

SOUTH



AUSTRALIA

FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 27th day of January and 1st day of February, 2000, before Wayne Cromwell Chivell, a Coroner for the said State, concerning the disappearance of Tony Donoghue.

I, the said Coroner, find that Tony Donoghue, aged 22 years, late of 226 Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide, died at Hardwicke Bay, South Australia on the 29th day of May, 1999 as a result of multiple injuries. The circumstances of death were as follows:-

Tony Donoghue disappeared on Saturday 29 May 1999. He had been windsurfing at Hardwicke Bay on Yorke Peninsula, South Australia.

Section 12(1)(b) of the Coroners Act empowers me to conduct an inquest into “the disappearance (from any place) of any person ordinarily resident within the State”. Mr. Donoghue was ordinarily resident at 226 Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide. I am satisfied that I have jurisdiction to conduct an inquest into his disappearance.

Mr. Donoghue had been staying at Hardwicke Bay with friends. He left to go windsurfing at about 12.15p.m. One of his friends, John Laurie, saw him windsurfing at about 2.30p.m. He said that he was “only a speck and far out” (Exhibit C.1a, p1).

When Mr. Donoghue had not returned by 5.00p.m., and his friends could not see him on the bay, they conducted a search along the shoreline and then reported his disappearance to the police.

A search was then organised by Constable Philip Copley from Minlaton Police Station. Mr. Donoghue’s sailboard was located at about 7.45p.m. Its position suggested that it had washed ashore by tidal movement rather than having been dragged ashore (Exhibit C.4a, p2). It was undamaged.

An even more extensive search was then mounted. It was coordinated by Sergeant R. Badenoch, a qualified Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (“SARMC”).

Police STAR Division and Water Response Unit participated, along with the helicopter Polair 2. The knowledge of local volunteers was utilized to calculate wind and tidal movements, and to conduct a sea search with their boats.

Mr. Donoghue’s wetsuit and harness were found during the night. Both had sustained damage, consistent with a shark attack. This was later confirmed by Dr. K. Brown, Forensic Odontologist (see Exhibit C.3a). Dr. Brown found that there were “numerous incisions and multiple branching tears distributed randomly penetrating through the 4.0 millimetre thickness of the neoprene back and front panels”. He concluded:-

“The damage to the fragment of surfing wetsuit, harness and yoke, said to have been identified as belonging to Tony Donoghue, is consistent with damage produced by the triangular serrated teeth of a Great White Shark”. (Exhibit C.3a, p2).

The search was discontinued at 2.00a.m., and recommenced at 6.00a.m. on 30 May 1999 and continued during the morning, but nothing further was located.

Unfortunately, Mr. Donoghue’s body has never been found.

In all the circumstances, and particularly in view of Dr. Brown’s opinion as to the cause of the damage to the wetsuit, I find on the balance of probabilities that Tony Donoghue died on 29 May 1999 of multiple injuries as a result of a shark attack while windsurfing at Hardwicke Bay.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations pursuant to Section 25(2) of the Coroners Act.

Key Words: disappearance; shark attack

In witness whereof the said Coroner has hereunto set and subscribed his hand and

Seal the 1st day of February, 2000.