



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 death of Robert McEwen Dunlop

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Robert McEwen Dunlop;
- b) Mr Dunlop died in the circumstances set out further in this finding;
- c) The cause of Mr Dunlop's death was freshwater drowning; and
- d) Mr Dunlop died, aged 50 years, on 29 December 2022 in the waters of Great Lake near Liawenee, Tasmania.

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

- Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits confirming identity;
- Report – Dr Christopher Lawrence, Forensic Pathologist;
- Report– Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Medical Records – Sheffield Medical Centre;
- Medical Records – Tasmanian Health Service;
- Affidavit – Mrs Cindy Dunlop, sworn 8 May 2023;
- Affidavit – Mr Craig Ashdown, sworn 29 December 2022;
- Affidavit – Mr David Parker, sworn 29 December 2022;
- Affidavit – Mrs Michelle Parker, sworn 29 December 2022;
- Affidavit – Senior Constable Daniel Adams, sworn 8 May 2023;
- Affidavit – Sergeant Justin Lawson, Marine and Rescue Services, Tasmania Police, sworn 3 January 2023;
- Affidavit – Senior Constable Daniel Korn, Marine and Rescue Services, Tasmania Police, sworn 17 January 2023;

- Affidavit –Senior Constable Connor Young, Dive Squad, Tasmania Police, sworn 4 January 2023; and
- Scene photographs, drone and body worn camera footage.

Introduction

Mr Dunlop was a married father of two adult children. He was employed as an arborist at the time of his death. Evidently he was an adventurous man who, apart from a diagnosis in 2018 of type II diabetes, was healthy and physically fit. He was described as a competent freshwater and ocean swimmer.

Circumstances of death

On 29 December 2022, Mr Dunlop was in the area of Boundary Bay, Great Lake, Liaweenee on a fishing trip. He was the sole occupant of his near new Quintrex aluminium dinghy. The evidence is that at about 12.40pm he returned to shore near to where he had parked his vehicle and boat trailer. While he cooked himself some lunch on the rear tray of his ute it would appear that his dinghy, which had been left untethered but resting in shallow water on the shoreline, drifted away from the shore.

Witness evidence from Mr David Parker and Mrs Michelle Parker indicates that Mr Dunlop stripped off his clothing to his underpants and entered the water to swim a distance of approximately 200 metres to where his dinghy was drifting. Mrs Parker saw Mr Dunlop reach his boat.

Another witness, Mr Craig Ashdown realised that Mr Dunlop was in trouble. He described seeing him disappearing under the water near the boat. He contacted emergency services and police arrived on the scene and a search was commenced involving members of the Tasmania Police Dive Squad, members of the public, ground based units, the rescue helicopter and a drone.

Members of the Tasmania Police Dive Squad located Mr Dunlop's body the following morning, 30 December 2022, in approximately 9 metres of water.

Investigation

Mr Dunlop's body was removed from the water and taken to the nearby Miena Community Centre where he was formally identified. His body was then taken to the mortuary at the Royal Hobart Hospital for autopsy. The autopsy was carried out by experienced forensic pathologist Dr Christopher Lawrence. Dr Lawrence provided a report. In the report he said that the autopsy revealed no injury, no significant heart disease but over expanded lungs

consistent with drowning. He expressed the opinion, which I accept, that the cause of Mr Dunlop's death was freshwater drowning.

Toxicological analysis of samples taken at autopsy did not detect the presence of alcohol or any drugs in Mr Dunlop's body.

An examination of his boat was carried out by Senior Constable Daniel Korn, an experienced member of Tasmania Police Marine and Rescue Services. The boat was found to be in a completely pristine condition.

Finally, the weather conditions at Great Lake on the day Mr Dunlop drowned were clear and sunny. The water temperature was approximately 14°C.

Conclusion

There are no suspicious circumstances associated with Mr Dunlop's death. I am satisfied that his death was the result of misadventure.

Comments and Recommendations

The circumstances of Mr Dunlop'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 Dunlop.

Dated: 31 October 2023 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper
Coroner