

IN THE CORONERS' COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Rel No: D0152/2024

Police No: 24 58331

**CORONERS FINDINGS**  
**ROAD DEATH 27 OF 2024**  
*Section 34 of the Coroners Act 1993*

I, Elisabeth Armitage, Coroner, having investigated the death of **a 39 year old Aboriginal male** and without holding an inquest, find that he was born on **31 July 1984** and that his **death occurred on 16 June 2024, at Royal Darwin Hospital in the Northern Territory.**

**Introduction:**

These findings concern road death 27 of 2024.

An intoxicated 39 year old Aboriginal male pedestrian was crossing the road at an unsafe location when he was struck by a speeding vehicle (79km/h in a 60km/h zone). The 23 year old Caucasian male driver did not stop and was later charged with hit and run causing death.

The speed of the vehicle and the unsafe manner of crossing by the intoxicated pedestrian both contributed to this lethal collision.

This is yet another tragic and unnecessary death which left a family devastated.

**Cause of death:**

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| 1(a) | Disease or condition leading directly to death:   | <b>Multiple blunt force injuries</b>        |
| 1(b) | Morbid conditions giving rise to the above cause: | <b>Motor vehicle collision (pedestrian)</b> |
| 1(c) |   | <b>Chronic alcohol intoxication</b>         |

Following an autopsy on 17 June 2024, Forensic Pathologist, Dr Salona Roopan commented:

***Past medical history***

Review of the Northern Territory electronic clinical case record revealed:

- Admitted as a pedestrian-motor vehicle collision on the 13/06/2024 at Royal Darwin Hospital.
- Significant injuries reported on pan-CT scan on admission: Bilateral vertebral artery dissections, bilateral subdural haematomas with mass effect, comminuted pelvic and right hip fractures (left inferior pubic ramus, left

femoral head and femoral neck, greater and lesser trochanter comminuted fractures, undisplaced left iliac bone fracture extending into sacro-iliac joint with possible diastases, undisplaced right sacral alar fracture with intra-articular extension, old right inferior pubic ramus fracture). Hepatic steatosis was also noted.

- Neurosurgical intracranial pressure monitor was inserted but he was considered poor prognosis from a neurological perspective and diagnosed with traumatic brain injury.
- Demised on the 16/06/2024.

### ***Summary of main pathological findings***

- External examination showed:
  - The body of an adult male of an average physique clad in a hospital gown with features of medical intervention consisting of a left infraclavicular central venous pressure catheter, urinary catheter, surgical staples to the top and left side of the head (parietal and left temporal scalp) indicative of neurosurgical intervention and multiple bandage dressings of the body.
  - On removal of bandage dressings, stapled healing wounds of the left foot, right lower leg, left cheek and chin were present.
  - Healing wounds of both hands, abdomen, both flanks, lower back, buttocks and right leg.
  - Severe pallor of the conjunctivae and gums.
  - Calluses of the right ankle.
  - Toxicological analysis on the ante-mortem admission blood submitted for analysis showed:
    - Alcohol of 0.33% was present
    - Ondansetron was detected.

### ***Comments***

- The opinion as to the cause of death is based on the available police and medical information, and a post-mortem examination including ancillary investigations.
- Toxicological analysis performed on ante-mortem admission blood obtained from the Royal Darwin Hospital detected an alcohol level of 0.33% and ondansetron was detected. Although the clinical features of alcohol intoxication at any level may differ from person to person due to a number of factors, an alcohol level of 0.33% is high and is sufficient to significantly impair cognition, mood, judgement and coordination.
- I have no reason to believe that the information available and findings made during external examination of the body that the death was due to any other cause other than the apparent motor vehicle versus pedestrian collision.

### **Background:**

The 39 year old Aboriginal male had three siblings, was employed, and often supported his family.

He was a known drinker. He had previous bans on the Banned Drinkers Register (BDR) from 2018 through to April 2024 but at the time of his death, he was not under any BDR restrictions.

