



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11

I, Simon Cooper, Coroner, having investigated the suspected death of Angela Joy Jeffrey

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Angela Joy Jeffrey;
- b) While satisfied Mrs Jeffrey is dead, I am unable to determine the particular circumstances of her death;
- c) I am unable to determine the cause of Mrs Jeffrey's death; and
- d) Mrs Jeffrey died on or after 2 June 2016 in the vicinity of Bakers Beach Tasmania, at a location I am unable to determine.

Why Mrs Jeffrey's disappearance is being investigated

1. The *Coroners Act 1995* (the *Act*) governs the investigation of deaths in Tasmania. Section 21(1) of the *Act* provides that "[a] coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death if it appears to the coroner that the death is or may be a reportable death."
2. 'Death' is defined in section 3 of the *Act* as including a suspected death.
3. 'Reportable death' is defined in the same section as including a death which occurred in Tasmania and was unexpected or the cause of which is unknown.
4. Thus if a coroner suspects (on reasonable grounds) that a person has died and the death meets the definition of a reportable death, then that coroner has the power to investigate that person's disappearance.
5. For reasons which will become apparent in this finding I am satisfied that it is appropriate to investigate the disappearance of Angela Joy Jeffrey because I am satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that she is dead.

Mrs Jeffrey's background

6. Mrs Jeffrey was born on 7 November 1962 in Burnie, the eldest daughter of Shirley and Murray Guard. One of four children, she was raised and educated on the North West Coast of Tasmania.
7. Mrs Jeffrey met her future husband David a year after leaving school. The couple married in 1982 when she was aged 20. The following year Mr and Mrs Jeffrey moved to Western Australia where they lived for the next 6 years. Her husband reports that while living in Western Australia Mrs Jeffrey suffered from, and was formally diagnosed with, depression. Ultimately, the couple decided to move back to Tasmania.
8. Mrs Jeffrey was the mother to two children, Kareena and Ryan. In addition, she was a proud grandmother to Kareena's young son, Noah.
9. It is apparent from her extensive medical records, which were obtained and examined as part of the investigation into her disappearance, that Mrs Jeffrey struggled with depression most of her adult life. She was medicated with antidepressant medication for many years, had at least one period of treatment as an inpatient at the Spencer Clinic at the Burnie Hospital, and received extensive support from psychologists, psychiatrists, general practitioners and, above all, her loving family.
10. At the time of her disappearance in June 2016 Mrs Jeffrey was working in the community care sector.
11. Mrs Jeffrey's grandson, Noah, was born in June 2015. Reportedly, Kareena experienced complications with her labour, which in turn caused significant stress and worry to Mrs Jeffrey.
12. Shortly before Mrs Jeffrey's disappearance she and Mr Jeffrey enjoyed a holiday in New Zealand. Mr Jeffrey said in an affidavit made by him on 30 September 2016 that during the holiday Mrs Jeffrey was "really good and happy... [and that]...she seemed to be really enjoying herself." Mr and Mrs Jeffrey returned home to Penguin on the evening of Saturday, 28 May 2016. The following day, Sunday, 29 May 2016 Mr and Mrs Jeffrey enjoyed lunch with friends. On Monday however Mr Jeffrey describes his wife as being "really down again". He

said that she did not want to get out of bed. Ryan described his mother at this time as the worst he had ever seen her.

13. Mrs Jeffrey went to work the next day, 31 May 2016, for 3 hours. Her community care client that day in a subsequent affidavit described her as being apparently in good spirits and said she talked about her New Zealand holiday. Mrs Jeffrey visited a friend on the way home. She had an appointment to see her psychiatrist, Dr Christopher Robinson, but illness meant that he had to postpone the appointment. Dr Robinson spoke to Mrs Jeffrey by telephone that day and suggested the appointment be rescheduled to 10 June 2016. Mrs Jeffrey and Dr Robinson agreed that they would speak on Thursday or Friday of the same week when Dr Robinson returned to work to confirm the new appointment.
14. At about 3.00pm the same day she contacted her supervisor at work to ask for 3 months off work. The supervisor described her as seeming shaken, upset and distressed. She indicated approval of Mrs Jeffrey's request, suggested she contact her doctor and speak about a mental health plan.
15. Family members describe Mrs Jeffrey as "tired and drained" upon her arrival home that day. Mrs Jeffrey told her husband she had resigned from work and that her last day would be Thursday 2 June 2016.

The circumstances of her disappearance

16. On Wednesday, 1 June 2016, Mr Jeffrey went to work at approximately 8.00am. He went home for lunch. Upon arriving home, he found that his wife was still in bed. Their daughter Kareena was lying next to her. Young Noah was sitting on the bed.
17. Kareena described her mother as extremely distressed and expressing suicidal ideation. She tried to encourage her mother to get out of bed and see a doctor or go to hospital - options her mother refused. Ryan, who was also home, went into the bedroom for a short time and recalled that his mother was "really bad".
18. Eventually Mr Jeffrey and Kareena were able to convince Mrs Jeffrey to get out of bed. Mrs Jeffrey declined to accompany Kareena to Burnie as had previously been arranged. Mrs Jeffrey then hugged Kareena as she and Noah left the house.

