

IN THE CORONERS' COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Rel No: D0183/2024

Police No: 24 69193

CORONERS FINDINGS

ROAD DEATH 35 OF 2024

Section 34 of the Coroners Act 1993

I, Elisabeth Armitage, Coroner, having investigated the death of a **20 year old Aboriginal female** and without holding an inquest, find that she was born on **21 March 2004** and that her **death occurred on 19 July 2024, at Royal Darwin Hospital in the Northern Territory.**

Introduction:

These findings concern road death 35 of 2024.

This was a pedestrian death of a 20 year old, sober, Aboriginal female, who was standing on the road with head-phones on.

Drivers of two vehicles, apparently driving to the speed limit, observed and avoided her. A third vehicle, driven by a highly intoxicated (0.158%) Aboriginal male who was speeding (74kp/h in a 60kp/h zone), collided with the pedestrian.

The pedestrian suffered catastrophic brain injuries and was declared brain dead 4 days later.

Intoxication and speed caused this collision with some contribution from the pedestrian who was on the roadway and not responding appropriately to her surroundings, at least in part, likely because she suffered from hearing loss and was wearing headphones.

This is another avoidable and tragic loss of a young person's life.

Cause of death:

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1(a) | Disease or condition leading directly to death: | Severe traumatic brain injury |
| 1(b) | Morbid conditions giving rise to the above cause: | Pedestrian versus motor vehicle collision |

Following an autopsy on 23 July 2024, Forensic Pathologist, Dr Marianne Tiemensma commented:

Summary of main pathological findings

- An ante-mortem CT scan of the brain showed:
 - Multiple severe cranial vault and skull base fractures.
 - Extensive pneumocephalus.
 - Widespread acute traumatic subarachnoid haemorrhage.
 - Acute subdural haemorrhage on the left.
 - Diffuse brain swelling with severe mass effect and herniations.
- No internal examination was performed.
- Toxicological analysis of an ante-mortem blood sample (collected 17:25 hours on 16/07/2025) showed:
 - The presence of therapeutic medications.
 - No alcohol was detected.

Comments

- I have no reason to believe with the information available, findings made during external examination and review of the hospital records, that the death was due to any other cause than the significant traumatic brain injury sustained during the reported motor vehicle collision.

Background:

This 20 year old Aboriginal female pedestrian was born in and lived her life in the Northern Territory. She is said to have enjoyed dancing, taking pictures and being on Facebook and TikTok. She suffered from Bilateral Hearing Loss in both ears and mental health issues.

She is mourned and deeply missed by her family.

Circumstances:

The entire incident was recorded on Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) situated at Sibbald Crescent, Woodroffe.

On 15 July 2024 at 11.12pm, this pedestrian was walking at a slow pace along Emery Avenue, in a south easterly direction. She was alone and wearing headphones that were illuminated in different colours.



Similar style of headphones worn at the time of the collision.

At 11.13pm, the CCTV records a vehicle driving along Emery Avenue towards the pedestrian, who was walking on the lane designated for traffic travelling towards Chung Wah Terrace. It is apparent the driver of this vehicle identifies a person on the roadway as the vehicle is observed to slow, before driving onto the opposite side of the road and away from the area without incident.

The pedestrian remained on Emery Avenue and briefly walked in an erratic manner.

At 11.13pm a second vehicle is observed driving along Emery Avenue towards the pedestrian. It is apparent that the driver of this vehicle also identified a person on the roadway as this vehicle is also observed to slow, before passing on the inside and driving away from the area without incident.

At 11.17pm the pedestrian was struck by a speeding vehicle driven by an intoxicated 36 year old Aboriginal male.

The driver was charged with driving a motor vehicle causing death and hit and run. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced on 7 August 2025 by Acting Justice Lasry to 3 years and 6 months imprisonment suspended after serving 18 months on supervision conditions (SCC2242777). The facts and circumstances established during the sentencing proceedings are as follows:

The agreed facts read to the Court by the prosecutor indicate that you [the driver] are an Indigenous male and aged 36 years of age. [The pedestrian] was a 20-year-old Indigenous female. At 11:17 pm on 15 July 2024, you were driving a Toyota Land Cruiser along Emery Avenue, Gray. Obviously, it was dark with street lighting, the road was dry, there was very little traffic.

