

CORONERS COURT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF JOANNE SHANAHAN AND TANIA MCNEILL

[2026] SACC 22

Inquest Findings of his Honour State Coroner Whittle

30 June 2026

CORONIAL INQUEST

Examination of the cause and circumstances of the deaths of two occupants of vehicles that were involved in a collision with a third vehicle being driven dangerously by a person in a psychotic state. The inquest explored the circumstances surrounding the dangerous driving and whether steps could have been taken to end the course of dangerous driving or otherwise protect the community.

Held:

1. Joanne Shanahan, aged 55 years of Kingswood, died at Highgate on 25 April 2020 as a result of multiple injuries.
2. Tania McNeill, aged 53 years of St Peters, died at Highgate on 25 April 2020 as a result of multiple injuries.
3. Circumstances of death as set out in these findings.

Recommendations made.

Counsel Assisting: MR M KIRBY

Interested Party: COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

Counsel: MR M ROBERTS KC - Solicitor: MILLS OAKLEY

Interested Party: DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORT

Counsel: MR J HOMBURG - Solicitor: GILCHRIST CONNELL

Witness: S/SGT C FERGUSON & SUPT D SCUTCHINGS

Counsel: MR M ROBERTS KC - Solicitor: MILLS OAKLEY

Witness: MR M SOUTHERN

Counsel: MR J HOMBURG - Solicitor: GILCHRIST CONNELL

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**INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF
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Introduction

- 1 Following a devastating collision which tragically took the lives of two innocent people, the Court heard an inquest in relation to a discrete issue. For reasons that I will explain, the inquest was focused only on whether there were opportunities to avoid or prevent the dangerous driving that caused the collision in the hour or so before it occurred, and whether there might be opportunities to prevent future deaths in similar circumstances.

Background

- 2 Tania McNeill was born on 20 August 1966. She married her husband Cary in 2002 and they were married for about 19 years when she died. They lived together in St Peters with their then 14-year-old son, Bayley. Mrs McNeill worked with her husband in the family freight business, as well as working in administration for Chubb Security. She was known to be devoted to home, family and children.
- 3 At the time of her death, on Saturday 25 April 2020, Mrs McNeill was out making some deliveries for the family business.
- 4 Joanne (widely known as Jo) Shanahan, was born on 10 August 1964. She was married to her husband Peter for about 37 years, after meeting when Mr Shanahan was a young police officer and Mrs Shanahan was a police cadet. She was a beloved wife and mother of their two children, Nick and Eleni, who were 24 and 22 years of age at the time of their mother's death.
- 5 Mrs Shanahan was a Detective Chief Superintendent of South Australia Police who had accomplished exemplary work in domestic violence policing and in advocating for victims of domestic violence. Her work in this field was cited when she was awarded an Australian Police Medal in 2019.
- 6 Shortly before the fatal collision, Mrs Shanahan and her husband had left their home in Kingswood and were on their way to do some shopping.
- 7 Both women died from injuries sustained in a motor vehicle collision at the intersection of Cross Road and Fullarton Road in Highgate.

The collision

- 8 At approximately 1:40 pm on Saturday 25 April 2020, Mrs McNeill was driving her BMW sedan in a northerly direction along Fullarton Road past the Urrbrae High School.
- 9 Immediately prior to the collision her vehicle was the first in a queue at the traffic lights on the corner of Fullarton Road and Cross Road, waiting for a green light to cross in that northerly direction.
- 10 Mrs Shanahan was a passenger in a Holden SUV being driven by her husband in an easterly direction along Cross Road. They were approaching the intersection with Fullarton Road in the left-hand lane and were slowing down as the traffic light had turned to red.

