

IN THE CORONERS' COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Rel No: A0038/2024

Police No: 24 78080

CORONERS FINDINGS

ROAD DEATH 42 of 2024

Section 34 of the Coroners Act 1993

I, Elisabeth Armitage, Coroner, having investigated the death of a **22 YEAR OLD CAUCASIAN MALE** and without holding an inquest, find that he was born on **28 December 2001** and that his **death occurred on 9 August 2024, at Stuart Highway & Dalgety Road, Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.**

Introduction:

60 people lost their lives on Territory roads in 2024. These findings concern the 42nd road fatality, that of a young motorcycle rider who lost his life in a high speed collision. His family are devastated.

Motorbikes represent approximately 3% of registered vehicles in the Northern Territory but over the last decade motor bikes crashes account for 12% of road fatalities and 14% of serious injuries. 96% of motorcycle fatalities are male, 8% are on a learner's licence, and 25% are aged between 19 and 25.

Speed is involved in 91% of fatal crashes and very high speed coupled with inexperience were the main contributing factors in this tragic crash.

Cause of death:

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1(a) | Disease or condition leading directly to death: | Multiple blunt force injuries |
| 1(b) | Morbid conditions giving rise to the above cause: | Motorcycle versus motor vehicle collision (rider) |

Following an autopsy on 14 August 2024, Forensic Pathologist, Dr Marianne Tiemensma commented:

- External examination showed:
 - o The body of a young adult male with evidence of medical intervention and resuscitation.
 - o Evidence of blunt force trauma to the left side of the

- face, the nose, and underneath the chin.
 - o Bilateral forearm and hand fractures (with resultant traumatic deformity and associated laceration and contusion).
 - o Blood leaking from both external ear canals.
- Abrasions and contusions involving the anterior aspect of the torso, and lower limbs.
- A post-mortem CT scan showed:
 - o Substantial pneumocephalus (presence of air in the cranial cavity).
 - o Subarachnoid haemorrhage with blood in the ventricles.
 - o Hinge fracture of the skull base.
 - o Left and right occipital fractures.
 - o Intact cervical spine.
 - o Fractured left clavicle and scapula.
 - o Minimally displaced bilateral anterolateral rib fractures, in keeping with resuscitation.
 - o Multiple bilateral traumatic pneumatocoeles.
 - o Left haemo pneumothorax.
 - o Small right-sided pleural effusion consistent with decomposition fluid.
 - o Small amount of blood around the liver and a moderate amount of blood around the spleen.
 - o Undisplaced left humeral head fracture.
 - o Fractures of the distal shafts of the left radius and ulna.
 - o Multiple fractures involving the left hand.
 - o Comminuted fractures of the distal right radius and ulna.
 - o Fractures involving the right hand.
- No alcohol or any other substances as per the Scope of Analysis attached to the formal toxicology report were detected on toxicological analysis of a sample of preserved femoral blood.

I have no reason to believe with the information available, findings made during external examination, and post-mortem CT scan of the body that the death was due to any other cause than injuries sustained during the reported collision.

Background:

This young rider lived in Alice Springs and was undertaking a plumbing apprenticeship. He had found a love for riding motorcycles. He was described as a force of energy, laughter and fun, with an encyclopedic knowledge of the things he loved, such as cartoons, music and TV. He was most dearly loved and his family's grief is acute.

Circumstances:

In January 2024 the rider completed a motorcycle safe rider program, known as the Metal Riding Course, where he gained his learners riders, "R" class licence. He purchased a 2019 Honda CB650R sports motorcycle and began to pursue his love for motorcycle riding. According to medical records he fell off his motorcycle in about May of 2024 and later an x-ray revealed a fracture of the left elbow.

At approximately 7.00 pm on Friday 9 August 2024, the rider and a friend went for a motorcycle ride around Alice Springs.

At 8.40 pm the rider is captured by Police CCTV exiting South Terrace onto Tom Brown roundabout. He rode twice around the roundabout before exiting north onto Telegraph Terrace. His friend can be seen overtaking the rider at high speed as the pair exited onto Telegraph Terrace.

8.42 pm the pair of riders are captured on Police CCTV travelling through the Stott/Telegraph Terrace intersection. The distance from Tom Brown roundabout to Stott Terrace is 2.5km, which covers two posted speed limits, being 80km/h, transitioning to 60km/h. An average speed calculation revealed that the rider travelled at an average of 93km/h over the distance, which indicates continual speeding.