What then occurred was captured on CCTV footage from a neighbouring residence. I have viewed that footage. As you drove along Emery Avenue, [the pedestrian], wearing headphones, was standing on the road about a meter from the nature strip. As you approached, it can be seen, just from watching the video and compared with other vehicles, that you were moving at a speed significantly above the signposted limit of 60 kilometres an hour.

At 11:17:06 pm your vehicle struck [the pedestrian] on the passenger's side. Apparently, the immediate effect was that her head struck the bitumen surface. She came to rest still on the roadway. Watching the video, the collision with [the pedestrian] seemed to have had almost no effect on the speed of your vehicle and indeed, you continued to drive to premises at [redacted] Emery Avenue where your partner [redacted] lived, driving your vehicle onto the front lawn.

As to your speed at the time of your collision, police calculation was that you were moving at 74 kilometres an hour in an area with a speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour. You then walked back to the victim about a minute after the collision. You picked her up under the armpits and endeavoured to remove her from the roadway but failed in that attempt and she remained on the road.

You then returned to [redacted] Emery Avenue and attempted to contact your partner by phone. You then woke her up by knocking on the window and told her you had done something bad by "bumping someone" and that you were sorry.

Seventeen minutes after the incident, you returned to the scene of the collision where [the pedestrian] still lay, and from there, contacted emergency services on your phone and waited for their arrival. They arrived two minutes later.

[The pedestrian] was taken to the Royal Darwin Hospital with traumatic brain injury and other injuries. Examination revealed a large external haemorrhage. There were multiple fractures of the skull and a widespread acute traumatic subarachnoid haemorrhage. The conclusion reached by the neurosurgical and intensive care teams was a likely catastrophic unsurvivable injury. Brain death was confirmed on 19 July and on 22 July, circulatory support and ventilation was ceased and [the pedestrian's] death was declared on that day.

You identified yourself to police as the driver of the vehicle that had struck [the pedestrian] and among other things, you were breath tested which revealed a reading of 0.158 per cent blood alcohol content. As you well know, it is a very high reading and more than three times the legal limit. The reading is indicative of a high level of intoxication with significant impairment of your skills and judgment. Clearly you were unable to drive safely.

Your counsel has told me that you had been stressed at work, suffering from mild depression and sought some refuge in alcohol. On that night, you had been drinking at a private residence and were on your way to your partner's house. You had made the bad decision to drive.

This was a very serious incident and viewing the footage is a confronting experience. It vividly illustrates the high level of danger to the public in combining speed and alcohol behind the wheel of a vehicle.

The court has received victim impact statements from [redacted] the father of [the pedestrian] and [redacted] the grandmother of [the pedestrian]. These are, in the original form, heartfelt statements of loss and impact. In their own way they are also compassionate and do not demand substantial prison punishment. The sentiments are also generous.

[The grandmother] understands why you left the scene in panic and expresses her gratitude to you that you went back. There is a further victim impact statement from [the grandmother] which has been referred to in the course of discussions with counsel. I have also received a victim impact statement today from [redacted].

The crash was reported by multiple people who contacted Emergency Services at 11.28pm. The driver reported the crash to Emergency Services at 11.34pm and said that the pedestrian had "stepped out" in front of him.

Brain death was declared at Royal Darwin Hospital on 19 July 2024 at 9.55am.

She remained in the care of ICU until 3.45pm on 22 July 2024.

Scene, conditions and vehicle:

The crash occurred on Emery Avenue, Gray, near the intersection of Sibbald Crescent. The section of Emery Avenue, Gray where the crash occurred is a sealed, dual lane carriageway with a single lane for traffic travelling southeast (towards Chung Wah Terrace) and a single lane for traffic travelling northwest (towards temple Terrace). At the location of the crash lanes are divided by a broken white line and there is a gradual upward slope for traffic travelling towards Chung Wah Terrace.

The road is situated within a built-up residential area with houses and units lined on either side. The posted speed limit is 60 kph.

The vehicle involved was a 2019 Toyota Landcruiser utility bearing NT registration. The vehicle was not inspected as there was no emergency braking prior to the crash and the vehicle was not deemed to be a causal factor in the crash. The vehicle's Electronic Data Recorder was analysed with no events recorded.

No adverse weather conditions were reported. Streetlights were positioned near the crash location and were working at the time which provided good lighting of the whole road area.

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.