the bonnet.

After examining the vehicle, Sergeant Carrick and Senior Constable Cordwell attended the Bellerive Police Station and were introduced to Ms Bridges. Ms Bridges was cautioned and then voluntarily participated in an electronically recorded interview with the two officers.

During the lengthy interview, Ms Bridges made admissions to being the driver of the Pajero, but claimed that she did not know that she had hit a person. She maintained that the damage to the vehicle was caused by hitting an animal and that she had not stopped as she did not believe it was safe to do so.

Post-mortem Examination

On 13 July 2016 Dr Donald Ritchey, forensic pathologist, performed an autopsy upon Mr Harmon. In the conclusion of his report Dr Ritchey stated:

“The autopsy revealed a well-developed, thin adult Caucasian man with severe traumatic injuries of the head, chest, abdomen and legs consistent with having been struck by a motor vehicle.

Specifically, there were lacerations of the scalp on the left side and there were severe traumatic brain injuries including a laceration of the medulla (brainstem) that would have resulted in near instantaneous death. Additionally there were extensive calvarian and basal skull fractures and injuries of the posterior aspects of the lungs, the liver and the aorta.

The patterns of the injuries suggest that Mr Harmon was upright when struck from behind, likely on the right leg. The force of the impact caused severe hyperextension along the vertebral axis as his body was likely thrown backward impacting the bonnet and windscreen of the vehicle where it likely somersaulted over the roof of the vehicle landing on the back on the road.”

In evidence, Dr Ritchey reinforced that the hyperextension injuries seen, such as the aorta being stretched along its long axis, were characteristic of a rapid change of body posture, such as when the body is extended from behind over the bonnet of the car. He gave evidence that his conclusion of “near instantaneous” death meant that the injuries were unsurvivable and death would have resulted in about one minute. Dr Ritchey stated that the fracture of the ankle was 16 centimetres above the ground, consistent with contacting the bumper of the vehicle. He explained that people who are hit below the centre of gravity will be thrown backwards with the head hitting the windscreen. He said that the hair found in the smashed windscreen indicates that this is how Mr Harmon’s body made contact with the vehicle.

Crash Investigation Evidence

Senior Constable Cordwell, the lead crash investigator, gave evidence that the posted speed limit at the crash site was 100 km/h and the crash occurred approximately one kilometre south of the Mornington Roundabout.

She determined that the point of impact was most likely at the location of the first (that is, the northernmost) paint fleck found on the highway. She indicated that this was an approximate point of impact, as there would be a delay of a fraction of a second between when the paint came off the vehicle and came to rest on the road. The location of Mr Harmon's mobile phone 3.9 metres north of the first paint flake also supported this interpretation of where he was struck by the Pajero. She also identified a scuff mark, signifying maximum braking, of 20.4 metres in length, which appeared approximately 21 metres after the point of impact. The mark started in the centre of the left hand lane and ended at the edge of the lane. She said that this indicated that it was likely made by the left wheel, with the trajectory showing that there may have been some attempt to avoid a hazard prior to impact as the driver's right wheels were close to being into the other lane or straddling the line. She indicated that the Pajero did not travel into the other southbound lane at all.

She gave evidence that the average night-time driver would take 2.5 seconds to detect an unexpected hazard, recognise that hazard and then make a decision about how to respond. For a driver travelling at 80km/h (the approximate speed at which Ms Bridges' indicated to police she was travelling), this would equate to a distance of 55 metres travelled before there would be a response from a driver to avoid the crash. A further 38 metres would then be needed to bring the vehicle to a complete stop. Therefore a total of 93 metres would be required, based upon this assumed speed and assumed reaction time. Based upon the same assumptions, Senior Constable Cordwell stated that a distance of about 75 metres was required if the driver chose to swerve to avoid the crash rather than brake.

Based upon the features and measurements from the scene and assuming a 2.5 second reaction time at 80 km/h, Senior Constable Cordwell calculated that Ms Bridges likely first saw Mr Harmon at a distance of 34 metres before she struck him. She said that the point of impact occurred during the perception phase, with the maximum braking being applied 21 metres *after* she had struck him. Senior Constable Cordwell gave evidence that it was unlikely that Ms Bridges would have only become aware of Mr Harmon *at or immediately prior to* the point of impact, as that would have entailed detection, recognition and response all in 1 second – a reaction time akin to that of a professional racing car driver. As discussed below, I am satisfied that Ms Bridges did not possess the unusually rapid perception-reaction skills of a professional racing car driver, despite her evidence of being involved in car racing activities as a younger person.