- 11 The traffic lights facing Mrs McNeill changed to green, allowing her to travel into the intersection heading north over Cross Road in the right-hand lane. Brett McCammon was alongside Mrs McNeill in the left-hand lane in his white Porsche.
- 12 When the lights changed to green Mrs McNeill moved off just ahead of Mr McCammon and was about half a vehicle length ahead of him as they reached the middle of the intersection.
- 13 At this time a grey Volkswagen Amarok twin-cab utility was being driven in a westerly direction on Cross Road by Harrison Kitt. Mr Kitt was travelling on the wrong side of the road at a speed later calculated to be approximately 167 km/h as he entered the intersection.¹ The events at the intersection were recorded on CCTV and I received a copy of that footage into evidence.²
- 14 Unknown to anyone, Mr Kitt was experiencing a psychotic episode which stemmed from a previously undiagnosed psychiatric condition. Expert opinion established that he was aware of his speed, but as a result of his psychosis was unable to appreciate the danger this might pose, or the wrongfulness of his actions.
- 15 Mr Kitt drove through the intersection and collided with the front right-hand side of Mrs McNeill's vehicle with such force as to shear the vehicle in two at the firewall.
- 16 As a result of the impact Mr Kitt's vehicle became airborne, narrowly missed the front of Mr McCammon's vehicle and then collided with the upper front passenger side of the Shanahans' vehicle, directly where Mrs Shanahan was seated, before it ultimately came to rest on its side after colliding with a brick wall and a tree.
- 17 Mrs Shanahan and Mrs McNeill died at the scene.
- 18 Mr Shanahan suffered some minor physical injuries, including cuts to his hands and swelling and ongoing pain in his shoulder, lower back and ribs. He required ongoing physiotherapy and psychological therapy.
- 19 Mr Kitt was taken by MedSTAR ambulance to the Royal Adelaide Hospital suffering from fractures to his femur, tibia, fibula and ribs. He also suffered a 4 cm laceration above his right eyebrow with significant swelling to his right temporal area, and perforations to his liver and to his lung.
- 20 Owing to his presentation while at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, he was detained using an inpatient treatment order imposed under the *Mental Health Act 2009* until 26 May 2020.

Cause of death

- 21 In relation to Mrs Shanahan, a post-mortem examination limited to CT scan, external examination and toxicology was conducted by senior specialist forensic pathologist, Dr Stephen Wills. Dr Wills formed the opinion that her death was due to multiple injuries

¹ Exhibit C136

² Annexure to Exhibit C148

sustained in the collision.³ In light of the evidence, I accept Dr Wills' opinion and I find that the cause of Mrs Shanahan's death was multiple injuries.

- 22 In relation to Mrs McNeill, a post-mortem examination also comprising CT scan, external examination and toxicology was conducted by senior specialist forensic pathologist, Dr Karen Heath. Dr Heath formed the opinion that Mrs McNeill's death was due to multiple injuries resulting from the collision.⁴ Once again, in light of the evidence, I accept this opinion and I find that the cause of Mrs McNeill's death was multiple injuries.

Mr Kitt's psychosis

- 23 At the time of the collision, Mr Kitt was a 21-year-old single man who lived with his parents at their home in Urrbrae. He was studying for a law degree and he was working in a number of jobs and undertaking a wine course. He had an active social life and engaged in outdoor activities, such as kayaking and fishing. He had experienced issues with depression and anxiety in the past.⁵
- 24 Mr Kitt's mother described having taken him to see a psychologist two to three times when he was about 13 or 14 years old, and also to see a sleep counsellor when he was about 16 years old. He had been referred to another psychologist when he was in Year 10 for what was later described as a generalised anxiety. The issues seemed to resolve until he was undertaking Year 12 studies in 2017, when he had what was described as a significant mental breakdown.⁶ He was found by his parents in his room in the foetal position following days of loss of appetite, bouts of anger and frustration, and considerable loss of weight.
- 25 He was referred to a paediatric psychiatrist and prescribed antidepressant medication, which he later stopped taking. He began using cannabis for a time, as well as abusing cough syrup, but this stopped prior to his exams that year. He remained feeling depressed and contemplating suicide but did not seek any further support for this.