19. At about 12.30pm Mrs Jeffrey told her husband that she was going to the chemist to pick up a prescription. This was the last time that Mr Jeffrey saw his wife. Mrs Jeffrey left the family home at Penguin in her grey 2010 Mitsubishi Lancer registered number C87QE.
20. When Mrs Jeffrey did not return Mr Jeffrey tried calling her mobile phone. He heard the phone ringing in the couple's bedroom. He contacted family and friends to try and locate his wife without success. At about 5.00pm he attended the local Penguin chemist. Staff reviewed video footage recorded during the afternoon but were unable to locate Mrs Jeffrey. Accordingly, at 5.34pm Mr Jeffrey contacted Tasmania Police to indicate his concerns for his wife's welfare. Police attended the Jeffrey home shortly after and efforts were commenced to attempt to locate Mrs Jeffrey.
21. Mr Jeffrey noticed some of his wife's medication was missing. He gave the remainder to the police who attended in response to his concern for welfare advice. Later the same evening, at about 8.00pm, Kareena went into the master bedroom and found notes under her mother's pillow. Those notes were handwritten. The handwriting was subsequently identified as being that of Mrs Jeffrey. It is unnecessary to go into detail about content of the notes other than to say they were addressed to family members and in their terms farewell notes. In addition, Mr Jeffrey noticed that a bottle of Malibu liquor purchased by the couple on their recent New Zealand trip was missing.

The search for Mrs Jeffrey

22. Immediately after receiving information from Mr Jeffrey as to the details of his wife's disappearance police issued a statewide 'KALOF' (Keep A Lookout For) notice. Initial checks were made with taxi companies, hotels and local hospitals. At 11.45pm the same day a "concern for welfare" post was placed on the Tasmania Police Facebook page and media releases drafted and distributed.
23. At about 3.00pm the next day, Thursday, 2 June 2016 a group of men riding four-wheel motorbikes (so-called 'All Terrain Vehicles') in the vicinity of Bakers Beach happened upon a woman walking on a track off Bakers Creek Road. The circumstances in which the woman was encountered and the description of her from two of those men, Mr Jason Hyde and Mr Shane Burden, satisfy me that the woman the men saw, and briefly spoke to, was Mrs Jeffrey. I note that she

was described as having scratches on her face and dirt on her jeans but that she told Mr Hyde she was 'ok' or 'fine'. There is no evidence of Mrs Jeffrey being seen alive after this time.

24. The next afternoon, Friday 3 June 2016, at about 4.30pm Mr Peter Apted was in the same general area looking for wood to cut. He saw a Mitsubishi Lancer parked in the middle of a track. He did not approach the car and later told investigators he went straight home after seeing it. When he got home, Mr Apted saw on a television news programme a story about Mrs Jeffrey being missing. He recognised straightaway that the car he had seen was hers (as it indeed was) and immediately contacted police. Police officers arrived at Mr Apted's home at about 7.00pm and he took them to Mrs Jeffrey's car which was located at 41 degrees 11' 22 S; 146 degrees 37' 30 E. Police observed that the driver's door was ajar and the dash lights were on. The back seat of the car was reclined and a bottle of Malibu was found in the rear passenger foot well. Various personal effects of Mrs Jeffrey including her wallet, electronic tablet and boxes of medication were found in the car. In addition, there were several notes in Mrs Jeffrey's handwriting located in the vehicle. The notes were concerned with religious themes. Dirt and broken dead bracken ferns were located in the foot wells of the car.
25. Mr Apted is to be commended for his contacting police as quickly as he did and the assistance he afforded to them in the investigation. Once the vehicle was located it was possible for the search to commence with a higher degree of focus. A search was commenced from the location of Mrs Jeffrey's car. Tracks extending along Browns Creek, Branchs Creek and Bakers Beach Roads were all searched. Formal efforts were suspended at 2.00am although roving patrols continued.
26. The same night also after watching the news on television Mr Burden rang Mr Hyde to tell him he thought the woman they had seen near Bakers Creek Road the day before was the missing person Mrs Jeffrey. The men then contacted police with information that proved important to enable further focus to be brought to the search. Mr Burden and Mr Hyde are also to be commended for the assistance they provided to the investigation.