Senior Constable Cordwell, along with Constable Armando Pasa, subsequently conducted visibility and perception testing in similar conditions, using a mannequin dressed in dark clothes (similar to Mr Harmon) positioned at the point of impact. The testing revealed that the earliest possible point of perception was 70 metres before the point of impact, a distance that took into account that both police officers had the considerable advantage of anticipating a hazard. However, Senior Constable Cordwell observed that Ms Bridges may have had a visibility advantage in observing Mr Harmon walking down the road in comparison to encountering a static object.

Senior Constable Cordwell concluded that, applying the 2.5 second perception-reaction time, even if Ms Bridges had observed Mr Harmon from the earliest point of perception (70 metres away) she would likely have been unable to swerve to avoid him within that time as there was insufficient distance to do so. If she had applied maximum braking instead of swerving she still would have struck him at a speed of approximately 63km/h, with the braking causing deceleration from a speed of 80 km/h.

Senior Constable Cordwell was cross-examined thoroughly by Ms Bridges' counsel, Mr Marcenko, in respect of her how analysis would vary if Ms Bridges was travelling at a different speed; if the point of impact was slightly different; or if Ms Bridges had a slower or faster reaction time. She agreed that the variations would impact on the analysis. However, I accept the submissions of counsel assisting, Ms Bill, that the evidence clearly showed that it is unlikely that the speed or point of impact were significantly different to those assumed by Senior Constable Cordwell in her calculations and therefore any variations are of minimal or no consequence. I agree that, on any reasonable analysis of the objective evidence, Ms Bridges observed an object on the road (being Mr Harmon) before the point of impact.

After examining the scene, Mr Harmon's body and the Pajero, Senior Constable Cordwell formed the opinion that Mr Harmon was struck in the vicinity of the front left headlight. She said that Mr Harmon must have been on the roadway, likely around 70 centimetres into the left-hand southbound lane from the white edge line of the road. He then travelled up the bonnet leaving two distinct indentations. He then struck his head on the lower left corner of the windscreen and then struck it a second time toward the top left corner. He then fell away from the vehicle and struck the roadway.

Sergeant Carrick, a highly experienced crash investigator, now retired, also gave evidence at inquest. He specifically noted upon his attendance at the scene that the road surface was damp, it was dark and not moonlit. In all respects, he agreed with Senior Constable Cordwell's scene analysis, methodology and conclusions. Relevantly, he gave evidence of five classes of trajectory involving a pedestrian being struck by a vehicle. He said that the circumstances of Mr Harmon being struck was

a “fender bolt” trajectory where the pedestrian extends or “wraps” over the bonnet of the vehicle due to the leading edge of the vehicle being lower than the pedestrian’s centre of gravity. In this class of striking, the pedestrian comes off the vehicle to one side rather than being projected over the roof. In his view, this occurred in Mr Harmon’s case.

In conclusion, the objective and expert evidence, which I accept, allows me to find that Mr Harmon was walking in the left southbound lane of the highway, about 70 centimetres from the line marking the edge of the road. He was under the influence of alcohol and drugs, making his way back to Clarendon Vale. He was facing south, his back to the direction of the traffic. He was 1 kilometre south of the Mornington roundabout when he was struck by the Pajero being driven by Ms Bridges. The force of the impact projected him backwards onto the bonnet and windscreen of the vehicle, after which he was thrown off the vehicle at the passenger side and onto the road surface. His severe injuries caused his death almost instantaneously.

I also find, based upon the Transport Inspector’s examination of the Pajero, that the vehicle had no defects that contributed to the crash.

I will discuss the further significant findings concerning Ms Bridges’ observations and manner of driving as I consider her account in detail below. However, it is noteworthy that Dr Ritchey, Sergeant Carrick and Senior Constable Cordwell all gave evidence that they would have expected a driver in Ms Bridges’ position to have been aware that the object struck was a person rather than an animal.

Did Mr Harmon Intend Suicide?

I considered that suicide should be considered as a possibility given the apparent coincidence of Mr Harmon accidentally causing the death of his friend, Mr Haas, in remarkably similar circumstances in 1998. Mr Harmon was driving a vehicle and struck Mr Haas who was lying on the road at the time. Charges were not laid against Mr Harmon in respect of the incident. However, as discussed, there is evidence that Mr Harmon suffered ongoing psychological consequences from this event.

I have already indicated that Mr Harmon’s regular general practitioner, Dr Sexton, did not consider Mr Harmon to have suicidal ideation. When the scenario before Mr Harmon’s death was put to him, Dr Sexton indicated that Mr Harmon leaving the vehicle in response to an argument accorded with what he considered to be a typical “reactive” response to a negative situation. He would not have thought that his actions involved suicidality.