Prosecution

- 26 Mr Kitt was charged with two counts of aggravated causing death by dangerous driving and one count of aggravated causing harm by dangerous driving.
- 27 Respected psychiatrist, Dr Paul Furst, provided a report for the purposes of the District Court proceedings. In it, Dr Furst detailed Mr Kitt's history of depression and the treatment that was sought for it. It details how Mr Kitt struggled with depression over the years and also suffered issues with his sleeping. Dr Furst also summarised the evidence of Mr Kitt's friends and family, who described the increase in strange and unusual behaviour in the weeks prior to this incident. Mr Kitt was interviewed by Dr Furst and he explained the increase in strange, grandiose thoughts and behaviours in the week before the collision.
- 28 Mr Kitt explained how he felt closer to God and that he was the only one who knew that everyone else was doing things wrong, and that God had given him a mission to tell

³ Exhibit C2a

⁴ Exhibit C3a

⁵ Exhibit C12

⁶ Exhibit C112

everyone so.⁷ Mr Kitt explained that he felt his friends wanted to inflict pain on him and for him to suffer. He had illogical thoughts such as feeling that there were hidden messages in sneakers. He felt there was a war approaching and he needed to be ready for it. Dr Furst wrote of the day prior to the collision:

He said that his mum had put all her shoe boxes under the bed and he was quite stressed about this for some reason and interpreted the shoe boxes under the bed as a sign that people were coming and that you needed to hide all your valuables and that they would never look under the bed. He said that his mum had also left some cookies for him and he was not sure what that meant but later realised they were just Anzac biscuits. He said he took the cookies as a sign that he needed to take his valuables and get to his mother. He said that he had this idea that there was going to be a war and all his family would be at Encounter Bay and he had to get there to them. He said he packed his things and checked all the windows etc. in the house but decided he could not travel the usual way to Encounter Bay. He drove part of the way in the usual manner but then saw a road block and this convinced him that people were trying to get him. He said he then saw a message from his ex-girlfriend from eighteen months earlier and thought to himself "*am I in hell?*". He said he continued driving to Encounter Bay and drove carefully and avoided major roads. He said when he arrived there was no sign of his family and no lights on and he had a sense of relief and went to bed around 3.00 am. He said this was the first bit of sleep that he had had in ages.

- 29 Dr Furst first diagnosed Mr Kitt as suffering from either bipolar I disorder or schizoaffective disorder (bipolar type). Dr Furst explained that Mr Kitt's longstanding history of depression, for which he had sought treatment, was overwhelmingly the most common presentation for people with bipolar disorder, and that the average time from onset to diagnosis was approximately 10 years.
- 30 He explained the reason for the lengthy period between onset to usual diagnosis was that anyone presenting with first onset depressive symptoms would first be diagnosed with a major depressive disorder and that it was not until they had experienced their first manic episode that the diagnosis could be changed to bipolar disorder. Accordingly, Mr Kitt's psychiatric illness could not have been identified earlier as this was his first episode of mania.
- 31 Another respected psychiatrist, Dr Narian Nambiar, also independently assessed Mr Kitt's case and agreed with Dr Furst's opinion.
- 32 Dr Nambiar also noted that Mr Kitt had a history of depression and anxiety from a young age and demonstrated significant change in his thought processes in the weeks prior to the collision. He noted that Mr Kitt experienced abnormally and persistently elevated mood, fluctuating with irritability and agitation, persistently increased goal-directed activity, and energy with disturbed thoughts and behaviour, consistent with numerous types of delusions.
- 33 In the days and weeks leading up to this incident, Mr Kitt began to display unusual behaviours that were noted by family and friends. He was erratic in his conversation and found it hard to stay on topic. He sent cryptic and confusing messages to family and friends via Facebook Messenger. He also sent a number of unusual Snapchat messages to a group of his friends, showing himself running around in his neighbourhood. While

⁷ Exhibit C112 at 14

these were likely signs of an acutely deteriorating mental health picture, these communications were sent to family and friends, not any support services.

