

IN THE CORONERS' COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Rel No: A0013/2024

Police No: 24 24119

CORONERS FINDINGS

ROAD DEATH 12 OF 2024

Section 34 of the Coroners Act 1993

I, Elisabeth Armitage, Coroner, having investigated the death of **an 18 year old Aboriginal male** and without holding an inquest, find that he was born on **6 May 2005** and that his **death occurred on 8 March 2024, at Alice Springs Hospital in the Northern Territory.**

Introduction:

This road death, number 12 of 2024, concerns the death of an 18 year old Aboriginal male who was a passenger in a stolen vehicle (Kumanjayi). The stolen vehicle was being driven in a 'hooning style' by another 18 year old Aboriginal male. The Kumunjayi was hanging out the window recording the events. Tragically, the stolen vehicle rolled and Kumunjayi was killed from the injuries he sustained in the crash.

Cause of death:

- | | | |
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| 1(a) | Disease or condition leading directly to death: | Multiple blunt force injuries |
| 1(b) | Morbid conditions giving rise to the above cause: | Reported motor vehicle collision (passenger) |
| 1(c) | | Acute Cannabis toxicity |
| 1(d) | | Criminal Activity |

Following an autopsy on 12 March 2024, Forensic Pathologist, Dr Salona Roopan commented:

- The opinion as to the cause of death is based on the available police and medical information, and a full post-mortem examination including ancillary investigations.
- The decedent was an 18-year-old male who was reportedly in a vehicle on

08/02/2024 around 1.40am when the vehicle entered into a roll with the decedent ejected from the vehicle.

- At autopsy, he had external blunt force injuries mostly on the right-side of the body. Extensive lung parenchymal injury, abdominal injuries and microscopic evidence of traumatic brain injury was present. Significant limb injuries were also noted on autopsy and radiological findings. There was no evidence of seat-belt related injury. Toxicology showed the presence of alcohol at 0.095% which may cause an impaired reaction time. The similar level in the vitreous fluid confirms that there was minimal endogenous ethanol production related to decomposition. Recent cannabis use was also noted in the toxicological analysis

Background:

Kumanjaya was born at Alice Springs. He is survived by his parents, siblings, partner and young son. He is greatly mourned and missed by his family.

He was well known to police for being involved in property offending and he was on a suspended sentence for unlawfully using a motor vehicle when he passed away. He was due to attend court later that same day for breaching his suspended sentence.

Circumstances Surrounding the Death:

During the early hours of 8 March 2024, Kumanjaya, an 18 year old Aboriginal male, was one of several young passengers riding in a stolen Toyota Hilux. The Toyota Hilux was involved in a single vehicle roll-over and Kumanjaya was killed in the crash.

Before getting into the stolen vehicle, between 1.00 am and 2.00 am, Electronic Monitoring Data (EMD) showed Kumanjaya moving from the suburbs of Braitling, Sadadeen, Alice Springs Central Business District (CBD) and then on to the Charles Creek Aboriginal Community (north of the CBD). At Charles Creek camp, his cousin saw him drinking alcohol and smoking (suspected cannabis) with three others.

The EMD data showed that between 2.00 am and 2.30 am, Kumanjaya moved to the CBD. Between 2.30 am and 3.00 am, nine associates were seen on Police CCTV walking west on Gregory Terrace before walking east back to the Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC) lawns. Once on the ASTC lawns, the group were joined by four more persons. One of them had the key to the stolen Toyota Hilux.

The group socialised and drank alcohol until they decided to go for a ride in the stolen vehicle.

The group walked towards McMinn Street where the vehicle was parked. At 3.34 am, a local resident heard the group get into the vehicle.

