



**CORONERS COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Inquest:	Inquest into the disappearance and presumed death of Jessica Jade Zrinski
Hearing dates:	2 – 4 March 2026 and 24 – 28 August 2026
Date of judgment:	28 August 2026 (delivered orally) 8 October 2026 (published)
Place of judgment:	Coroners Court of NSW, Lidcombe
Judgment of:	Deputy State Coroner, Judge David O’Neil
Catchwords:	CORONIAL LAW – missing person, police investigation, suspicious circumstances, whether missing person is deceased, whether findings came be made about date, place, cause and manner of death, circumstances and possible reasons for disappearance
File number:	2023/451756
Representation:	Counsel Assisting: Christopher McGorey instructed by Clara Potocki and Rebecca Campell of the NSW Crown Solicitor’s Office Paul Jones: Steven Rees of the Aboriginal Legal Service
Findings	I am satisfied to the requisite standard that Jessica Jade Zrinski is deceased. Identity: The person who died was Jessica Jade Zrinski. Time of death: On or shortly after 29 November 2022. Place of death: Unascertained. Cause of death: Unascertained. Manner of death: Unascertained.

Recommendations:	To the NSW Commissioner of Police: I recommend that the New South Wales Commissioner of Police refer the investigation into the death of the missing person Jessica Zrinski to the State Crime Command Unsolved Homicide Team for ongoing investigation, review and monitoring.
Orders and Notations:	Non-publication orders pursuant to s 74(1)(b) of the <i>Coroners Act 2009</i> (NSW), non-disclosures orders pursuant to the Court's implied and incidental powers, and notations pursuant to s 65(4) of the <i>Coroners Act 2009</i> (NSW) have been made in this inquest. A copy of the orders and notations can be found on the registry file.

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Introduction

- 1 Jessica Jade Zrinski, whom I shall refer to as Jessica, was last seen on 29 November 2022 when she was captured on closed circuit television inside a 2008 blue Holden Commodore, registration BHB 96W, with Paul Jones, whom I shall refer to as Mr Jones, leaving the Ampol service station on the Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria. This Commodore was at the relevant time registered to Mr Jones.
- 2 On 3 December 2022, Jessica was reported missing to Fairfield City Police Area Command by her paternal grandmother, Milka Zrinski.
- 3 Milka advised responding police officers that Jesssica would often leave home unexpectedly but would return in a day or so to sleep and shower, and that she was concerned on this occasion as Jessica had not returned home for eight days.
- 4 Milka recalls that at around 10pm on 25 November 2022, Jessica returned home from her friend Mr Famularo's house, had something to eat, picked up her handbag and left home shortly after. This is the last time Milka recalls seeing Jessica.
- 5 On 5 December 2023, Jessica's disappearance and suspected death was reported to the Coroner, as is required by law. The police response to the missing person report made by Milka, was immediate. An extensive CCTV canvass was undertaken.
- 6 Tragically, NSW Police have been unable to ascertain any trace of Jessica since she was captured on CCTV leaving the Ampol service station on the Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria.
- 7 The investigation into her disappearance remains the subject of an ongoing investigation.
- 8 An inquest was required by operation of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW) as it had not been sufficiently disclosed whether Jessica had died. The inquest took place in two segments. The first in March 2026 and the second in August 2026.

The role of the Coroner and the scope of the Inquest

- 9 The role of the Coroner in a case such as this is to make findings firstly as to whether the missing person is actually deceased and only if that can be established, to make further findings as to the date and place of death and the manner and cause of death.¹

¹ s 81, *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW).

- 10 The decision about whether a person is deceased is considered a threshold question in a missing person case.² Given the seriousness of the finding it is well established that the Court should apply the *Briginshaw* Standard.³ The proof of death must be clear, cogent and exact. At common law, there is a presumption in favour of a continuance of life,⁴ however, it is not a rigid presumption, and the circumstances of any given case must be carefully examined before a finding of death can be made.
- 11 In addition to deciding these questions at the conclusion of proceedings, the Coroner may, if appropriate, make recommendations in relation to matters arising directly from the evidence if they have the capacity to improve public health and safety in the future.⁵
- 12 Prior to holding the inquest, a detailed coronial investigation was undertaken. Documents, including witness statements and proof of life checks and audio-visual material, including CCTV footage obtained during the investigation by either Police or the Counsel Assisting team formed part of the brief of evidence which was tendered at the inquest. All that material and all the oral evidence of the witnesses who attended to give evidence at the inquest has been considered in making the findings detailed below.

Witnesses

- 13 The Court heard from various witnesses including the Officer in Charge of the investigation (Detective Sergeant Sasha Pinazza), Sergeant Dallas Atkinson, Mark Nunan, Robert Furner, Paul Jones and relatives and/or associates of Mr Jones.

Issues

- 14 The issues that guided the coronial investigation and were considered and examined at inquest included:
- 1) The circumstances in which Jessica disappeared including her movements in and around 29 November 2022 and the possible reasons for her disappearance.
 - 2) Whether Jessica has died, and if so:
 - a) The date and place of Jessica's death; and
 - b) The manner and cause of Jessica's death.

² Dillon H and Hadley M "The Australasian Coroner's Manual", Federation Press 2005 at p.15.

³ *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336.

⁴ *Axon v Axon* (1937) 59 CLR 395.

⁵ s 82, *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW).

- 3) Whether any recommendations are considered necessary or desirable to make in relation to any matter connected with the disappearance and suspected death of Jessica, pursuant to s 82 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW).