At 8.52 pm the pair are captured on Police CCTV departing the Stuart Highway BP service station, heading north

At 8.53 pm a 'triggered event' was captured by an in-road Traffic Management System (TAMS) data terminal in the vicinity of Woods Terrace, Braitling, travelling north, along the Stuart Highway at a speed of 68 km/h in a posted 60 km zone. This triggered event is believed to be the pair travelling abreast.

At 8.54 pm the pair are captured on CCTV located at the commercial premises of Bush Bus, 226 Stuart Highway, Braitling near the location of the crash. The rider's motorcycle appeared to be positioned on the centre line of the roadway and travelling at high speed with its headlight illuminated.

At 8.54 a Toyota Hilux is captured on the CCTV of Centralian Ford, travelling east towards the Stuart Highway with its headlights illuminated. A police speed analysis calculated the Toyota Hilux to be travelling at approximately 19 km/h as it approached the intersection.

At 8.54 pm the Toyota Hilux approached the 'give way' intersection, where the driver is believed to have given way to the direction of the motorcycle. Due to the distance the rider was from the intersection, Toyota Hilux driver's view was obstructed by the commercial property, road furniture and vegetation and he could not see the rider.

At 8.55 pm the rider is captured on CCTV at Centralian Ford travelling north, towards the intersection of Dalgety Road. The motorcycle's headlights and taillights are illuminated. At this point the Toyota Hilux had crossed into the path of the rider and the driver became aware the motorcycle was approaching at high speed. In the 1.2 seconds that the driver had before the impending crash, he attempted to take evasive action by accelerating out of the way of the rider, however, could not avoid the crash.

At 8.55 pm the rider struck the driver's side, rear tray of the Toyota Hilux with such force as to rotate it 90° clockwise, where it came to a rest near the centre island sustaining moderate damage. The motorcycle came to an abrupt halt, with the rider suffering catastrophic injuries and the motorcycle severely damaged.

At 8.55 pm the rider's friend travelled through the scene at high speed, narrowly avoiding colliding with the rider lying on the roadway and the Toyota Hilux. He slowed his bike down, conducted a U-turn and returned to the scene.

The driver of the Toyota Hilux immediately stopped and called triple zero at 8.58pm, while his partner administered first aid. The Northern Territory Police Tactical Response Group (TRG) arrived shortly after and took carriage of the scene, followed by General Duties Officers, St John and the Fire Department.

At 9.18pm the paramedics determined that the rider was in traumatic cardiac arrest, asystole, no pulse and no spontaneous respirations but it was determined to transport him to Alice Springs Hospital.

The driver was tested at the scene producing a nil result for drugs or alcohol.

Police investigation:

A coronial investigation by police found no suspicious circumstances surrounding this death.

Location of Crash

The crash occurred at the intersection of the north Stuart Highway and Dalgety Road, Alice Springs on a straight section of sealed roadway.

Road Features and Conditions

The section of roadway the crash occurred is a sealed bitumen, dual carriageway, running in an approximate north/south orientation. The Stuart Highway has a posted 70km/h speed zone in this area. The road surface is in good repair, with no obvious signs of damage and is clearly marked. The intersection of Dalgety Road and Stuart Highway has a posted Give Way intersection with the Stuart Highway traffic, having right of way. Dalgety Road has a posted 60km/h speed limit.

Weather and Lighting Conditions

At 8.55pm on 9 August 2024, the weather was fine and clear with no weather induced visibility issues. The road surface was dry, and the area illuminated with overhead white LED lights, which were activated at the time.

Vehicles

The motorcycle was a 2019 Honda CB650R, Sports Bike bearing NT registration.

The motor vehicle was a 2011 Toyota Hilux, dual cabin utility bearing NT registration.

Both the rider and the driver held current drivers' licenses.

On 9 August 2024, Northern Territory Motor Vehicle Registry inspectors conducted an examination on the 2019, Honda, CB650R and Toyota, Hilux, Dual cabin utility. The comprehensive report did not find any defective or mechanical issues that were factors in the crash.

CCTV Analysis

An analysis of CCTV footage obtained from the Centralian Ford dealership, facing the Stuart Highway was conducted to establish the pre-impact speed of the rider's motorcycle

Metadata associated with the file was confirmed using AXON Investigate. It indicated the footage operated at a frame rate of 25 frames per second (fps) or 0.04 seconds per frame.