- 34 Mr Kitt's mother described him being increasingly agitated in the days before the collision and also showing unusual behaviour. While he was staying at the Encounter Bay home, he left and told her he was on his way home to clean his room because he had wanted to do it for a while. He appeared to be emotional and sentimental about things that seemed unusual, but it was not until the day of the incident that it became apparent that he was acutely unwell and seriously so.
- 35 In addition to the reports of Mr Kitt's increasingly strange behaviour in the lead-up to 25 April 2020, investigation into Mr Kitt's internet and telephone usage shows that by the day of the collision he had not been sleeping adequately.
- 36 Toxicological analysis in relation to Mr Kitt revealed the presence of THC from cannabis use and MDMA in his system, however expert analysis by independent pharmacologist, Professor Jason White, established that Mr Kitt was not affected by drugs at the time of the incident. The presence of the drugs was attributed to previous use some days before 25 April 2020, and without any pharmacological effects remaining. Additionally, Professor White agreed with the opinions of Drs Furst and Nambiar that Mr Kitt's manic episode was not the result of drug intoxication.
- 37 In light of the expert reports, I determined that the inquest would not explore the circumstances in which Mr Kitt's psychosis was not detected before the collision. In light of the opinion of two experienced psychiatrists that it was not possible to identify and diagnose Mr Kitt's true condition before the collision, then exploration of that topic did not have the capacity to reveal serious and systemic safety issues.

The relevance of criminal proceedings

- 38 The Coroners Court is prohibited from assessing or commenting upon liability. I will not do so. I observe as a matter of factual background that Mr Kitt was prosecuted for his involvement in the collision. He admitted that he had committed the objective elements of the offences charged, but he was found not guilty of any offences by reason of mental incompetence to commit those offences at the time. Mr Kitt was then declared liable to supervision and made subject to a limiting term of 10 years. I have gratefully drawn upon the reasons of his Honour Judge Muscat, who in the District Court analysed the circumstances of the collision and Mr Kitt's involvement.⁸
- 39 Through the criminal prosecution process, Mr Kitt's mental health was thoroughly assessed and investigated, including by way of multiple expert examinations. The evidence was clear enough that the prosecutors agreed that Mr Kitt lacked mental competence to commit the offences alleged. It was accepted that he had no prior instances of psychosis and that he was not subject to any treatment for psychiatric disorder. It was accepted that there was no involvement of drugs or alcohol in either the collision or his psychosis.
- 40 In light of the course of events and the outcome in the District Court, the fact that this dreadful collision occurred following a spate of high-speed, dangerous driving by a young

⁸ *R v Kitt* [2022] SADC 5

man experiencing his first psychotic episode was not in question and was not explored at inquest. The mechanisms of the actual collision were also thoroughly assessed and reconstructed by members of SAPOL's Major Crash Investigation Section.

- 41 The unfortunate truth is that this event could not have been predicted, nor, as I shall find, was there any genuine opportunity to safely end Mr Kitt's behaviour after the course of events had begun.

Focus of the inquest

- 42 In that light, the inquest therefore examined only whether there might have been opportunities for Mr Kitt to have been identified by members of the South Australia Police as being dangerous to himself and others before the collision. The inquest explored whether SAPOL had the tools it needed to identify and intercept Mr Kitt, or whether improved resourcing might have prevented the deaths.