Both Ms Bennett and Ms Gordon also gave evidence that they did not consider that Mr Harmon was suicidal at the time of his death. Ms Bennett gave evidence that Mr Harmon had dinner with her and their children a few nights before his death. She thought Mr Harmon was generally looking towards the future, including finding accommodation for himself and their son, Tex. Ms Bennett believed that Mr Harmon would not have tried to take his own life by deliberately allowing a car to strike him as Mr Haas' death had a significant impact on him and he would not have wanted to inflict that suffering on another person. She said that Mr Harmon never spoke of ending his life.

Mr Harmon's actions in walking on the road are consistent with impaired judgement, disorientation and/or disinhibition caused by the combined effects of alcohol and illicit substances. Mr Alexandrellis' observation that Mr Harmon seemed to be unaware of traffic at the time also indicates drug and alcohol intoxication.

I am satisfied that Mr Harmon did not intend to end his life.

Ms Bridges' Account of Events

Ms Bridges' account of events was marked by inconsistencies, anomalies, apparent untruths, and statements that could only be described as incredible. I will consider her evidence below and the significance of its unreliability for the issues to be determined.

The essence of Ms Bridges' account, from which she did not resile, is as follows.

At approximately 11.00pm Ms Bridges finished her work shift at Avis Car Rental at the Hobart Airport in Cambridge. At 11.21pm she sent a message to her partner, Mr Radosavljevic, stating that the expected flight had been cancelled and she was on her way home. Immediately after sending that message, she left the work car park in the Pajero. She was playing a song on her phone through headphones, but had put the phone in her bag. Her evidence was that she pulled the headphones out shortly afterwards in the vicinity of the airport when a taxi driver nearly ran her off the road.

She had had the same vehicle for many years and was familiar with the road to her residence and was travelling the same route she normally took to get home. She had not consumed alcohol, drugs or medication. She said the drive was the same as any other night. She said that she had never seen pedestrians on the highway, but had seen dead kangaroos at least four feet in height.

Ms Bridges was feeling physically uncomfortable that evening because she was experiencing menopausal symptoms, including heavy bleeding. She was anxious to return home for this reason.

However, she was not in a hurry, travelling within applicable speed limits and concentrating on her driving. As she entered onto the highway, when the speed limit changed from 60km/h to 100km/h, she reached a speed of about 80km/h and this speed remained constant through her journey. She described the conditions as being very foggy. She had her lights on low beam and there were no other vehicles on the road. Approaching the scene of the crash she was in either fourth or fifth gear.

The first thing that Ms Bridges knew in relation to the crash was that something that was “big and brown” had come up onto her windscreen. She saw nothing until the moment of impact. The fog was still very thick at this point. She assumed it was an animal. She braked after the object hit her windscreen. It caused extensive damage to her windscreen. However, Ms Bridges continued to travel home without stopping. She did not stop because she was told previously by a work colleague not to ever stop after hitting an animal. She had never seen a person on that area of road and she assumed that it must have been an animal.

Ms Bridges returned home approximately 10 minutes after the crash. She parked her vehicle in the garage. After arriving home, she exchanged a series of text messages with her father in which she asked to borrow \$1,000 from him for car repairs. She did not mention the crash in these messages. She was in shock, shaking and crying on the couch. She was worried about having no money to fix the car.

When Mr Radosavljevic arrived home, Ms Bridges was waiting at the front door as he came into the garage. He observed that Ms Bridges was already distressed. She asked why he was late, and he explained about the road closure. He said that he had spoken to a police officer at the site who told him that it was the “worst of the worst”. Ms Bridges immediately started crying, gestured to the damage on her car and said, “I’ve hit something”. Mr Radosavljevic told her that he did not think she had hit an animal, and Ms Bridges became even more distressed. She dressed and they both attended the Bellerive Police Station in relation to Ms Bridges’ possible involvement in the crash.

Mr Radosavljevic’s Account of Events

Mr Radosavljevic’s evidence at inquest coincided very closely with the account given by Ms Bridges and I have difficulty accepting much of his evidence due to the fact of obvious collusion. His account is as follows.

Mr Radosavljevic finished work as a security officer at Wrest Point Casino at about 1.00am on 9 July 2016 and commenced the drive home to Tranmere. At a point on the South Arm Highway he encountered a section of road blocked by police. Mr Radosavljevic was informed by a police officer

that there had been a serious accident, with the officer stating to him that it was “as bad as it can get”. Mr Radosavljevic then diverted through Clarence Street and drove home.