He is mourned by his family and friends.

**Circumstances:**

On 13 June 2024, CCTV captured the moments leading up to the 39 year old being hit by a vehicle. The collision was first reported to 000 at 4:08pm. Several further calls were subsequently received by 000. He was taken by ambulance to hospital. He passed away as result of his injuries at Royal Darwin Hospital on 16 June 2024 at 9.27pm.

A 23 year old Caucasian male was driving the vehicle that collided with the deceased. He was charged with hit and run causing death. On 15 September 2025 he pleaded guilty and was sentenced by Her Honour Justice Brownhill to an Intensive Community Corrections Order for a period of 12 months (SCC 22421821). The Director of Public Prosecutions has lodged an appeal against this sentence on the grounds that it is manifestly inadequate. The appeal has not yet been finalised. The sentencing proceedings established the following facts and circumstances of the collision:

... you have pleaded guilty to the charge that on 13 June 2024, you were the driver of a car involved in an incident that resulted in the death of the 39 year old and you failed to stop the car at the scene, failed to give any assistance that was reasonable in the circumstances and failed to notify police, contrary to s174FA of the Criminal Code. The maximum penalty for that offence is imprisonment for 10 years.

The offence is commonly referred to as a “hit and run”.

The circumstances of the offending are that you were 23 years old. You were driving a Subaru Tribeca registered at your father’s address.

You left work before 4:00 pm and drove along Vanderlin Drive towards Casuarina Shopping Centre. The weather was clear and traffic was moderate. You approached Hibiscus Shopping Centre. About 450 metres from those traffic lights, the speed limit changes from 80 to 60 kilometres per hour. You did not reduce your speed and as you approached the traffic lights, you were travelling at about 79 kilometres per hour.

At about 4:06 pm, two groups of people were crossing the road from the Hibiscus side. The first group crossed without incident. About 40 metres from the traffic lights, two men aged 39 and 37 were crossing Vanderlin Drive. They crossed the outbound lanes and stopped on the median strip to wait for an inbound car to pass.

They began to cross the inbound lanes. You were driving in the outside lane at about 79 kilometres per hour. The two men hesitated while crossing. Then the deceased tried to run the rest of the way, running into your path. You did not slow down or deviate and collided with the deceased.

He was thrown into the other man knocking him to the ground and landing about 7 metres from where he had been struck. You did not slow down or stop at or near the scene. You did not try to render assistance or contact police as soon as reasonably practicable.

Bystanders who saw the collision went to help the deceased and the other man. They called 000 and an ambulance came and took them both to hospital.

The deceased was unresponsive, and the other man had a large cut to his head. When they got to the hospital, the deceased was intubated, then taken into surgery where an intracranial pressure monitor was inserted.

He was then taken to the Intensive Care Unit. He had suffered a severe traumatic brain injury, comminuted fractures of his pelvis and hip, extensive rib fractures and nasal bone fractures. On 16 June 2024, his family decided to withdraw life support and he passed away that night.

The other man lost consciousness at the scene. He was treated for a bleeding head injury and had pain in his shoulder. He was very upset and distressed and left the hospital.

A witness at the scene gave Police a partial registration number of your car and a piece of the front bumper at the scene enabled Police to identify its make. Your car was identified as a vehicle of interest. Police made efforts to locate and speak to you. That evening, you texted your father and sent photos of the damaged car and a text which said, "driving home from work and two black fellas jump out onto the road, tried to slow down but I still hit them at 80kms I just kept driving and my rego is still got your address so if cops swing past looking for me just give them my number." And there was a thumbs up emoji. Your father tried to call you, but you did not answer.

At about 7:15 pm, Police told your father's wife they were trying to find the car as it was probably involved in an accident. She said she did not know where you were living. She told your father of the call and he told her about your text messages. She later called the Police and told them about the texts.

Later that evening, you sent a number of text messages, which I am quoting directly:

Two for one combo, they learnt their lesson now, maybe next time they will use the crossing instead of walking out in front of cars expecting me to stop like they own the place.