Opportunities to stop Mr Kitt's dangerous driving

- 43 At 4:14 am on 25 April 2020, Mr Kitt's BMW sedan was recorded on a Safe-T-Cam on Victor Harbor Road at McLaren Vale. He was driving within the speed limit in a southerly direction. He went to the Encounter Bay house and was there when his mother woke up early that morning. Together, they walked the dogs and at about 10 am Mrs Kitt tried to talk to him about unusual text messages that he had been sending. Mr Kitt became agitated and told her he would stop sending messages.
- 44 Shortly after arriving back at the Encounter Bay house, Mr Kitt took the keys to his parents' Volkswagen Amarok and drove away. His driving was not aggressive and was described as normal. Mrs Kitt called and sent messages to Mr Kitt because he had taken their keys and they did not have a vehicle. Mr Kitt did not respond to any of the calls or to the messages. They were not aware that Mr Kitt was driving back to Adelaide in a dangerous manner, speeding through traffic and other intersections.
- 45 At 12:51 pm, a driver on the Southern Expressway, Jemma Kirkham, called police to report a ute speeding past cars in the emergency lane. Within a couple of minutes other calls were made to police reporting a grey or silver ute speeding and weaving in and out of traffic. Nobody was able to report the registration number, but their reports were otherwise clear and consistent; there was a dangerous driver on the Expressway.
- 46 At 12:59 pm, Elaine Magias called police to report a ute speeding past her on Goodwood Road and running the red light at Springbank Road near Torrens Park. Once again, Ms Magias was not able to provide the registration number.
- 47 A review of the affidavits of various witnesses who reported dangerous driving that day allowed Mr Kitt's movements across greater Adelaide to be reconstructed. Mr Kitt drove from Encounter Bay via Mount Compass where he passed another vehicle at high speed, crossing a double white line. He continued via Victor Harbor Road and onto the Southern Expressway. He exited the Southern Expressway on to Ayliffes Road continuing on Fiveash Drive and Goodwood Road. All the while he appears to have been driving at high speed weaving around traffic. He turned east off Goodwood Road into Grange Road at Westbourne Park and was later seen on Kitchener Street and Claremont Avenue in Urrbrae. He ended this portion of his journey at his home in Urrbrae.

- 48 During this time, without any information about the driver or the likely destination, police were not able to identify and intercept Mr Kitt. I received evidence that police aircraft were not available as they were dealing with a search and rescue operation at the time.⁹
- 49 Mr Kitt remained at home for nearly 30 minutes during which time some of his friends arrived and noted him behaving in an odd and erratic manner. They were concerned for his welfare but then could not stop him leaving. One of Mr Kitt's friends, Edward Price, was sufficiently concerned to call triple zero, asking for an ambulance to attend just as Mr Kitt was leaving. Mr Price suggested to the SA Ambulance Service that his friend was experiencing a psychotic episode. It was only about 90 seconds later that the fatal collision occurred.
- 50 Mr Kitt's time at home was also insufficient for police to identify the registration of the ute and link it back to Mr Kitt's home.
- 51 I find that, without any opportunistic encounters with police along the journey, and no registration number obtained, there was really only one potential occasion where Mr Kitt might have reasonably been stopped from continuing to drive dangerously; that is, the time that he spent at home. This would have involved very quick investigations to identify the registration number and would rely on camera networks available to the government.

Traffic Management Centre cameras

- 52 I heard evidence from the manager of the Traffic Management Centre, Michael Southern. Mr Southern explained that the Centre manages 1,200 strategically placed cameras in the urban area 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.¹⁰ The purpose of their work is to identify accidents or crashes, hazards and traffic signal faults. This includes liaising with members of the public and emergency services.
- 53 Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly given the sheer number of cameras available, the Centre uses smart technology to draw their attention to specific cameras of concern. For example, some camera systems have 'instant detection systems' which use thermal camera analytics to specifically flag stopped vehicles, pedestrians on the motorways, contraflow vehicles or objects on the road.¹¹
- 54 The Traffic Management Centre has the capability to send live feeds from any two of the 1,200 cameras to SAPOL's Communications Centre.¹² This can occur when the Traffic Management Centre identifies an issue of concern, or when asked by SAPOL for something specific to be shared.
- 55 Mr Southern gave evidence of his impression that, in recent years, SAPOL appears to have appreciated the assistance that the Traffic Management Centre's technology can be to them. He stated that they now receive dozens of requests per day from SAPOL to share feeds from particular cameras.¹³ The relationship was not the same at the time of this collision. The nature of the change described was from assistance gathering evidence