He arrived home at about 1.35am and Ms Bridges appeared distressed. She pointed to the front of her parked car, which was in the garage, and he saw that there was considerable damage to the front windscreen and the front passenger side corner of the car.

When he asked her what happened, Ms Bridges said that she had hit something but did not see what it was as there were no street lights and it was dark. Mr Radosavljevic asked her where this incident had occurred and when Ms Bridges said that it was up on the Mornington Hill just around the bend, he realised that she may have hit a person and been responsible for a fatality. Mr Radosavljevic said to Ms Bridges that he did not think she had hit an animal, after which Ms Bridges became distraught. She then insisted on making contact with police. Mr Radosavljevic told her that he would drive her to the Bellerive Police Station, which they then did.

Analysis of Post-Crash Events

Credibility of Mr Radosavljevic

In his oral evidence at inquest, Mr Radosavljevic said that he saw his written affidavit only in the week before the inquest and that there were several aspects of inaccuracy in that affidavit. Specifically, he claimed, without hesitating, that his memory of the night was a lot better at the time of the inquest, over three and a half years later, than it was when he made his affidavit on 9 July 2016.

He said that Ms Bridges was not, in fact, outside to greet him when he arrived home as he had stated in his affidavit, but instead that she was inside the house and opened the door for him. His affidavit appears to convey that there was no conversation between him and Ms Bridges until she pointed to the damage on her car, which shocked him and caused him to ask her what happened. However, at inquest, he gave evidence that his first communication to her was to say “how are you?” To which she replied “what took you so long to get home?” He then said that he told Ms Bridges of the police road block as a result of an accident and upon her questioning about how bad it was he said “it’s as bad as it gets”. He said that it was only then that she pointed to the damaged car.

In evidence, Mr Radosavljevic said that there had been phone communication between him and Ms Bridges whilst he was still at work. Such communication was not mentioned by him at all in his affidavit, despite being highly relevant evidence. It is clear to me that Mr Radosavljevic, prior to giving evidence at the inquest, became aware that the telephone records between him and Ms Bridges

during the period in question were exhibits in the investigation. His evidence of the timing of the communications corresponded with the telephone records.

Mr Radosavljevic gave evidence that he called Ms Bridges at 1.00am whilst on his break. He said that she told him that she felt sick but she did not give details. He said that he had an *idea* that she was suffering menstrual issues. When this issue was explored further by counsel assisting, he was not forthcoming or helpful in respect of his knowledge of Ms Bridges' health issues. Even though he was not told of the nature of her illness, she asked him to finish work early and return home to her. He said that she had never asked him to leave work early before. He therefore obtained permission from his employer to leave early as he was scheduled to finish at about 2.30am. He agreed that he likely rang her again at 1.06 am (the time indicated in the records regarding the occurrence of the second phone call) but could not give details of that further conversation. He specifically denied that Ms Bridges told him in these phone conversations about being involved in the crash, about damage to the car, or concern regarding money to pay for car repairs.

In evidence he said that his affidavit was incorrect in stating that Ms Bridges *normally* parked the Pajero in the garage. He gave evidence that, in fact, Ms Bridges does *not* normally park in the garage and he was surprised to see her car in that position when he arrived home. He did not know why he was incorrect in the statement in his affidavit. Interestingly, he said that he had to walk past the Pajero in the garage to the door to enter the house. Despite the small distance between the car and the entry door, and the fact that the damaged side was close to the door, Mr Radosavljevic said that he did not notice the damage until it was pointed out to him by Ms Bridges. He also said he was not surprised to see Ms Bridges up and about even though she was apparently unwell enough to warrant him taking the very unusual step of leaving work early.

It was difficult to ascertain from Mr Radosavljevic's evidence the extent of communication between him and Ms Bridges after he arrived home. Upon his evidence, it seems that it was minimal - an implausible scenario in the circumstances of realising that a shocking event had taken place. Mr Radosavljevic said that when they went to the police station in the car, a drive of seven to eight minutes, he *assumed* that Ms Bridges spoke of what happened but cannot recall any details of what she said at all. He later said that there was a silence in the car whilst trying to "come to terms" with what happened but that he definitely did not engage in a discussion about what they would tell police. Noting the extent of Ms Bridges' verbosity whilst giving evidence, I cannot accept that she remained silent or only spoke minimally about the crash to Mr Radosavljevic between the time he arrived home and the time of entering the police station.