Background

- 15 Jessica was born on 20 April 1992. Her parents are Darko - or Dark - Zrinski, and Michelle Barton. Jessica has two siblings; an older sister Shantel and a younger brother Matthew. Jessica went to Liverpool Girls High School where she completed year 10 before leaving to work in the retail industry. As at the time of her disappearance, Jessica was receiving payments from Centrelink. Jessica at that time did not have her own mobile phone but was known to use the phones of friends to keep in touch with her family.
- 16 Jessica had a history of mental health issues and received and/or was treated on occasions for drug induced psychosis, depression, anxiety and possible bipolar disorder/schizophrenia. The treatment included, on occasions, being admitted or scheduled to hospitals. On one occasion, Jessica had been discharged under a community treatment order and referred to the Nowra Community Mental Health team.
- 17 The use of prohibited substances, including ICE and / or GHB, had resulted in the drug-induced psychosis referred to above on occasions. As a result, Jessica would sometimes hear voices and become paranoid and agitated. At times, Jessica's behaviour could be quite erratic and her moods at times unpredictable. Jessica's general practitioner confirmed she at times did not engage fully with medical clinicians.
- 18 Jessica's drug use and its effects made her vulnerable, and her behaviour at times included being away from home for days at a time, and on other occasions Jessica would leave the precincts of Club Marconi or the Greenfield Tavern with men she had just met. Whilst Jessica exhibited risk-taking in some aspects of her life, she was a much-loved daughter, sister, granddaughter and more.
- 19 Jessica's family described her as follows:

"...vibrant, lively, compassionate, caring. She was a person to whom family meant a lot. She enjoyed the simple pleasures in life. She was one of those people who when talking to you made you believe you were the most important person in the world to her."

20 Her mother indicated that Jessica *“knew lots of people from all walks of life. She had a lot of friends, and she would trust and talk to anyone. She was not a shy girl. She was beautiful inside and out. A very caring girl to whom family meant a lot.”*

21 Her family miss her deeply every moment of every day.

Timeline of Jessica’s involvement with Mr Jones on 28 and 29 November 2022

22 On 4 January 2023, investigators with the Fairfield Police Command identified CCTV footage showing Jessica entering a blue Holden station wagon driven by Mr Jones at about 10.05pm on 28 November 2022. Following that discovery, police obtained information as to the movement of that vehicle, with particular focus on 28 to 29 November 2022.

23 The following timeline is put together from CCTV footage, banking information, mobile phone data and Facebook records.

24 On 28 November 2022 at 10.02pm, Jessica is seen entering the carpark of the Greenfield Tavern. Footage shows Mr Jones walking out of the Greenfield Tavern into its carpark at 10.04pm. At 10.05pm Jessica entered that vehicle in the carpark of Greenfield Tavern.

25 Footage shows the vehicle driving out of the carpark at 10.09pm. At 10.15pm, Mr Jones’ vehicle is captured entering a nearby BP service station in Horsley Park where he purchased 27 litres of petrol and cigarettes. Jessica is clearly visible in the front passenger seat. Jessica showed no signs of distress. She remained in the vehicle when Mr Jones entered the service station to pay for the fuel. Jessica made no attempt to exit the vehicle.

26 At 10.59pm, Mr Jones’ bankcard was debited at a Shell service station at 106 Elizabeth Drive, Liverpool. At 11.04pm, \$200 cash was withdrawn from Mr Jones’ bank card at a 7-Eleven service station at 95 Elizabeth Drive, Liverpool.

27 At 11.56pm, Mr Jones’ mobile phone signal was picked up on a mobile phone tower located in Huntington Drive, Arndell Park. At 4.04am on 29 November, a \$260 transaction was recorded on Mr Jones’ bank card for Megafield Pty Ltd, a company which had an association with a brothel located in Arndell Park. Mr Jones’ mobile phone signal is also picked up on a tower identified as Huntington North at 4.04am.

28 At 5.13am, Mr Jones made a Facebook Messenger audio call to Jason Minney which lasted about three and a half minutes. At 5.16am, Mr Jones made a Facebook Messenger video call to Mr Minney lasting about 30 seconds. Mr Jones’ phone signal

was picked up at 5.23am on a tower located in Claremont Meadows, which is about 13 kilometres west of Arndell Park.

- 29 At 6.17am, a CCTV camera located at a heavy vehicle weighing station at Mount Boyce in the Blue Mountains located between Blackheath and Mount Victoria captured Mr Jones' blue Holden Commodore driving along the Great Western Highway heading west. At 6.21am, Mr Jones' vehicle was captured on a CCTV camera at the Ampol service station, Mount Victoria, continuing west along the Great Western Highway.
- 30 At 6.35am, Mr Jones again made a Facebook Messenger audio call to Mr Minney lasting about two and a half minutes. At 6.45am, Mr Jones' made a Facebook Messenger audio call to Mr Minney lasting about one minute.
- 31 At 6.46am, Mr Jones' mobile signal was picked up on the Johns Place tower, in what in evidence, was referred to as its A1 quadrant in the north tower. At 6.47am, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was picked up in the A3 quadrant, which meant the phone had moved such that it was picked up in the south tower.
- 32 Mr Jones made three Facebook Messenger calls to a Zac Cocorelis; the first at 7.13am, the second at 7.16am, and the third at 8.12am. The first two were not answered. The last call was answered and lasted five minutes and 31 seconds. At 8.30am, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was picked up again on the Johns Place tower, this time shifting from quadrant A3 to A1, consistent with it travelling south to north past the tower towards the Great Western Highway. At 8.49am, an RTA speed camera located on the Great Western Highway at or near Mount Victoria captured Mr Jones' vehicle heading east.
- 33 At 8.50am, Mr Jones' vehicle approached the Ampol service station at Mount Victoria from the western side and pulled in. I am satisfied that Jessica was seated in the front passenger seat with her hands on her lap and seatbelt on as the car drove into the service station.
- 34 Mr Jones' opened the boot, shifted some sheeting or fabric, and entered the service station after filling the car with petrol. He paid for the 60.31 litres of petrol and purchased a strawberry milk. He went back to the car before returning and purchasing a packet of cigarettes. Mr Jones' vehicle departed Ampol Service Station at 8.57am, again heading west.
- 35 At about 9.17am, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was again picked up on the Johns Place tower shifting from the A1 quadrant to the A3 quadrant, consistent with it passing that tower on Jenolan Caves Road heading in a southerly direction. Between 10.45am and 10.52am there were a succession of tower hits at Mount York, Hartley

Vale and Johns Place. Between 10.52am and 4.32pm, Mr Jones' mobile phone was not connected to the network. That is, there were no tower hits in that period.