⁹ Exhibit C153

¹⁰ T37.34 and T39.31

¹¹ T39.3

¹² T40.16 and T41.4

¹³ T42.32

following an incident, to now being relied upon to support police dealing with an unfolding event.¹⁴

- 56 I was impressed by Mr Southern's description of what is involved in this task, which appeared to me to be akin to the production of a live television broadcast across hundreds of cameras being operated in succession to feed a continuous stream of footage of the particular vehicle being tracked. The abilities of the Traffic Management Centre appear to be better than that available in other states.¹⁵ In Queensland, police have a presence within their equivalent facility.
- 57 Notwithstanding the technical expertise that exists within the Traffic Management Centre, Mr Southern explained that they had not received any notification of Mr Kitt's speeding vehicle before the collision occurred, and this is not something that he would expect his staff to manually visually observe.¹⁶ There was, therefore, no genuine opportunity for the Traffic Management Centre to have prevented the collision.
- 58 Mr Southern explained the reasons behind the Traffic Management Centre's systems being designed to automatically identify slow vehicles rather than speeding vehicles, which I accept is for good safety reasons. I accept that there should be no changes to the Traffic Management Centre's technology itself to deal with the circumstances under review. However, I will assess whether there is, in any event, a role for them to play in assisting in such situations in the future.

SAPOL speed camera

- 59 The first indication of the danger that Mr Kitt's driving posed was when he was captured by a fixed-point speed camera on Victor Harbor Road near Tatachilla. This camera detected him travelling at 187 km/h in a 100 km/h zone. A clear photograph was taken by that camera, showing the vehicle, the driver and the registration number. This occurred at 12:41 pm on 25 April 2020, about an hour before the collision.
- 60 I heard evidence from Senior Sergeant Craig Ferguson of SAPOL's Expiation Notice Branch about the usefulness of that camera evidence in a circumstance such as this. Because of the technology used, and the manner in which those fixed cameras operate, this information was not passed on immediately to police or any other authority. The simple fact is that these cameras do not send photographs or any other information to SAPOL in real time.
- 61 Senior Sergeant Ferguson explained that following a detection by a speed camera, there is a secure electronic transfer from the camera system to the Expiation Notice Branch system. This transfer occurs each 15 minutes.¹⁷ The specific time that such a transfer occurs in relation to the time any individual photograph is taken will depend on when the photograph is taken within the 15-minute cycle. It may be transferred moments after it is taken if that occurs towards the end of the cycle, but otherwise could take up to 15 minutes to be transferred. There is no mechanism whereby the cameras can be viewed 'live'.¹⁸ This means that, even if SAPOL were to receive intelligence that there was a dangerous

¹⁴ T57.8

¹⁵ T81.10

¹⁶ T72.32

¹⁷ T90.17

¹⁸ T93.18

driver on the road, the cameras could not be used to provide a stream with which the roads could be viewed.