Mr Radosavljevic gave evidence that he was not aware that Ms Bridges' driver's licence was suspended until one week prior to the inquest. However, he subsequently gave evidence that, at a time in 2016 just after the crash, he became aware that she had unpaid fines that caused her licence to be suspended. He explained that his confusion between the versions was due to him being tired as he was giving evidence from working a double shift and having little sleep. I utterly reject this explanation and, again, find that it was contrived to fit with the unassailable documentary evidence. It is likely that he was aware that Ms Bridges was suspended at the time of the crash.

Mr Radosavljevic was very slow and careful to answer questions. The discrepancy between his affidavit and court evidence was marked and much of his account was implausible. I am satisfied that much of his evidence had been rehearsed with Ms Bridges, and in light of further knowledge of the investigation evidence, to ensure consistency between them. I am satisfied that Mr Radosavljevic was working on the evening in question and did leave his shift early to return home to Ms Bridges. However, I do not accept that his return was motivated by an unspecified illness suffered by Ms Bridges and that he had no knowledge of her involvement in a crash until she showed him the damage to her car.

Credibility of Ms Bridges

It will be apparent from my comments already made, that I found Ms Bridges' evidence to be most unsatisfactory and unhelpful to the Court. To illustrate this point and to explain my reasoning I will now deal with some of the main areas of difficulty surrounding her evidence.

I make initial comment about Ms Bridges' manner of giving evidence. Her answers were, as a matter of course, non-responsive and unhelpful, usually defaulting to advocating at length for her own interests. Her evidence as a whole was characterised by a marked propensity to divert responsibility from herself, even if the resulting account was patently illogical or incredible. The degree to which she was unable to answer simple and relevant questions meant that her evidence at inquest was extended well past the anticipated duration but with little benefit to the Court. Despite being an articulate and well-spoken person, she was unable to modify her manner of giving evidence to comply with my repeated requests to provide direct and factual answers, rather giving answers that were overly focussed upon herself. In her police interview, for example, she focused heavily upon her love for her car, its features and her distress at the damage, only acknowledging that a person was deceased very late in the interview. I came to the conclusion that Ms Bridges' sole concern was to exculpate herself from any responsibility in respect of Mr Harmon's death, rather than to assist the coronial functions.

Ms Bridges' manner of driving and attention

Certain aspects of Ms Bridges' account require some focus. She gave evidence that she saw nothing until an object hit her windscreen. She maintained vigorously and persistently that it was only for an instant, less than a second, that she saw the object on the windscreen before it disappeared. She said that there was nothing in the headlight at all before that occurred despite the fact that she was watching the full lane. In her video record of interview after the crash, and in her oral evidence, she said she could give no explanation as to how Mr Harmon came to be in this position because he was definitely not in her lane. She agreed that she only applied the brakes after impact, coinciding with the objective crash investigation evidence. She told the Court, after hearing the crash investigation witnesses that she was "definite" that her perception time only started at the time of impact. On that basis, she suggested that her very fast reaction time to maximum braking as being attributable to the fact that she raced "Formula 16" cars (describing them as high powered go-carts) for a period of two years at 17 and 18 years of age. Even if this evidence is true, Ms Bridges was 51 years of age at the time of the crash. Her evidence in this regard was clearly tailored to the evidence that she had previously heard in Court.

She described the impact as being a brown flash, and doing the best she could, the object appeared to be the size of an A4 piece of paper on the "very far" left side of the windscreen. She presumed, however, that the object was larger than the size of a piece of paper as she did not see its full form. She said it did not come over her bonnet. This evidence was contrary to what Dr Ritchey, Sergeant Carrick and Senior Constable Cordwell indicated that a driver in her position would be expected to see. All said that it would be expected that a driver would recognise a human form in such circumstances. Her headlights were operational and would have illuminated an object in front. Mr Harmon made significant contact at numerous points with the bonnet of her vehicle before his head smashed a large section of the left-hand side of the windscreen.

I have had regard to Mr Marcenko's comprehensive and analytical submissions on behalf of Ms Bridges. He submitted that it was reasonable in all the circumstances that Ms Bridges believed that the object was a kangaroo. I accept that animals, and in particular kangaroo/wallabies are regularly seen on that stretch of road at night time. I also accept that Ms Bridges would not have expected the unusual event of encountering a pedestrian walking on the highway. Mr Marcenko submitted that it is reasonable to infer that Mr Harmon walked into the path of the Pajero during "the second before impact". I do not accept that submission. Upon all of the evidence, Mr Harmon was, in his intoxicated state, not moving quickly. Even if he had moved from the road verge to his position within the lane, he would have been visible within the illuminated beam of a properly adjusted headlight. There is no evidence that Ms Bridges' left headlight was not properly adjusted. She simply

did not see anything at all until an object came to her windscreen. Further, I am satisfied, based upon the analysis of the objective evidence, particularly his hyperextension injuries, that when Mr Harmon was struck, he had his back directly to the traffic. It is unlikely that, in a second, Mr Harmon stepped out quickly sideways from the shadows of the road verge to a position within the lane facing directly forward.