- 36 At 4.08pm, Mr Jones' vehicle was captured on camera driving through Hartley on the Great Western Highway heading east up the Blue Mountains. At 4.15pm, his vehicle is captured passing Mount Victoria Ampol service station heading east. I am satisfied at that time there was no-one seated in the front passenger seat of the vehicle. At 4.32pm, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was picked up on a tower located in the Blackheath area.
- 37 At 7.06pm, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was picked up on a tower in the Eastern Creek area. At 7.10pm, Mr Jones' bank card was debited in a transaction at the BP at Eastern Creek located near to Horsley Park where Mr Jones' resided. Mr Jones purchased a drink and some thongs, and there was a \$200 withdrawal from his bank card at 7.33pm at that venue.
- 38 At 5.58am the next morning, Mr Jones was captured on CCTV attending his workplace in Prestons. He drove there in the blue Holden Commodore. At 6.23am, Mr Jones sent a text message to someone he was then in an intimate relationship with, seemingly in reply to the following message which had been sent to Mr Jones the previous evening (8:30pm on 29 November 2022) which was as follows: *"Hi beautiful, can you call me when you get my message pretty please. I don't care what time it is. It worries me when I don't hear from (scared/upset emoji). I hope everything is okay."* Mr Jones in his reply wrote that he was stressed and overthinking.
- 39 On 1 December 2022, Mr Jones again attended work, and after completing his shift, he attended at the Carnes Hill Marketplace shopping centre by about 3.54pm, and on arrival arranged for his car to be cleaned, interior and exterior, including a wipe down of plastic interior parts and vacuuming of seats, footwells and rear boot. The attendant responsible for the wash said he did not recall receiving any specific instructions from Mr Jones about the clean, nor did he observe anything unusual when he cleaned the vehicle.

Steps taken by Mr Jones after police attended upon him at his workplace; Police search of Mr Jones' Caravan

- 40 Mr Jones and Jessica were in each other's company for a significant amount of time between 10pm on 28 November 2022 and 4.15pm on 29 November 2022. I am satisfied they were together when Mr Jones' vehicle drove out of the Ampol service station at Mount Victoria heading west at 8.57am on 29 November, having previously driven past that service station heading west and then south along Jenolan Caves Road.

- 41 In the circumstances where Jessica has not been seen since, the police were understandably interested in Mr Jones' knowledge in relation to Jessica's disappearance. To that end, police served a search warrant on Mr Jones on 25 January 2023 when two detectives attended upon him at his workplace. They provided him with a copy of a search warrant for his caravan in Horsley Park. They also seized his blue Holden Commodore for forensic examination. That examination yielded nothing of significance.
- 42 Police also seized a mobile phone and obtained from Mr Jones the passcode to unlock that telephone. Another phone was located during the search of Mr Jones' caravan. Both those phones were later examined and Facebook Messenger communications located. During their interaction with Mr Jones, police informed him they were investigating the disappearance of Jessica and showed him a photograph of Jessica's face. Mr Jones on looking at the image stated, "*I don't know her, mate*". He also said he had picked up a female and given her money, but he did not know her name. He denied to police that this was the person pictured in the photograph. In evidence, Mr Jones said he had previously picked up a red-haired female and that his reference to a female was to that person and not to Jessica.
- 43 The search of Mr Jones' caravan yielded nothing relevant to the investigation into Jessica's disappearance. Mr Jones was not placed under arrest. After being served with the search warrant, he left his work premises, picked up a motorcycle he owned, which was at another location, and at 11.05am, a cash withdrawal was made from Mr Jones' bank account in the sum of \$9,000.
- 44 Mr Jones rode to his daughter's residence. Mr Jones' daughter indicated he arrived unexpectedly at her home without notice. He showed her a warrant, being the warrant served on him by police. He stayed at her place for a short time before heading off.
- 45 CCTV footage obtained from cameras in Bunbury, Western Australia, show Mr Jones in Bunbury on the morning of 28 January 2023. Mr Jones had relatives living in Bunbury. En route he had made calls to his relatives, including his half-sister, Talia Kite, both from a payphone and using his daughter's Facebook Messenger account.
- 46 Ms Kite in evidence said she received an unexpected Facebook Messenger call from Mr Jones the day before he arrived in Bunbury. In that call, she recalled he said words to the effect of he had fucked up, he was in trouble and unable to talk about his difficulty over the phone. Ms Kite said the following day she received calls from payphones in Bunbury which she did not answer in an attempt to avoid contact with Mr Jones.

- 47 After arriving in Bunbury, Mr Jones presented his motorcycle to a Yamaha dealership requesting repairs. He ended up leaving his bike at that shop. Ms Kite later received a phone message from the shop asking her to collect the bike. The evidence reveals that she did not assist. Mr Jones' bank records indicate that he was in Perth the next day, 29 January 2023.
- 48 Thereafter, Mr Jones travelled by plane to Queensland where his stepsister, Kristen Hooper, resided. Ms Hooper gave evidence that one day Mr Jones contacted her by phone and said he was near to where she lived and wanted to visit her. He had given her no prior notice of the visit. Nevertheless, he attended and ended up staying at Ms Hooper's home for a couple of months. He told Ms Hooper he had just arrived from Western Australia. He appeared to her to be quite stressed on his arrival.
- 49 Ms Hooper asked him questions over time in an attempt to work out why he was in Queensland. She said in evidence that Mr Jones gradually disclosed more and more, but what he said did not make sense to her. In summary, she recalled he said there was a missing girl and police had attended on him and showed him a picture of the missing person. He also said he had randomly met a girl at a tavern. This had not been preplanned. The girl had offered him a thousand dollars to drive her someplace, which he agreed to do. He said that after they started driving, the girl said she did not have the money but offered to provide him drugs instead if he was willing to take her to a nominated place.
- 50 Ms Hooper understood, from what Mr Jones said to her, that he agreed to that arrangement and dropped that girl off somewhere, but he never saw her again. She does not recall Mr Jones indicating where that "somewhere" was. Mr Jones said to Ms Hooper that the girl he had randomly met and driven was not the same female depicted in the photo.
- 51 Ms Hooper said that Mr Jones left her premises in about April 2023. She understood he was returning to Sydney. During his stay with Ms Hooper, Mr Jones did not engage in any employment for which he was paid a salary into a bank account or have his earnings declared to the Australian Tax Office. That situation continued at least until March 2026. Very little is known of Mr Jones' movements from when he left Ms Hooper's place until when he was served by police with a subpoena requiring him to appear and give evidence in the inquest into Jessica's disappearance.