Selected road furniture was used, being the Centralian Ford sign (point A) at the southern end of the yard, and a fixed fence post (point B), in conjunction with the 3D laser scan to determine the distance to be 37.58 metres

An examination of CCTV between the hours of 20:55:00 and 20:55:01, indicates the rider's motorcycle passed point A at frame 49 and exited point B at frame 70, equating to a total of consecutive 21 frames over 0.84 seconds. Using a time-based formula, this equated to a velocity of 44.73 metres per second or calculated to be a speed of 161.05km/h.

An analysis of CCTV footage obtained from the Centralian Ford dealership, facing Dalgety Road was conducted to establish the pre-impact speed of the Toyota Hilux as it travelled past the premises on its approach to the Stuart Highway intersection.

Metadata associated with the file was confirmed using AXON Investigate. It indicated the footage operated at a frame rate of 25 frames per second (fps) or 0.04 seconds per frame.

Selected road furniture was used, being two shade sail poles (point A and point B), in conjunction with the 3D laser scan to determine the distance between the points to be 21.35 metres.

An examination of the CCTV between the hours of 20:54:55 to 20:55:59, indicates the Toyota Hilux passed, point A, at frame 197 and exited point B, at frame 296, equating to a total of 99 consecutive frames equating over 3.96 seconds. Using a time-based formula, this equated to a velocity of 5.39m/s or 19.40km/h.

Scene Reconstruction

The point of impact was established using road-based evidence, photographic images, CCTV footage, and 3D laser scan data. The position was determined to be 6.51m from the point of the Give Way to the point of impact.

Scene reconstruction enabled the vehicles to be repositioned at the point of impact. Using known timings and velocities, the vehicle positions could be placed back at intervals of 1, 2 and 3 seconds prior to impact. This method established approximate vehicle positioning in the moments prior to the crash.

Based upon a reconstruction of the crash scene, and consideration given to environmental aspects, it was determined that:

- a) 3 seconds prior to the crash, the rider is 134.19 metres from the point of impact and travelling at a dangerously high speed calculated to be 161.05km/h.
- b) At this point the rider is fully obstructed from the line of sight of the driver by the commercial premises of Centralian Ford and a row of gum trees which line the Stuart Highway.
- c) At this same time, the driver is 16.17 metres from the point of impact and travelling at a speed of 19.40km/h.
- d) The driver cleared the intersection to the right, with the rider not within an area a road user would expect a 70km/h rider to be.
- e) The driver then cleared the intersection to the left as he continued towards the intersection.
- f) At approximately 1.2 seconds prior to the crash, the driver returned his vision to the right as he crossed the point of the Give Way, into the north bound, curbside lane, and he observed a motorcycle approaching at high speed.
- g) At this time, the rider was 53.67 metres from point of impact and outside the average driver's perception and response time (PRT) of 1.8 - 2.6 seconds.
- h) Due to the dangerously high speed, the rider was travelling, both the rider and driver had insufficient time to take evasive action to avoid the collision.

Had the rider been travelling at the posted speed limit of 70km/h, the following would have occurred:

- a) 3 seconds prior to impact, the rider would have been 134.19 meters from the point of

impact and outside the driver's field of view.

- b) At the time the driver entered the intersection and crossed the rider's path, the rider would have been 75.86 metres from the point of impact.
- c) At this distance, the driver would have 3.90 seconds to perceive and respond, which is more than research suggests for an average driver's PRT, of 1.8 - 2.6 seconds.
- d) At the time the rider reached the point of impact, the driver would have cleared the intersection by 21.02 metres.
- e) Had the rider been travelling at the posted speed limit, the crash would not have occurred.

Prosecution

On 28 January 2025 an opinion was sought from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

On 30 January 2025 a response was received indicating there was no likely prospects of a conviction against the driver of the Toyota Hilux and a recommendation against laying any charges.

Opinion as to the Cause of Crash

Based on analysis of the physical evidence and available research with the application of known scientific laws and principles:

- The motorcycle rider's dangerously high speed was the cause of the crash; and
- The crash was unavoidable to the Toyota Hilux driver.

Comments:

Major Crash Investigators, through the Commander Crime, will use the forum of the Fatal and Serious Crash Quarterly Meetings to suggest that the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure (DLI) change this intersection to a controlled Stop intersection. This may give users of both roads more time to appreciate speeds and distances in relation to each other before taking any actions

Decision not to hold an inquest:

Pursuant to 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. 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.