The fact that Mr Harmon was quite capable of being seen from a distance by motorists was evidenced by Mr Alexandrellis and Ms Hoskinson. Specifically, Ms Hoskinson was able to recognise, as she approached Mr Harmon lying on the road, that it was a human body and not an animal. She was able to move her vehicle to the centre of the road to avoid him before she stopped at the scene. I accept, as previously set out, that it was not unreasonable in the circumstances that a prudent driver would not avoid striking a pedestrian walking on the road where Mr Harmon was positioned. The visibility, limitations of the corner and reaction times in this regard have been discussed. I do not accept Ms Bridges' assertion that her perception time commenced when Mr Harmon came onto her windscreen. There is nothing at all to suggest that her perception-reaction time was that of a professional racing car driver, being one second or less. By her own account, the journey on the highway was dark, uneventful and she was preoccupied with thoughts about her personal and menstrual issues. There is nothing to indicate that her perception-reaction time was significantly faster than that of a normal, prudent motorist driving at night or significantly faster than that assumed in the crash investigation and analysis. Her counsel made submissions as to how variations in her speed and reaction times could affect the point of perception of the hazard. He provided a hypothesis (with different speed and point of impact variables and a perception-reaction time of 1.25 seconds) by which Ms Bridges may only have seen the object 5-15 metres before the crash and could not have identified it as a person. He challenged the value of the analysis given by Senior Constable Cordwell, although conceding that it was weighted in favour of a driver in the position of Ms Bridges.

I have already found that it is unlikely that the speed or point of impact were significantly different from those postulated by Senior Constable Cordwell and Sergeant Carrick. I note that both crash investigators gave evidence that, upon examination of the scene, there was nothing to indicate that Ms Bridges was travelling at a speed that significantly varied from 80 km/h or the point of impact could have been significantly different. Mr Alexandrellis and Ms Hoskinson said that they recognised the object as a human when it was only four to six metres away. It is unlikely that such estimates are correct given the evasive measures taken, but the fact remains that they did recognise Mr Harmon on the road. Upon any reasonable analysis, Ms Bridges saw an object on the road, albeit for a second or more, before she struck it. Having seen the object, as the other motorists did, it would have been apparent to her that it was a human and not a kangaroo. As the object came over the left side of her

vehicle bonnet and windscreen, having been illuminated by the headlight, the human form would have been large and clear. I reject the evidence of Ms Bridges that she only saw something the size of a piece of A4 paper come across her windscreen.

She said that when she turned her neck to see what she hit, it was gone. However, she could not specifically recall looking out of the rear window. She said that there was only one loud noise associated with the impact and she heard nothing else. She said that there was no jolting or sensation of impact, and no reverberation in the car. She said that she did not notice that one of her headlights was out, even though they were on low beam and they were not strong light and she was familiar with her vehicle driving at night.

Such evidence was typical of the statements made by Ms Bridges designed to convey that she could not have known that she had struck a person. Ms Bridges was a self-serving witness and, in general terms, not a witness of the truth.

I find that visibility was poor at the time of the crash. It was at night time, with little or no moonlight, no street lights, and Mr Harmon was wearing dark clothing. As previously discussed, it would have been difficult for Ms Bridges to see Mr Harmon and it is reasonable for a driver not to expect to see a pedestrian on the roadway at this location.

Ms Bridges maintained that the fog impacted upon her visibility at the incident site. In evidence she vacillated in her description of the conditions, describing them as both foggy and misty - foggy meaning thick "pea soup" and misty something less than that. She had her head lights on low beam, rather than high beam, because high beam would have been of little assistance.

The fact of fog being a significant problem for motorists' visibility in the area of the crash is not fully supported by the other credible evidence. Mr Alexandrellis indicated that there was some mist in the area. The first witness on the scene, Ms Hoskinson, gave evidence that visibility was clear when she found Mr Harmon. I find that Ms Bridges' evidence of her visibility being affected by the "pea soup" fog was untruthful.

Notwithstanding the above comments, I accept the evidence provided by the crash investigators that the fact that Ms Bridges struck Mr Harmon does not indicate that her driving departed from reasonable standards. Even if she was somewhat distracted, and could have perceived Mr Harmon on the road earlier than she did, she had limited time and distance to react and stop before striking him.