The police investigation

- 52 Detective Sergeant Pinazza, as she then was, was assigned officer in charge of the investigation into Jessica's disappearance. As I have indicated, Fairfield City Police Area Command initially had carriage of the investigation up until 11 January 2023,

when the investigation was assigned to the homicide squad. The early stages of the investigation included contacting and obtaining accounts from as many people as possible who knew Jessica or had a connection to her. As has been set out, investigators sourced CCTV footage. Initially, that was footage from venues or premises in and around the Bossley Park area that Jessica was known to attend from time to time. That was not able to be done instantaneously, but the examination of footage when gathered was conducted over days and weeks. By examining the footage and speaking to people with connection to Jessica, the investigators were able to establish Jessica's movements, including her movements from 27 November 2022.

- 53 On that day Jessica had attended the premises of people known to her. Police spoke to them after and were able to establish that Jessica had subsequently entered a vehicle at about 5am on the morning of 28 November 2022. They found out who owned the car and spoke to that person. In short, the owner of the car indicated that he had met Jessica in the carpark, that it was an unplanned encounter, that Jessica accompanied him back to his residence, and that he had subsequently arranged for an Uber to take her home. Police sighted records to do with the Uber booking from that residence.
- 54 Police later tracked Jessica's movements throughout the early evening of 28 November 2022. They were able to establish that Jessica had walked to Mr Famularo's front yard at about 7.51pm. She was seen entering the front area of the residence and was there for approximately half an hour.
- 55 Mr Famularo indicated to the police that he did not believe he was home at that time, but on prior occasions when Jessica had visited him, she would wait on the front steps for his return.
- 56 At about 8.20pm, Jessica left Mr Famularo's premises and was subsequently seen walking through the carpark of Club Marconi. Subsequently she was picked up on the footage in Greenfield Tavern, which is approximately a 1.5 kilometre walk from Club Marconi. That was how the investigation led police to the footage of Jessica getting in the car with Mr Jones. There was no evidence of prior association between Jessica and Mr Jones or a plan to meet. But for police finding and obtaining the CCTV footage of Greenfields Tavern Jessica's encounter with Mr Jones may never have been discovered.
- 57 In footage obtained from 1 December 2022 which drew the interest of police, was footage of Mr Jones with a bandage on his left arm, which was not present in footage from 28 or 29 November 2022. Secondly, he had removed his beard. Each of these things were revealed by a consideration of the footage. Also, as indicated, it was from

consideration of footage from Western Australia that police confirmed Mr Jones' presence in Bunbury on 28 January 2023.

- 58 On 25 January 2023 police executed a search warrant of Mr Jones' caravan and seized his Blue Holden Station Wagon. Both were examined but no forensic evidence of interest was located.
- 59 On 15 March 2023, Mr Jones contacted Detective Sergeant Olivares of the NSW Police to discuss the return of his property. On that occasion, checks revealed Mr Jones' used a payphone in Queensland. Additionally, Mr Jones was invited to attend a police station to meet with investigators. He declined to do so. At some stage in 2023, Mr Jones' vehicle was released, and in November 2023 it was sold online.
- 60 Later in 2023 year, Detective Sergeant Pinazza was contacted on her work allocated mobile phone. That contact phone number appeared on the Detective Sergeant's work card. Mr Jones left a message from a private number. The message was to the effect that he identified himself, he said he had obtained the number from his daughter, and he said he would like to come in and see the police officer and that he would make himself available on 2 January 2024. Mr Jones did not meet with police on 2 January and there was no further contact.
- 61 Police conducted further checks in relation to Mr Jones. Investigations revealed that Mr Jones was not receiving any Centrelink benefits. There was no known activity on government accounts such as MyGov. There were no medical attendances anywhere in Australia as indicated on Medicare records, and there was no evidence of any ongoing bank account activity by him. Investigators were aware of Mr Jones' bank accounts, but as indicated, they did not reveal any activity.
- 62 As counsel assisting put it *"to use a colloquial expression, Mr Jones had gone off grid."* His driver's licence had expired and not been renewed.
- 63 The foregoing reveals the extensive efforts made by police to check Mr Jones' premises, to check his car, to talk to all of Jessica's contacts and associates, and the successful checking back through CCTV to establish what had occurred in terms of contact between Jessica and Mr Jones on 28 and 29 November 2022.

Mobile phone data analysis and land searches

- 64 Another highly important part of the police investigation was the work of Sergeant Dallas Atkinson. Sergeant Atkinson is attached to the NSW Police Force Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit which operates out of the Katoomba Police Station. He is the rescue unit's team leader for the Blue Mountain region. His role includes overseeing

search and rescue operations in that region. He has been attached to the unit since 2007. He has completed specialised search training, including land search coordinator training in 2009. He has worked in a land search capacity, predominantly in the Blue Mountains region, for about 16 years, although he has also performed searches in other areas within New South Wales.

- 65 Sergeant Atkinson has significant experience in analysing mobile phone data and tower hits; particularly, he has had experience in the Blue Mountains area.
- 66 A tower hit of its own does not pinpoint a handset's exact location. Interpretation of that data is a key component of the analysis. The topography of a given area, including mountains, ridges and the line of towers, can impact on the tower hits. A mobile phone handset will attempt to connect with a tower and to establish the strongest connection possible.
- 67 By way of example, a handset's connection may switch from one tower to another, even though the latter is geographically more distant to the handset than the former, because a handset has travelled over a ridgeline and lost direct line of sight to the former. Understanding the topography of a given area can significantly aid the interpretation of tower hits and making sense of what that might mean for a handset's locations at a given time.
- 68 Sergeant Atkinson was asked in early 2023 by the homicide squad to assist once it had been discovered that Jessica was captured on footage in Mr Jones' company on the morning of 29 November 2022. Sergeant Atkinson reviewed the call charge records for Mr Jones' mobile phone for 29 November 2022 with a particular focus on the tower hits from 6am and thereafter until the end of that day. He ascertained there were hits on various towers in and around the western side of the Blue Mountains, including on the Johns Place, or Lowther Tower, on Jenolan Caves Road.
- 69 It should be noted that Jessica did not have a phone at the time so there was no data available to examine.
- 70 Sergeant Atkinson then obtained two handsets with numbers subscribed to Optus, being the same telecommunication company Mr Jones' phone number was subscribed with. Sergeant Atkinson performed a series of tests whereby he drove around the various locations, including in and around the Great Western Highway, Jenolan Caves Road and Duckmaloi Road. He noted his location at specific times. He then compared the tower hits for those two phones against Mr Jones' call charge records to ascertain similar patterns.

