



# MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

## CORONIAL DIVISION

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

*Coroners Act 1995  
Coroners Rules 2006  
Rule 11*

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Stephen James Dishman

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Stephen James Dishman.
- b) Mr Dishman was born on 8 September 1951 and was aged 70 years at his death. He was married and was a citizen of the United States of America ordinarily residing in Houston, Texas. He was the proprietor of a construction company. He held current Texas USA car and motorcycle licences. At the time of his death, Mr Dishman was in Tasmania to participate in a vintage and classic motorcycle rally conducted by the British Motorcycle Club of Tasmania. For several days prior to his death, Mr Dishman was driving a 1953 Vincent Rapide Series C registered motorcycle owned by his friend, Peter Bender, with Mr Bender's permission. Mr Dishman was an experienced motorcycle rider and, after his arrival in Hobart on 15 March 2022, he commenced riding with Mr Bender around various parts of the state. There is no indication upon the evidence that he had any difficulty in doing so.

On 29 March 2022, whilst participating in the rally, Mr Dishman left Hobart and travelled to the East Coast of Tasmania, intending to travel via St Helens to Launceston after stopping at Weldborough (in the north-east of the state) for lunch. Mr Dishman was riding behind Mr Bender and in front of another rider, Nick Jeffries. At 11.30am, just before his death, Mr Dishman was riding on the Tasman Highway at Goshen, west of St Helens. The bitumen road surface was in good condition, comprised two lanes, and had a 100km/h posted speed limit. The weather was fine. Mr Dishman had not consumed alcohol or drugs, was wearing an approved helmet and correct attire, and the motorcycle was mechanically sound. At this time, Mr Dishman failed to negotiate a tight left hand bend, riding straight off to the opposite side of the road in front of an

oncoming campervan, into a deep culvert, and then into a bank. The left hand bend was marked with a clearly visible 45km/h advisory sign. Unfortunately, despite the rendering of medical assistance, Mr Dishman died at the scene as a result of a broken neck. The subsequent autopsy revealed that he had some heart disease but not enough to have contributed to the crash or his death.

The very thorough coronial investigation following Mr Dishman's death, including specialised crash analysis, indicates that Mr Dishman was not travelling recklessly or inattentively. I am satisfied that he was travelling at a speed under 60 km/h. Although I am not able to make any more precise finding regarding his speed, I am satisfied that he was nevertheless travelling too fast to safely negotiate the particular bend in question. Prior to his crash, his motorcycle leaned excessively to the left through the bend causing the left foot peg to scrape on the ground for some distance. This, in turn, caused the motorcycle to become upright, cross the centre line and continue travelling onto the gravel verge of the opposite lane. It then travelled a further distance into a drain and impacted with the bank before coming to rest.

- c) Mr Dishman's cause of death was cervical spine (C3/C4) fracture dislocation.
- d) Mr Dishman died on 29 March 2022 at Goshen, Tasmania.

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

- The police report of death for the coroner;
- An opinion of the forensic pathologist who conducted the autopsy;
- Toxicology report of Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Affidavits confirming identification;
- Medical records for Mr Dishman;
- Affidavit of Transport Inspector regarding condition of the motorcycle;
- Affidavits of Colin Pearson and Jarrod Seabrook, eyewitnesses;
- Affidavit of Peter Bender, friend of Mr Dishman and owner of the motorcycle;
- Affidavit and report of First Class Constable Nigel Housego, crash investigator;
- Affidavits of two police officers attending the scene, including a Forensic Services officer;
- Scene photos and sketches, drone images, traffic crash report and police incident report, and recording of emergency call; and
- Department of State Growth crash details for the area.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

I extend my appreciation to First Class Constable Nigel Housego, experienced crash investigator, for his investigation and report.

I also acknowledge the assistance, including resuscitation measures, provided to Mr Dishman by a number of people who came upon the scene.

The circumstances of Mr Dishman's death are not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

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

**Dated:** 5 April 2023 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
Coroner