Reasons for continuing to drive

Ms Bridges maintained specifically that a main reason for not stopping after the crash was because of advice given to her by a work colleague, Mr Dermott Bowerman. She alleged that Mr Bowerman said that a driver must “keep on going” after hitting an animal. Mr Bowerman, who gave credible evidence, denied saying that a driver should not stop after hitting an animal. To the contrary, he told the Court that he had himself been taught to stop, check and remove any animal after accidentally striking it on the road. This practice was one that he had always adopted for many years. Mr Bowerman gave sound and responsive evidence, which I accept.

Ms Bridges identified another work colleague, Ms Danielle Hursey, who she said had been party to the conversation, which occurred in late 2015 or early in 2016. Ms Hursey said that Mr Bowerman did not actually provide advice not to stop or get out of the car in the event of striking wildlife, only that he said words to the effect of “if you see an animal you just have to mow them down”. Ms Hursey said that she herself would stop if her car was badly damaged as a result of striking an animal. In my view, Mr Bowerman intended to convey by his words that it is dangerous as a motorist to swerve on a road, even if it meant inevitably striking an animal. It is well-known that that advice is given to many motorists. Ms Bridges, conveniently, provided an interpretation of such advice that suited her own actions.

I agree with Ms Bill’s submission that, even if Mr Bowerman did intend to convey that a motorist should keep driving even after hitting an animal, it is implausible to consider that Ms Bridges recalled that advice and followed it, even in the face of it being dangerous to continue driving with a vehicle so significantly damaged. Ms Bridges gave further evidence that she was “conflicted” about stopping because she was vegetarian; however, she was also an animal lover and knew that animal welfare advocates advised motorists to stop in such a situation. Specifically, she gave evidence that she follows Brightside Farm Sanctuary on Facebook and is opposed to the abattoir killing of animals. Again, in the face of the enormity of the event, I do not accept that any thoughts of this type entered her mind. It is difficult to understand how Ms Bridges did not have the insight to realise that the Court would not accept such evidence as credible.

Ms Bridges had the opportunity to pull over but she did not. In particular, there was a wide gravel section a very short distance away along the highway intended for drivers to stop safely to the side of the highway. Ms Bridges had her mobile phone with her. She had the ability to safely stop, look at what she had hit and make a call to emergency services. Instead, she said that she did not look back and continued to drive. She said that she did not know about the gravel ‘pull-over’ area, but this area is clearly visible to a motorist seeking to stop their vehicle. Interestingly, Ms Bridges was able to recite accurately to police the positions of various signs on the highway, given her familiarity with the

road. To continue to drive in this situation without assessing damage to the car or injury to the alleged animal indicates panic and the desire to flee from the scene. Hitting an animal *per se* is a common occurrence and, whilst unfortunate, should not trigger flight from the scene.

Ms Bridges said that she would have stopped if she knew she had struck a human being. I reject her evidence in this regard.

Suspension of licence

Ms Bridges was not, at the time of the crash, lawfully able to drive due to the fact that her licence had been suspended by the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service (MPES) for a failure to pay parking fines from 30 March 2016. Ms Bridges maintained that she was unaware of the suspension. MPES records indicate that three letters were sent to her current address in respect of the suspension. Those records also showed that Ms Bridges' licence had been suspended on prior occasions, and that she had paid to have those suspensions revoked. In evidence it was put to Ms Bridges that she had periods of suspension in accordance with MPES records in 2012 and 2014. She became argumentative, non-responsive and said that she could not recall any previous periods of suspension, even though she volunteered that 16 years ago she was suspended for six months.

Ms Bridges paid the required debt on 2 August 2016, and consequently the suspension was revoked. Even after the crash, Ms Bridges subsequently accumulated further unpaid parking fines and, was again suspended from driving on 15 June 2017. Her suspension was revoked when she again paid the required amount. In evidence she said, in relation to the suspension at the time of the crash, that she did not receive the letters warning her that it would be imposed. She gave evidence that Mr Radosavljevic usually took the letters from the mail box but did not explain at all how she did not see any of the three letters sent to her current address. I am quite satisfied that she did know that she was suspended at the time of the crash and that her evidence to the contrary is simply false. I find that her knowledge of her licence suspension contributed to her continuing to drive away from the scene of the crash and to her failure to notify emergency services in a timely manner.