- 71 Sergeant Atkinson prepared a map showing the location of towers of interest, particularly the Johns Place/Lowther Tower. In November 2022, this tower had three quadrants, which essentially means it had receivers positioned around the tower in three separate segments or quadrants.
- 72 As previously noted, at 6.45am on 29 November 2022, Mr Jones made a Facebook Messenger audio call to Jason Minney lasting about one minute. At 6.46am, Mr Jones' mobile signal was picked up on the Johns Place tower in its A1 quadrant. At 6.47am, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal was picked up in its A3 quadrant. In Sergeant Atkinson's opinion, this switch between the north facing and south facing tower is consistent with the handset having travelled north to south past the tower, as previously referred to. Having considered Sergeant Atkinson's explanation and reasoning, I find his opinion in this regard compelling.
- 73 After 6.47am, signals continued consistent with southward travel until 7.12am. Thereafter, there was no connection for 53 minutes. There was no hit on any tower in that period. As Sergeant Atkinson explained, the options were; the phone was switched off or in aeroplane mode, or it had run out of battery. At 8.05am, signals were again established, and, as set out previously, at 8.30am the signals indicated the phone, was travelling north at 8.30am as it headed back in the direction of the Ampol station. I am satisfied the phone was in the car, and I am satisfied at that time both Mr Jones and Jessica were in the car.
- 74 Assessing all that information, Sergeant Atkinson expressed the view that in that period of 53 minutes in which there was no connection, and the vehicle had been heading in the direction of Hampton, the handset movements between 6:47am and 8:30am reveal that:
- it is likely that Mr Jones' mobile telephone travelled south along Jenolan Caves Road towards the village of Hampton at around 6:47am.
 - it is unlikely that the handset travelled south of or along Duckmaloi Road.
 - it is more likely than not that the handset did not travel south past the Hampton / Rydal Road intersection.
 - at about 8:30am it is likely the handset travelled north, past the Johns Place tower, towards the Great Western Highway (the distance and time it would take to travel from this point to the Hartley speed camera appears consistent with this analysis).

- 75 It cannot be known precisely what occurred in that period of time. What is known is that the vehicle, Mr Jones, Jessica and the phone returned to the Ampol service station at Mount Victoria where, amongst other things previously referred to, Mr Jones removed grass which was stuck in the passenger side of the car.
- 76 As previously set out, the vehicle subsequently departed the Ampol station, heading west towards Hartley at 8.57am. At about 9.17am, Mr Jones' mobile phone signal again picked up on the Johns Place tower shifting from north to south, was consistent with it travelling southward again on Jenolan Caves Road. Between 10.45am and 10.52am there were a succession of tower hits for Mount York, Hartley Vale and Johns Place. However, between 10.52am and 4.32pm Mr Jones' mobile phone was again not connected to the mobile phone network. There were no tower hits.
- 77 Again, as explained, the phone was either intentionally switched off, put into airplane mode, or the phone battery was flat. Based on the testing he completed, Sergeant Atkinson's view, without being definitive, was that there was a reasonable prospect that the handset was in the vicinity of the Millionth Acre rest area near the Duckmaloi Road, Jenolan Caves Road intersection when it ceased connecting to the network at about 10.52am. This evidence from Sergeant Atkinson is the best available evidence of the last known movements of Jessica in the company of Mr Jones and the last known place of where the phone, the car, Mr Jones and Jessica may have been.
- 78 The work having been done in relation to the mobile phone data, the next step for the investigating team was to arrange for searches informed by the findings of Sergeant Atkinson. The area to be searched was in and around the Hampton State Forest and the Jenolan State Forest. Those forests each consist of about 5,000 or more acres. These areas contain pine trees which are known to make the areas very dense with no visibility from the air to the ground.
- 79 There are a multitude of unsealed roads throughout these forests with trails leading off other trails. The quality of the trails ranges from well-graded gravel surfaces to degraded rutted dirt surfaces. A sizeable number of trails are not recorded on any maps. There is also the nearby national park which consists primarily of native vegetation such as eucalyptus trees as distinct from pine trees. A land search officer, Senior Constable Jarnett carried out a search of areas within the Hampton State Forest on 19, 29 and 30 March 2023. This was a single officer search as opposed to a large party search. Nothing material was found. On 13 and 14 April 2023, PolAir did a flyover of the Hampton State Forest area looking for anything of interest relevant to Jessica's disappearance. Nothing material was found.
- 80 In preparation for a large land search, Sergeant Atkinson and Senior Constable Skinner spent about two days doing driving reconnaissance of the Hampton and Jenolan State

Forests. They looked for trails that would be accessible by a two-wheel drive vehicle. These areas were marked with GPS coordinates recorded. Thereafter the land search team defined 65 search areas marked with geographical boundaries. Generally speaking, these captured at least 100 metres of two-wheel trails into the state forests, with greater priority for downslope areas as compared to upslope areas.

- 81 Between 5 and 7 May 2023, a large land search was carried out involving between 75 and 116 members from the State Emergency Service, Rural Fire and Rescue Services and the NSW Police Force over the three days. These members were divided into teams ranging from 10 to 14 and assigned specific areas. The search covered parts of the Hampton State Forest and parts of the Jenolan State Forest.
- 82 Each team generally aimed to perform a track sweep with each member walking in a spaced outline to cover at least 100 metres from the roadway where able. In some places, it may have been less than 100 metres owing to the vegetation and topography, such as gullies and ravines. Each team had at least one GPS device to track the search area. That data was recorded and collated into maps. All searches conducted over the three days have been displayed on a map which has become an annexure to the statement of Sergeant Atkinson. Nothing material was located relevant to Jessica's disappearance.
- 83 Subsequently in June 2023, the investigating team made arrangements for police divers to attend and carry out underwater searches of dams and some waterways identified as being of potential interest. Again, the search did not reveal anything relevant.
- 84 The final or second search occurred after Mark Nunan had provided police with some further evidence. On 24 August 2023, Mr Nunan, who did some work as a truck driver, was requested by his supervisor to attend a briefing at the Forestry Corporation depot in Black Springs in relation to an investigation by the NSW Police Force. He attended the briefing. He was shown a presentation about a missing person investigation. The following day on 25 August, Mr Nunan contacted detectives from the Homicide Squad where he advised them of what he had seen. He provided a statement on 28 December 2023. The effect of that statement was that on 28, 29 and 30 November 2022, Mr Nunan was working on Mini Mini Range Road, driving a truck carting gravel from the western side of Jenolan Caves Road onto Mini Mini Range Road in the Jenolan State Forest area.
- 85 In his written statement, Mr Nunan set out that his shifts were between 6am and 5 to 5.30pm on those days, however, about 9.50am on 1 December 2022 the truck he was driving blew up so he did not do any more work that day.