Nah cunt, I'm on a comedown from work. I ain't stopping for no one.

I couldn't stop. I'd rather get done for hit and run than stay and get tested. It was an easy choice Buddha. I need me licence.

Nah, they were rolling all over the road like bitches when I looked in my rear view mirrors.

The world needs cunts like me to take a hit to teach these cunts a life long lesson.

I hit the cunts at like 80kms. One of the blokes elbow went through my windscreen, so I reckon one of them has gotten at least a fucked elbow. I tried to slow down, so I maybe hit them at like 60-70. Maybe if I'm lucky I'll be able to claim his Centrelink for taking out another oxygen thief.

Cops looking for me. They rocked up at my old mans.

They wanna drug test me and I smashed a P after work.

My life fucked again all cause some niggas can't use a crossing at the lights that was literally 10 metres from where I hit the dogs.

2 niggas jumped out onto the road and I hit them. Tried to slow down but the dumb cunts were jaywalking.

Some cunt tried to rob me so I ran over him and his mates, now they calling it a hit and run. They funny cunts tho, tried buying gear off me with a stolen gold watch and when I told them to get fucked and that I wanted coin, they pull out a machete and block the road acting like they superman and my car won't go straight through them.

It was pretty funny watching job them roll around on the road after going over my bonnet and through my windscreen. Them mob play stupid games win stupid prizes. Tried robbing me then called the cops when they had to go hospital. Dumb junkies man.

I do have to hand myself in but I ain't getting jail time. I'm a [name redacted], we don't go to jail. It's amazing how much lawyers fight for you like its life and death when you know you can pay whatever fee they pull out of their ass. I'm not even a fugitive cause I haven't ran from court. They just after me for a statement, inspect the vehicle and to breath test me cause these cunts reported me as a hit n run so it's just standard procedure.

At 8:30 pm, you took a screenshot of the NT News Facebook post with the headline, "Two pedestrians struck near Darwin shopping centre."

Police looked for you but could not find or contact you that evening. The next day at 12:35 pm, you called Police and told them where you were and that you wanted to hand yourself in.

Police came, saw that your car had damage to the front side and the windscreen. You were arrested and taken to the watch house. You declined to do a recorded interview. You were granted bail.

At the time of the offending, your driver's licence was suspended by the Fines Recovery Unit.

### **Collision scene and conditions:**

The collision occurred on Vanderlin Drive, Leanyer. The posted speed limit is 60km/h. A speed calculation report was compiled utilising available CCTV. The speed of the vehicle which struck the pedestrian was determined to be 77km/h just prior to the collision.

At the collision site, a third lane opens to the right to allow traffic to turn onto Leanyer Drive, controlled by traffic lights. Within the raised grass median there is a steel fence with a concrete plinth to discourage pedestrians from crossing. At the time of the collision approximately 20 metres of fence panels were missing from an unrelated crash that occurred on 31 May 2024.

The fence has since been repaired to prevent pedestrians from crossing at that point.

Vanderlin Drive is a sealed dual-lane, dual-carriage way, divided road. There are two inbound lanes and two outbound lanes divided by a raised grass median. The roadway is delineated by concrete kerbs. Each lane is about 3.5 metres in width and divided by a painted white broken line. The left edge of the left lane is marked with a painted white fog line and is a 1.5 metre sealed shoulder before the kerb.

The weather was fine and clear.

### **Vehicle:**

The vehicle involved was a 2007 Silver Subaru Tribeca. On 26 August 2024 the vehicle was inspected by an MVR Inspector at the Wishart inspection facility. The vehicle was issued a defect notice due to collision damage.

**Comments:**

Both the speed of the approaching vehicle (travelling at 77 km/h in a 60km/h zone) and the deceased crossing the road at a dangerous point while very intoxicated contributed to this fatal collision.

**Decision not to hold an inquest:**

Under section 16(1) of the *Coroners Act 1993* 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.