An 18 year old Aboriginal male (the driver), was driving and he was later charged with driving a motor vehicle dangerously causing death, hit and run and driving a motor vehicle without consent. On 27 August 2025 the driver pleaded guilty and was sentenced by Her Honour Justice Brownhill to 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2 years and 6 months (SCC 22409030). The sentencing proceedings established the following facts and circumstances:

The circumstances of the offending are that on 28 February 2024, you [the driver] had recently turned 18 and were granted bail by the Youth Justice Court on three unrelated files. The bail conditions included that you remain home between 9pm and 7am.

On 8 March 2024, at 1:40am, a caravan belonging to IB was parked at a caravan park in Alice Springs. Around that time, the caravan was unlawfully entered and a set of car keys belonging to IB were stolen. The keys were for a Toyota HiLux belonging to him parked nearby.

The HiLux was driven to the caravan park gate by an associate of yours called J. J drove the HiLux through the closed gates and out onto the streets. He was followed by police for a short time before they disengaged. He drove the car to an address in Alice Springs and five offenders got out, leaving it parked on the side of the road.

Between 2:39 and 2:59am, you came into town with a group of eight youths aged between 16 and 21, including the victim Kumanjayi, who was 18 years old. The group walked to the library lawns and were seen there on CCTV between 2:43am and 3:25am. You were spoken to by three witnesses.

The group then walked towards where the HiLux was parked and got into the car. You got into the driver's seat. Kumanjayi and another youth got into the front passenger seats and five other youths got into the rear seats. You drove the HiLux into the Alice Springs CBD. You knew the HiLux was stolen. That is the offending the subject of count 1.

As you drove the HiLux, Kumanjayi and another youth sat on the passenger side windowsills, taking videos of themselves and speaking to friends watching on the street.

At 3:39am, you drove the HiLux in a dangerous manner by taking a corner too fast, which caused it to roll passenger side down onto its roof, where it slid, stopping at the footpath. When the HiLux rolled over, Kumanjayi was crushed when the vehicle came to rest in the gutter. That is the offending the subject of count 2.

You and the others got out of the HiLux. You got out of the driver's door and ran down the street, stopped, ran a short distance back and then ran away. All of you ran away from the scene within about 50 seconds of the crash, leaving Kumanjayi where he lay. None of you stopped to help or assist him. He had sustained critical injuries but was still alive.

Three witnesses dragged him to safety. Kumanjayi spoke to one of the witnesses, but she struggled to hear what he was saying. Police and Emergency Services arrived very quickly, and a crime scene was established. Kumanjayi could not be saved, and he was declared deceased at 5:00am.

On 16 March 2024, you voluntarily went to the police station, where you were arrested. You declined to do a recorded interview.

At the time you drove the HiLux, you drove on public streets. You held only a learner's driver's licence. When police took a DNA swab from you, you said that you did not steal the car and that you were forced to drive it.

I have received victim impact statements from Kumanjayi's mother, his father and a family member. In her first statement from May 2024, Kumanjayi's mother said that she is still grieving, sad and crying. She feels sad every day and every night. The pain she feels inside is indescribable.

Her son was her love. He was with her and then he was gone, and she struggled with that. She said he was taken from her. She is hurt, her family is hurt, and the pain does not stop. She mentioned cultural payback law and processes, including mediation, but did not say anything specific about those matters.

In her second statement from August 2025, Kumanjayi's mother said that when she first heard of her son's passing, she felt very sad and lost and did not want to believe what happened. She is still grieving for her son and feels heartbroken without him in her life. She feels a lot of pain in her heart and body every single day and misses him every single day.

Kumanjayi's son is now 4 years old and asks about his dad a lot. When the family visit him at the cemetery, he asks, "Where is Dad?" Kumanjayi's mother feels sad that Kumanjayi's son has to grow up without his dad. Kumanjayi loved being a dad and was there with his son, teaching him things and playing with him and being very proud of him.

Kumanjayi's mother says she will make sure he knows about Kumanjayi and how much he loved his son. She said Kumanjayi was her eldest son. His two sisters and brother miss him very much. He was a friendly young man who liked going hunting and liked to tell jokes to his grandparents and spend time with his cousins, who all miss him very much. The family has not been the same since he passed.