- 86 Mr Nunan reported coming across a Commodore on one of the indicated days, that is 28, 29 or 30 November 2022. He was driving the truck along Mini Mini Range Road and he had stopped at the intersection of Jenolan Caves Road. He saw a Holden Commodore station wagon coming from the direction of the Hampton State Forest when he was waiting to turn left. The Holden Commodore turned into Mini Mini Range Road where Mr Nunan was waiting. The Holden Commodore drove about 50 to 100 metres into the track, but because Mr Nunan was in the middle of the road, the male driving had to pull to the left and stop the car so Mr Nunan could get past. The Commodore stopped. Mr Nunan drove past. The male driver kept his head down as Mr Nunan drove past and did not look at Mr Nunan.
- 87 Later when Mr Nunan travelled back along Mini Mini Range Road, he saw fresh wheel tracks leading down a side fire trail. He believed these were due to the wheel tracks in the wet ground and that the Holden Commodore may have driven down this track after he had lost sight of it. He had not seen any other vehicles in the area. In his oral evidence, Mr Nunan indicated he cannot recall exactly the timing of the day when he saw the Commodore, but he thought it was mid-morning.
- 88 Mr Nunan indicated in his statement to police that he thought the male was middle-aged and had a dark short beard or possibly stubble. He indicated that he was very suspicious of the male as his behaviour was strange and he thought the male was up to no good. He stated it was very unusual to drive that sort of vehicle into that area. He indicated he could not see if there was or was not any passenger due to the juxtaposition between where he was seated in his vehicle and the closeness of the vehicle as he passed. He had signalled to the driver, the driver had not responded.
- 89 In response to that information about the possible sighting of a low base vehicle driving from Jenolan Caves Road, Land Search coordinated another large scale search in and around the area identified by Mr Nunan. The search was conducted by a large number of volunteers and police who were divided into teams and assigned a specific area to search. The searches proceeded in the same method as that on 5 to 7 May 2023. Regrettably, nothing of interest relevant to Jessica's disappearance was located.
- 90 In January 2026 a drone company volunteered to assist by carrying out a drone search over areas of interest. This involved taking a significant number of images with software being used to combine the images into a consolidated visual image of the area covered. The software searches for irregular patterns on the ground or items which might be flagged for a physical search. Some items of interest were identified, but on checking, these were not found to be material to Jessica's disappearance.

- 91 I have set out significant aspects of the police investigation which in my view has been committed, detailed and thorough. I commend and thank the police for their efforts to date.

Lay witnesses

- 92 I have already touched upon relevant aspects of the evidence of Mr Jones' adult daughter; his half-sister, Ms Kite; his stepsister, Ms Hooper; and Mr Nunan. Further evidence during the second part of the inquest came from Robert Furner who gave evidence that in late November 2022, he was working on a friend's property in the front yard near the intersection of Duckmaloi Road and Jenolan Caves Road.
- 93 His work position was about 10 metres from the road, and his vision was largely unobstructed. He indicated that on two separate days, each at about 11am, he saw a car which he described as a unique, dark blue Commodore station wagon which sounded like a V8. It had mag wheels and a modified exhaust. He noted that it was a very lowly set vehicle. On the first day he indicated it was travelling at about 120 to 130 kilometres per hour. On the second day he noted extreme acceleration. On both occasions it was heading towards Oberon. He later recognised that vehicle in the media and subsequently provided a statement in relation to the car.
- 94 Mr Furner indicated that at a time after he was subpoenaed to give evidence, he realised that a person he had seen in the bush a little distance from where he was working around the time, he had seen the dark blue Commodore was in fact the same person who had been identified to him previously when that person's photo had been shown to him during an interview with police. The photo referred to was a photo of Mr Jones.
- 95 During the earlier interview with police Mr Furner had indicated that he had not ever seen the person in the photo. Given the notorious unreliability of identification evidence, I am unable to place any weight on the identification of Mr Jones that Mr Furner purported to make after being served with his subpoena.
- 96 Evidence was given by Mr Jason Minney and Zac Cocorelis. Each of them was contacted by Mr Jones during the morning of 29 November 2022.
- 97 Mr Minney was contacted at 5.13am by Facebook Messenger audio. The call lasted for about three and a half minutes. Mr Jones contacted him again at 5.16am. That was a video call which lasted 30 seconds. Mr Jones again contacted him at 6.35am, in a further audio call that went for two and a half minutes, and at 6.45am, a further audio call that went for one minute.

