



# 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*

**(These findings have been de-identified in relation to the name of the deceased, family, friends, and others by direction of the Coroner pursuant to s57(1)(c) of the Coroners Act 1995)**

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of HN.

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is HN, date of birth 2 October 1941.
- b) HN was aged 80 years at his death. He was divorced with one son. For much of his working life, he had been employed as a linesman for the Post Master General followed by Telecom. In or around 1980, HN was knocked from his pushbike and suffered a significant head injury. Unfortunately, there were ongoing consequences for HN, including a change to his personality. His marriage broke down and he could no longer work. Despite this, HN's son described him as being active, independent, mentally alert and in good physical health.

At 2.10pm on 1 July 2022, HN and his son left HN's residence on Boland Street in Launceston in HN's silver Mercedes Benz. HN had a tax appointment in Newnham at 2.30pm, and agreed to drop his son off at a mechanic's workshop in Wellington Street on the way. Once that had occurred, HN drove in a northerly direction along Goderich Street, continuing onto the East Tamar Highway towards the exit to University Way. Several witnesses driving in the area described seeing a silver Mercedes Benz (HN's vehicle) driving 'erratically' - speeding up, slowing down and changing lanes close to other cars.

Shortly before 2.40pm, HN moved into the north bound right turning lane of the East Tamar Highway with an intention to turn into University Way. At approximately the same time, truck driver Gurjeet Bhullar was driving a Fuso

Fighter refrigerated van (“the truck”) in a southerly direction on the highway towards Launceston. The truck was owned by his employer, SRT Logistics Pty Ltd. Mr Bhullar was traveling below the 80km/h posted speed limit for the area. As Mr Bhullar neared the University Way intersection, he saw HN’s Mercedes Benz travelling north towards him in the right turn lane and recalled thinking that the driver was driving too fast. Mr Bhullar therefore applied his brakes. HN then turned suddenly in front of Mr Bhullar and into his lane, causing the left side of his truck and the left side of the Mercedes to collide. The forward momentum of the truck pushed the front left of the Mercedes in a southerly direction, causing it to rotate clockwise and wrap around the front of the truck. The truck then pushed the Mercedes a total distance of 37.3 metres south of the impact point before it came to a stop. Ambulance paramedics attended the scene quickly but, despite administering first aid, HN passed away due to injuries from the crash.

I am satisfied that Mr Bhullar was driving the truck attentively and was travelling below the sign posted speed limit. He was unable to avoid a collision, despite reacting and applying the brakes of the truck at an early time.

The crash was caused entirely by HN failing to give way to the truck when he was required to do so. I cannot determine upon the evidence whether he failed to see the oncoming truck, misjudged the distance or was in a hurry because he was late for his appointment. I am satisfied that the weather conditions, road conditions, alcohol and drugs were not factors in this crash.

- c) HN’s cause of death was chest and abdominal injuries sustained in a collision with a truck.
- d) HN died on 1 July 2022 at Mowbray, Tasmania.

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits confirming life extinct and identification;
- An opinion of the forensic pathologist who conducted the autopsy;
- Toxicology Report of Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Ambulance Tasmania electronic patient care record;
- Launceston General Hospital and Rose Cottage Medical Centre records for HN;

- Affidavit of James Ross, Transport Safety and Investigation Officer with the Department of State Growth;
- Affidavit of Conrad Brown-Thomas, Safety and Compliance Officer with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator;
- Affidavit of Gurjeet Bhullar, driver of the truck involved in the crash;
- Affidavit of Andrew Gray, witness to HN engaging in erratic driving prior to the crash;
- Affidavit of Benjamin Ritson, witness to the crash;
- Affidavit of Chelsea Crawford, witness to HN driving erratically prior to the crash;
- Affidavit of Daniel Beechey, witness to the crash;
- DashCam footage of the crash from the truck;
- Affidavit of AB, son of HN;
- Affidavits of two police officers attending the scene, including a Forensic Services officer;
- Affidavit and report of First Class Constable Nigel Housego, crash investigator;
- Scene photos and sketch, traffic crash report, police incident report, crash history of the crash location and incident report;
- Personnel records for Mr Bhullar provided by SRT Logistics;
- Licence and registration details for HN; and
- Report provided by Department of State Growth.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

Experienced Crash Investigator for this investigation, Constable Nigel Housego, identified prior instances of crashes at the East Tamar Highway/University Way intersection.

As a result, I sought comment from Department of State Growth and received a helpful response advising that the East Tamar Highway/University Way intersection has been categorised as being a high priority for improvements as part of the East Tamar Highway Corridor Strategy.

Accordingly, I **recommend** that the Department of State Growth improve the safety of the East Tamar Highway/University Way intersection.

I extend my appreciation to investigating officer Constable Nigel Housego for his investigation and report.

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

**Dated:** 16 October 2023 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
**Coroner**