Kumanjayi's mother struggles to sleep, because when she closes her eyes, she sees his face, which sometimes makes her feel happy and sometimes makes her feel sad. She misses him very much. She has found it hard to deal with her grief.

Kumanjayi's father said that he feels very sad inside. He thinks about this a lot because Kumanjayi was his only son, and it makes him stressed out. This has made the family very sad, which also makes him very sad. The death of Kumanjayi has caused a lot of grief and cultural issues within the family and with the families of the offenders. He says when you are released, you will need to face cultural law to finish up this business.

Kumanjayi's family member said that she feels really bad and it makes her feel sick hearing the story and speaking to police. She feels sad, stress and pain. Every day, she thinks about it. She sees her family in pain, which hurts her too. The pain is hard to explain. She has been trying to coordinate cultural matters and mediation between the families, which has been difficult while she is also grieving.

In addition to the facts and circumstances established at the sentencing proceedings it is also known that the group in the vehicle were all known recidivist property offenders, with several of them already on bail conditions which they were breaching that night.

At 3.39am, the vehicle was seen on multiple Police CCTV angles turn right onto Railway Terrace at a speed too fast to safely take that corner. This manoeuvre was aggravated by the high centre of balance of the vehicle and occupants on the outer edge of the turning vehicle. The vehicle tipped and rolled, passenger side down on Gregory Street. Alice Springs police have noted that it has become common practice in Alice Springs for offenders to drive stolen cars through the CBD while recording their actions, which they then post and boast about on social media. It is understood that this encourages the practice of stealing vehicles and dangerous hooning behaviour.



Selected CCTV image courtesy of Major Crash investigators.



Selected photograph courtesy of Major Crash investigators.

Police and emergency services were called to the carnage at 3.40am with Paramedics arriving at 3.45am. Kumanjayi was taken to Alice Springs Hospital arriving at 4.19am and succumbed to his injuries at 5.00am.

In the following weeks, all the occupants of the vehicle were identified, arrested and placed before the courts. One was given a written warning (diversion).

Vehicle Inspection:

On 14 May 2024, the Grey 2013 Toyota Hilux bearing SA registration was inspected by Motor Vehicle Registry Mechanical Inspectors.

The mechanical roadworthiness of the vehicle was not a causal factor in the crash.

Road Features and Conditions:

The location of the crash was on the intersection of Railway Terrace and Gregory Terrace in the Alice Springs Central Business District (CBD).

Railway Terrace is a 400m long single carriageway with north and south flowing traffic.

Gregory Terrace is a 400m long single carriageway with east and west flowing traffic.

The intersection is at the western side of the CBD behind the Coles shopping centre carpark.

Both roads are sealed with Gregory Terrace having an unbroken white line separating east and west bound traffic.

West bound traffic on Gregory Terrace is required to stop before commencing onto Railway Terrace. There is a stop sign on the southern side of Gregory Terrace before the intersection. The speed along Gregory Terrace and Railway Terrace is 40 km/h.

Weather and Lighting Conditions:

The Bureau of Meteorology recorded that the weather was fine and dry on the night of the crash. The weather was not a factor in the crash.

The crash occurred at nighttime. The area was well lit with working streetlights. The intersection and signposts were clearly visible. Lighting was not a factor in the crash.

Decision not to hold an inquest:

Under section 16(1) of the *Coroners Act 1993* I decided not to hold an inquest because the investigations into the death disclosed the time, place and cause of death and the relevant circumstances concerning the death. I do not consider that the holding of an inquest would elicit any information additional to that disclosed in the investigation to date and the circumstances do not require a mandatory inquest because:

- The deceased was not, immediately before death, a person held in care or custody; and
- The death was not caused or contributed to by injuries sustained while the deceased was held in custody; and
- The identity of the deceased is known.