Conduct at home post-crash

After the crash, it took Ms Bridges eight minutes to drive to her home. I am satisfied upon the evidence that it was unusual for her to park in the garage. She said in evidence: "I only parked there if I was angry with Dragan". She gave evidence that she was furious at Dragan for not building an undercover carport, as her car was so important to her. She said that on the occasion of the crash such anger was not a factor; it was just to look at the damage. She said that she put the garage door down to stop the cats getting out, not to hide the damage. However, she maintained that she only

looked at the damage for a few seconds, explaining that she was trying to put the garage door down, ensure the cats were contained and get in the front door of the house. When she saw the damage she was in shock and her prime concern became the car, given her emotional attachment to it and the cost of fixing it. Giving other reasons for not apparently thoroughly inspecting the damage, Ms Bridges said in her police interview that the light in the garage only activates for a matter of seconds. The crash investigators inspecting the car, however, gave evidence the light stayed on for about 10 minutes. Mr Radosavljevic also stated that the light was on when he got home. Ms Bridges gave no credible or consistent evidence about this point. Mr Marcenko submitted that it was reasonable for Ms Bridges to park in the garage to inspect the damage. However, the inability of Ms Bridges to give any logical evidence on this point (together with the other matters I have dealt with above) leads me to the conclusion that when she did so, it was her intention to conceal the damage to her vehicle.

A few minutes after arriving home, at 11.44pm, Ms Bridges sent a text to her father in the United Kingdom asking him to transfer to her the sum of \$1,000. She said that this was to pay for repairs to her car. Her father responded shortly afterwards stating that he would transfer the money. In the text exchange, she did not mention to her father that the amount was to pay for damage sustained to the car because she said that he was protective of her and did not like her being in Australia.

In her interview with police later the following morning, she made no mention of the phone calls between her and Mr Radosavljevic. Instead, she told the interviewing officers that she was waiting up as she was anticipating that she would help him treat his foot condition. She said that he told her on the phone that he would come home early because she was unwell. She said that she did not tell him about the accident on the phone because he would be angry and she wanted to say that she had already arranged the funds from her father. Therefore, she was anticipating an argument about finances and did not go to sleep. This evidence is implausible. I find that something was said by Ms Bridges to Mr Radosavljevic regarding the crash to cause him to take the unusual step of leaving work early. I find that Ms Bridges was waiting outside to greet him as he stated in his affidavit and then showed him the damage to the car. It is quite likely that, because of what she told him on the phone, he spoke to a police officer at the scene to find out what happened. The statement made by the police officer to the effect of "it's as bad as it gets" does not imply that a pedestrian had been struck by a vehicle, as opposed to, say, vehicles striking each other. The fact that Ms Bridges made the connection immediately indicates that she was aware of the fact that it was her vehicle that had struck the person.

Summary of Findings

In summary, I find that Mr Harmon died as a result of misadventure by walking on an unlit highway in the dark whilst intoxicated. He did not intend to end his own life. Ms Bridges did not intentionally strike Mr Harmon. She was travelling well under the speed limit and had not consumed drugs or alcohol. It is likely that she was tired or distracted, or both, and did not see Mr Harmon until she was a short distance away from him when she could not have avoided striking him. Even if she had seen him earlier, she may not have been able to avoid striking him, particularly if she had been travelling at the speed limit of 100km/h.

I find that Ms Bridges knew that she had hit a person at the time of impact and subsequently failed to stop, likely out of panic because of her licence suspension of which she was well aware. The evidence indicates that Mr Harmon could not have been saved, even if Ms Bridges had stopped and sought help for him immediately.

I acknowledge that Ms Bridges presented herself to the police station some hours after crash.

Unfortunately, Ms Bridges' false account of the circumstances of the crash led to an unnecessarily lengthy investigation. In particular, her false testimony caused significant distress to Mr Harmon's loved ones.

Formal Findings

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Trinton John Harmon;
- b) Mr Harmon died as a result of being a pedestrian hit by a car driven by Simone Bridges in the circumstances described in this finding;
- c) The cause of Mr Harmon's death was multiple injuries suffered in the crash; and
- d) Mr Harmon died 8 July 2016 at the South Arm Highway, Mornington, Tasmania.

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

I acknowledge the actions of Ms Tracey Hoskinson, Ms Kim Boscoe and Mr Leslie Broadbent (now deceased) in stopping and attending to Mr Harmon and preserving the scene for the investigation.

I extend my appreciation to Ms Emily Bill, counsel assisting, and Constable Amanda Phair, coroner's associate, for their assistance. I also make mention of Mr Marcenko, counsel for Ms Bridges, who represented his client competently and was of assistance to the Court.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Trinton John Harmon.

Dated: 26 August 2020 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart
Coroner