- 98 Mr Minney had met Mr Jones in 2019. They lived in the same area. He had last seen Mr Jones in May 2022 and had last spoken to him on a video call on 21 January 2023. In relation to the calls on 29 November 2022, Mr Minney indicated that Mr Jones called him a number of times whilst Mr Minney was driving to work and the connection kept dropping out. He indicated that during those calls he was under the impression that Mr Jones was not making much sense and did not sound his normal self. He said he did not seem himself, he was incoherent, and seemed to be in a panic. He also indicated that during one of the calls he heard a female voice in the background. During another call he could see Mr Jones was at a rest stop.
- 99 In relation to 23 January, Mr Minney indicated that Mr Jones said, *"I hope you've got my back. People may come and talk to me."* Mr Minney also indicated that after reflecting on the calls Mr Jones had made to him, he noted what he referred to as the similarity between the date of media releases and the calls made by Mr Jones contacting him: He said: *"I have noted that I received video calls on Facebook Messenger from Paul on both 2 December and again on 21 January. Both of these calls were general conversation except what I've mentioned in relation to what Paul said to me. I think he may have been calling me to see if I had seen the media releases and maybe see if I mentioned them to him."*
- 100 Mr Cocorelis had first met Mr Jones when he was about seven or eight. He lost contact with Mr Jones when he was around 12 and regained contact with him in 2015, speaking regularly to him from 2015 to 2017. Frequent contact resumed after 2018, and he was in regular contact with Mr Jones in the period leading up to December 2022.
- 101 Mr Jones made three Facebook Messenger calls to Mr Cocorelis at 7.13am, 7.16am and 8.12am. Mr Cocorelis' recollection is that the first two calls were not answered. The last call was answered and lasted 5 minutes 31 seconds. It might be noted that this was at a time that Mr Jones was in his vehicle with the phone, and I am satisfied that he was with Jessica and likely heading back towards Mount Victoria.
- 102 He recalled Mr Jones saying, *"Hey cuz, I am coming your way. I need help. Can I trust you?"* He noted Mr Jones appeared drug affected during the call and seemed quite nervous. He indicated Mr Jones' further comment was that he needed to get rid of something and he needed Mr Cocorelis to help him move something. He asked, *"Are you with me cuz? Can I trust you?"* I note that Mr Cocorelis resides in the Bathurst area.
- 103 Mr Cocorelis said he assumed that Mr Jones was talking about drugs. Mr Cocorelis said to Mr Jones, *"Are you cooked?"* to which Mr Jones responded, *"Yeah cuz, I've been on it. I'm fucked up."* Mr Cocorelis indicated to Mr Jones that he would help him if he

came to his house. Mr Jones said he was about an hour away and to make sure he was at home. That arrangement to go to Mr Cocorelis' house never came to fruition.

Mr Jones evidence

- 104 The final witness was Mr Jones. As is made clear from the foregoing, Mr Jones was the last person known to have seen Jessica alive prior to her disappearance. Unfortunately, his evidence did not shed any light at all on events during the time he was in Jessica's company or how or when they separated, as he claimed to have no recollection at all of events from when they met. I am unable to accept Mr Jones' evidence of having no recollection of any part of events whilst he was in Jessica's company for the following reasons.
- 105 Firstly, Mr Jones was overall an unimpressive witness. At times, when it suited him and on uncontroversial topics, he answered directly and responsively, whereas at other times he failed to do so. On those occasions, his answers were typically non-responsive and/or evasive.
- 106 Secondly, Mr Jones has a memory of events prior to and subsequent to 28 and 29 November 2022, suggesting there is no ongoing or substantial issue with his memory. His lack of memory seems to relate only to 28 and 29 November 2022.
- 107 Mr Jones' representative drew attention to the fact that Mr Minney and Mr Cocorelis both suggested that Mr Jones sounded drug affected in some way. They also both indicated they knew Mr Jones to be someone who used drugs. Be that as it may, the evidence does not support someone so grossly affected by drugs to the extent it would impact on any ability at all to recall any aspect of what had happened in the relevant period of time.
- 108 I have come to this view in circumstances where, on my calculation, Mr Jones drove in excess of 400 kilometres in the period between 10pm on 28 November 2022 and him arriving at work on 30 November 2022. Additionally, so far as can be seen on CCTV he appears of normal gait and able to interact with those serving him, including when he was at the Ampol service station at Mount Victoria prior to the final trip south along Jenolan Caves Road. He attended work the next day, 30 November 2022, early in the morning. He responded rationally to a text from a woman with whom he was in a relationship at the time. These factors are not to suggest he may not at times have been drug affected in the relevant period. Rather, as I have said, the above indicators do not support that he was so drug affected that he could not have any memory of

events at all, particularly when he was shown in some detail, whilst he was giving evidence, photos and CCTV footage which showed himself, his vehicle, Jessica, and his some of his movements.

- 109 Returning to the general factors in relation to why I do not accept his evidence, some comments made to his associates strongly suggest a recollection of the relevant events. Firstly, he told his half-sister words to the effect of, *"I have fucked up, I am in trouble, I'm unable to talk about the difficulty over the phone."* That does not sound like someone who cannot recall what happened. He told Mr Minney on 23 January, the day after a media release of information according to Mr Minney, *"I hope you've got my back. People may come and talk to me."* As it turns out, police came to talk to Mr Jones on 25 January.
- 110 The next factor is the rapidity with which he left not only Sydney but New South Wales after police served a search warrant upon him on 25 January 2023. In doing this, Mr Jones left behind a job, presumably a woman with whom he was in an intimate relationship, a family law application which on the evidence was important to him, though stressful, his motor vehicle, his accommodation, and he travelled with great haste to Western Australia, the other side of the country.
- 111 The evidence of the family and extended family members he contacted as he travelled initially west is that he called without notice. I took from their evidence that he was guarded in what he conveyed to each of those people.
- 112 In oral evidence Mr Jones' efforts to convey that his departure was related to something other than events involving Jessica was an example of him appearing to be evasive and non-responsive. The evidence was completely unconvincing.
- 113 When police attended upon Mr Jones on 25 January 2023, he indicated that he had picked up a female and given her money, that he did not know her name, but he denied this was the person whose picture he had been shown. On Ms Hooper's evidence, Mr Jones said a not dissimilar thing or gave a not dissimilar account to her. Ms Hooper's impression was that his story, as he relayed it to her over time, did not make sense. Mr Jones' attempts in oral evidence to explain that this story was a reference to a redhead girl, a crazy woman as he said, and thereby not a reference to Jessica, were again completely unconvincing.
- 114 Finally, I note that one portion of Mr Jones' evidence seemed to include a positive insinuation, if not assertion, that in fact he did remember what occurred, but he could not say what occurred for some underlying unexpressed reasons. His words were to the effect of he could not indicate what had happened and that the people in court knew why he could not give evidence of what happened. As I say, that appears to be

an assertion of some underlying basis he could not give the relevant evidence, rather than an assertion he could not recall what had occurred.