27. At 6.00am on Saturday, 4 June 2016, search efforts were recommenced. By 7.30am, after a briefing, a large contingent of searchers mainly comprising of SES and Police personnel were in the field searching for Mrs Jeffrey. Some of the searchers were in (or on) vehicles and others on foot. The search was supported by the Westpac Police Rescue helicopter.
28. Later in the morning two tracker dogs, horse mounted searchers and a second helicopter fitted with a forward looking infrared camera all joined the search. No trace of Mrs Jeffrey was located and at 6.00pm on Saturday evening, the search was suspended (although roving patrols continued in the area overnight).
29. The next day, Sunday, 5 June 2016, saw an expansion of the search area to include the Rubicon River estuary and the Narawntapu National Park as well as areas along the Frankford Highway. Resources employed that day again included two helicopters, police specialist search and rescue personnel, police officers on all-terrain vehicles, a large contingent of SES, civilian volunteers and police officers on foot, SES and civilian volunteers in 4 wheel drive vehicles, mounted search and rescue personnel, trail bike riders from the Tasmanian Enduro Riders Club, handlers with tracker dogs as well as members of Mrs Jeffrey's family and friends.
30. The search was informed by regular contact with Mr David Jeffrey and other family members, as well as meteorological forecasting. In addition, calculations as to search parameters were based upon recognised lost person behaviour theory. By mid-morning on Sunday, 5 June 2016, the weather deteriorated significantly. This had two impacts upon the search. First, flying conditions became unsafe and by midday aircraft were no longer able to be utilised. Second, flash flooding occurred and trees began to fall in the search area, endangering ground searchers. Accordingly, the search was suspended at 4.30pm.
31. Terrible weather conditions meant no search activities could occur the following day within the identified area, although Surf Life Saving Tasmania undertook searches in the Rubicon River (without result). Significant flooding events had occurred overnight, which stretched Police and SES; resources from both agencies were needed to respond to flood emergencies in various other areas in the North West region of Tasmania.

32. On Tuesday, 7 June 2016, search efforts for Mrs Jeffrey were recommenced. By then it was apparent to those involved in coordinating the search that given the time Mrs Jeffrey had been missing, her inexperience in the bush, her reported inadequate clothing and the weather, her chances of survival were virtually non-existent.
33. Search coordinators sought advice from Dr Paul Luckin, a recognised expert in survivability and consultant to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Dr Luckin expressed the opinion that there was virtually no chance of Mrs Jeffrey being alive by that time. Appropriately, in my view, search and rescue coordinators changed the focus of the search from a rescue operation to an attempt to locate Mrs Jeffrey's body.
34. Accordingly, a police cadaver dog was committed to the search but nothing of interest located. Eventually, on Monday, 13 June 2016, with no trace of Mrs Jeffrey having been found a decision was made, again an appropriate one in my view, to suspend the formal search.
35. No trace of Mrs Jeffrey's body has ever been found.

Informal search efforts

36. While the formal, coordinated search for Mrs Jeffrey was undertaken, a parallel, informal search organised through Facebook also occurred. A large number of people were involved in that search. Their community spirit is acknowledged. The informal search efforts continued until approximately 28 June 2016.
37. On Saturday, 11 June 2016 some of those volunteers located a black cardigan at about 1.30pm. Unfortunately those searchers did not leave the cardigan where it was and handled it in a manner inconsistent with appropriate forensic examination procedures. Police were advised and took possession of the cardigan. It was subsequently forensically examined at the laboratory of Forensic Science Service Tasmania and traces of Mrs Jeffrey's DNA were identified as being present on it. I am satisfied on the basis of the forensic evidence that the cardigan belonged to Mrs Jeffrey.
38. In addition, those organising the search received a Facebook post from a member of the public just before midnight on 17 – 18 June 2016. The post contained information about a possible sighting of Mrs Jeffrey on 2 June 2016. It

is regrettable that the author of the post did not pass the information on to Police rather than volunteer searchers. It is also unfortunate that the information was not passed on considerably earlier than 18 June.

Subsequent enquiries

39. Mrs Jeffrey's disappearance has been the focus of features in two subsequent National Missing Person Weeks. Enquiries have been conducted in relation to financial activity, interstate travel and with interstate police jurisdictions without success. Substantial coverage in mainstream and social media has elicited no sightings of Mrs Jeffrey.
40. In all the circumstances, viewing the evidence as a whole I am satisfied that Angela Joy Jeffrey is deceased. The evidence does not allow me to reach a conclusion as to the cause of her death. The circumstances in which she disappeared suggest that she died at her own hand, although in the absence of her body it is impossible to reach a concluded view as to this.

Comments and Recommendations

41. The circumstances of Mrs Jeffrey's death are not such as to require me to make any recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.
42. I do however consider it appropriate to **comment** that while the efforts, including the use of social media, by members of the public organising a search at the same time as Tasmania Police were laudable, it is important that any information at all be passed on as quickly as possible to the appropriate authorities. The fact that relevant information was not given to Police for 16 days, whilst unlikely in this case to have affected the outcome of the search, might do so in cases in the future. The same comment holds true with respect to the cardigan. It was handled in a manner completely inconsistent with appropriate investigative protocols – a fact which could well hamper an investigation (although I acknowledge it did not in this case).
43. I acknowledge in particular the efforts of First Class Constable Wotherspoon who was the officer primarily responsible for coordinating search efforts for Mrs Jeffrey.

44. I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Mrs Jeffrey on their loss.

Dated 13 August 2019 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper
Coroner