



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 Peter Michael Warrington Chilvers

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Peter Michael Warrington Chilvers;
- b) Mr Chilvers was born in Launceston on 20 March 1971. At the time of his death, he was aged 49 years, was a respected farmer, and was living with his family on their farm, "Winburn", at Nile. He was married to Fiona Chilvers and they have two children, Charlotte and Felix. Mr Chilvers was in good health and physically fit. Mr Chilvers was an experienced rock climber, bushwalker, skier and mountaineer.

Mr Chilvers had, for several years, planned an expedition to complete the Mt Geryon traverse and decided to undertake the expedition to celebrate his 50th birthday. The other three members of the expedition, which included his brother, were experienced climbers and mountaineers. Mt Geryon is a dolerite mountain in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park comprising two peaks (each with an elevation in excess of 1500 metres) in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. All members of the group were familiar with the area, the requirements of the expedition and were properly equipped with high-quality gear and equipment for climbing.

On the morning of 18 March 2021, the group departed for Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park and reached the summit of South Geryon at about 6.30 pm that evening. They camped overnight at the summit. At 9.00 am the following day, being 19 March, the group moved to the abseil point on South Geryon to prepare to abseil down the mountain to the base of Foresight, which is a large block pillar between North and South Geryon. They intended then to traverse over Foresight to climb North Geryon.

At the summit of South Geryon, the group determined that it was necessary to join two 60 metre ropes together to allow an abseil of 60 metres. Mr Chilvers therefore tied two 60 metre ropes together at the anchor maillon and prepared to descend. As he leant back to commence the abseil, the knot joining two ropes became fully untied and detached from the anchor point. As a result, he fell a distance of 100 metres into a steep gully below, hitting a ledge on the way down.

A photograph of Mr Chilvers preparing to abseil was taken by another group member and captured the knot that he had used to join the ropes together. Based upon the expert evidence of the investigator, I find that the knot was an “abnormal figure 8” knot, being unsafe for the intended purpose. Additionally, it was poorly dressed and had insufficient ‘tails’ at the end of the knot. Both of these issues also contributed to it becoming dismantled. The evidence indicates that, unfortunately, Mr Chilvers did not test the knot after tying it as he normally would. It is possible that he was distracted and inadvertently tied an unsuitable knot without checking its strength.

- c) The cause of Mr Chilvers’ death was massive non-survivable head, trunk and limb injuries.
- d) Mr Chilvers died on 19 March 2021 at Mount Geryon in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in Tasmania.

In making the above findings, I have had regard to the evidence gained in the investigation into Mr Chilvers’ death. The evidence includes:

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- An opinion of the forensic pathologist regarding cause of death;
- The results of toxicological analysis of samples taken by autopsy;
- Affidavits of life extinct and identification;
- Affidavit of Fiona Chilvers, wife of Mr Chilvers;
- Affidavit of William Chilvers, brother of Mr Chilvers;
- Affidavits of the three other members of the expedition;

- Statement from Sam Bosshard, providing evidence of Mr Chilvers' climbing knowledge and skills and expertise as to the climbing knots used;
- Statement by Nic Deka, Regional Manager of Parks and Wildlife;
- Affidavit of attending and investigating police officers;
- Records from Ambulance Tasmania;
- Medical records for Mr Chilvers; and
- Forensic and photographic evidence.

Comments

I appreciate the investigation carried out by the investigating officer, Senior Constable Leighton Riggall. Senior Constable Riggall, a qualified search and rescue controller, is an experienced mountaineer and a trainer in rope access and vertical rescue techniques. I have relied upon his thorough investigation and expert analysis in determining the circumstances surrounding Mr Chilvers' tragic accidental death.

I am satisfied that no other person contributed to the death of Mr Chilvers.

It is unnecessary to make recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

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

Dated: 16 November 2021 at Hobart Coroners Court in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart
Coroner