- 115 It was to say the least extremely disappointing to the family that Mr Jones did not shed any light at all on events after Jessica left the Ampol service station on the morning of 29 November 2022 in his car, in his company. The state of the evidence is that nothing is known of Jessica since that morning.

Proof of life checks

- 116 I turn now to a further aspect of the police investigation, and that is what is referred to as proof of life checks. Simply, they are checks that are done by police when someone is missing.
- 117 The first and most important aspect of this is acknowledgement that Jessica has not contacted her family since late November 2022. As I have indicated, family was important to Jessica. She always let her paternal grandmother know of her whereabouts if she had not spoken to her or seen her for a couple of days. She kept in contact with family and friends at all times. Significantly, her brother Matthew had an upcoming wedding. Her sister was pregnant. There is absolutely no doubt that if Jessica was alive, she would be in contact with her family and her friends.
- 118 The formal checks police have undertaken include phones. Whilst Jessica did not own her own phone at the time of her disappearance, but used handsets of friends and family to communicate, police have conducted checks with various carriers to see if any service has been subscribed to by Jessica since November 2022. Checks have also been conducted in relation to numbers previously used by Jessica as provided by family and friends. None have been attributed to Jessica, and no new number has been attributed to her.
- 119 Inquiries have been made of financial institutions. Jessica's account was held by the Commonwealth Bank. There have been no transactions attributable to Jessica since her disappearance. Additional checks were made with other banks to see if there were any accounts in her name. Checks were made with Services Australia to see if there were any payments or other information. JobSeeker payments were cancelled on 17 July 2023. There was no bulk billing in relation to Jessica since 7 September 2022. There have been no Medicare or PBS transactions since 18 May 2022. There were no hospital admissions. There was no evidence of any travel under Jessica's passport. There was no social media activity.
- 120 Police checked with places Jessica frequented, nail places, hair salons. Staff there all knew Jessica, but they had not seen her since 2022. They were asked to contact NSW

Police should there be any contact from Jessica. Police checked with Uber ride services and made interstate police checks. They received responses from all Australian state and territory police forces' missing persons sections with regards to the documentation lodged in relation to Jessica's disappearance. All returned nil result and no trace. Further inquiries and searches were made with Births, Deaths and Marriages, road authorities, general police systems and intelligence, Corrective Services, the Firearms Registry, and the Electoral Roll. All enquiries returned nil results for Jessica's name.

- 121 Finally, it is important to note that a sample of Jessica's DNA was received by the Forensic Analytical Science Services. That had occurred on 21 July 2017.
- 122 The DNA profile was recovered and uploaded onto the New South Wales DNA database on 25 July 2017 and the national DNA database on 26 July 2017. The DNA profile was uploaded onto the national DNA database on 12 January 2025.
- 123 These DNA profiles continuously search against all new profiles uploaded to either NSW or national DNA databases under permitted indices, including unknown deceased person samples. Any DNA matches from database searching will be reported to NSW Police. Since it was processed the DNA profile of Jessica has been continuously searched against all unidentified remains on the New South Wales and national database. No links have been observed between Jessica's profile and any unidentified remains on the DNA database. Any future familial DNA matches will be reported to NSW Police.

Reward

- 124 On 29 November 2023, the NSW Police Force and NSW Government announced a \$500,000 reward for information into the disappearance of Jessica.
- 125 On 1 December 2023 the following notice was published in the New South Wales Government Gazette which is the permanent public record of official NSW Government notices:

"On 29 November 2022, Jessica Zrinski, aged 30 years, was last seen alive travelling west along the Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria, NSW.

Jessica has not been seen or heard from since and is presumed to be dead. Notice is hereby given that a reward of up to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) will be paid by the Government of New South Wales for information leading to the location of Jessica ZRINSKI or her remains or for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person/s responsible for her suspicious disappearance and suspected death.

The allocation of this reward will be at the sole discretion of the Commissioner of Police.

The urgent assistance and co-operation of the public is especially sought in the matter. Any information, which will be treated as confidential, may be given at any time of the day or night at any Police Station or by telephone”.

- 126 If any member of the public has any information relating to the disappearance of Jessica despite the inquest concluding, I encourage that this information be shared with New South Wales Police noting the police investigation into Jessica’s remains ongoing.

Is there a need for recommendations?

- 127 Pursuant to s 82 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW), Coroners may make recommendations connected with a death.
- 128 I am of the view that the evidence supports that the recommendation outlined below is appropriate and necessary or desirable to be made in relation to Jessica’s disappearance and suspected death.
- 129 The conclusion of the inquest is by no means the end of the Police investigation into Jessica’s disappearance.
- 130 As I shall formally set out below, I am satisfied Jessica is deceased.
- 131 In those circumstances it is appropriate to recommend referral to the Unsolved Homicide Team as follows.

To the NSW Commissioner of Police:

I recommend that the New South Wales Commissioner of Police refer the investigation into the death of the missing person Jessica Zrinski to the State Crime Command Unsolved Homicide Team for ongoing investigation, review and monitoring.

Formal findings pursuant to s 81 *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW)

- 132 On all the evidence I am satisfied to the standard required that Jessica is deceased. However, the circumstances and the cause of her death remain unascertained. I am satisfied that Jessica died on or shortly after 29 November 2022.
- 133 The formal findings pursuant to s 81 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW) are:

Identity: The person who died was Jessica Jade Zrinski.

Time of death: On or shortly after 29 November 2022.

Place of death: Unascertained.

Cause of death: Unascertained.

Manner of death: Unascertained.

Conclusion

134 I thank Jessica's family for their involvement with and participation in the coronial process. To all Jessica's family and friends, I extend my deepest sympathy.

135 I thank the officer-in-charge, Detective Sergeant Sasha Pinazza, for her work in the Police and Coronial investigation and compiling the extensive evidence for the inquest. I extend thanks to all police involved in the investigation to date.

136 I thank Mr Rees for the manner in which he conducted his representation of Mr Jones.

137 I thank the assisting team for their work in preparing for inquest. The team's dedication, skill, industry and engagement with the family facilitated the smooth, efficient and effective running of the inquest.

138 I close this inquest.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David O'Neil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a period at the end.

Judge David O'Neil
Deputy State Coroner
Coroners Court NSW

Delivered orally on 28 August 2026

Published on 8 October 2026