- 62 It is possible for the point-to-point system to be interrogated to check whether a particular registration plate has passed through the system.¹⁹ Senior Sergeant Ferguson said that the ‘point-to-point’ camera systems have automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) which extracts the registration plate number from the photograph. This allows it to match up the first and second photographs as depicting the same vehicle travelling through each of the cameras to then calculate an average speed.
- 63 The Expiation Notice Branch deals with 169 fixed cameras across South Australia which results in about 1,500 to 2,000 images a day, which are reviewed during business hours.²⁰ This means that there will be a day or so delay until any image is reviewed.
- 64 Senior Sergeant Ferguson said that there were no systems in place that identified any particular images as more important than others.²¹ He said that, to ensure integrity of the camera systems, access is only available to specific members of police. If police wanted to interrogate what happened within a recent time period, a member of the Expiation Notice Branch would need to log into the camera system, which itself takes about 10-15 minutes.²² It would then take another 5-10 minutes to examine the metadata. Senior Sergeant Ferguson said it would then take about another 20 minutes to use other systems to obtain information about the vehicle if the registration number was recorded by the camera.
- 65 Senior Sergeant Ferguson’s evidence was therefore that the process of identifying that a particular vehicle had passed through a particular camera at a particular time could take up to 30 minutes, and then additional time to obtain any information about that vehicle that is sought. This is, of course, when the registration of the particular vehicle is known. It would be a more difficult task to do the reverse; to use the system to identify a vehicle that is known to be speeding along a road and obtain the registration number. Members would have to guess the timeframe within which the vehicle might have passed by the camera, or otherwise review a wider time period, and review each and every vehicle that passes through to try to match it to the description of the vehicle of concern.
- 66 Had that been requested here, the identity of Mr Kitt’s vehicle as the vehicle of concern might have been easily done, given the extreme speed at which it was travelling, which would have made it stand out as the likely candidate. However, given the system does not flag extreme speed, that task would still require the manual review of all cars that passed through.
- 67 Senior Sergeant Ferguson spoke of another method, which involves extracting from the camera system a list of all registration numbers that had passed through the camera for a certain time period and then checking each registration in the Department for Transport’s

¹⁹ T97.33

²⁰ T90.36

²¹ T91.37

²² T100.36 and T101.12

systems to identify which one matches the description.²³ It is hard to imagine this would be any quicker than reviewing the images.

- 68 I am satisfied therefore that, even if an immediate request was to have been made to the Expiation Notice Branch for assistance, it would have taken no less than 30 minutes, but likely longer, and only if this occurred within business hours. Of course, this incident occurred on the Anzac Day public holiday.
- 69 The unfortunate flow-on from this limitation was that when later reports came of a speeding ute travelling dangerously on the Southern Expressway and closer to Adelaide, but without registration details being advised, the vehicle could not reasonably have been identified in the time available. Had the registration number been known, it is possible that police might have been able to identify that the likely destination for the ute was Mr Kitt's home and they might have been able to intercept him during the 30 minutes he was present there. That would require extremely quick police work and it is far from certain that this could have actually been achieved in the time available.
- 70 In light of that evidence, I am satisfied that there was no genuine opportunity for police to prevent the collision.
- 71 My conclusion is therefore that the deaths of Mrs Shanahan and Mrs McNeill were not preventable.

Recommendations

- 72 In light of the evidence I heard and received at inquest, I am required to consider whether there are recommendations I ought to make that might prevent or reduce the likelihood of a similar event occurring again, or that would improve public health and safety and whether such recommendations are appropriate.
- 73 I have not found any criticism to be made of either the involvement of the Department for Transport, nor SAPOL, however that does not mean that initiatives could not be undertaken that might have assisted and might assist in future.
- 74 During the inquest, consideration was given to whether specific alerts could be issued by camera systems that detect very high speed vehicles where the speed, in and of itself, puts road users at risk.
- 75 I was advised that SAPOL's camera network was comprised of aging technology that would be unlikely to be able to be 'upskilled' to perform this operation.
- 76 I received evidence about the process for approaching such change, involving a business case prepared by external analysts which addresses 'commercial and operational viability'. A considerable sum was suggested for the preparation of such a proposal.²⁴ I was advised that SAPOL were, at the time of the inquest, procuring a replacement of the existing traffic camera network.
- 77 I observe that a measure enabling a traffic camera to send an immediate notification to SAPOL that a vehicle with a particular registration number had passed through a fixed-

²³ T104.8

²⁴ Exhibit C152 at 3

point speed camera at a speed, for example, in excess of the speed limit by 45 km/h or more is unlikely to satisfy a description of ‘commercially viable’. The purpose of the Court’s inquiry into this issue is not to identify opportunities to generate further revenue for the government. It is instead directed at improving the safety of all road users. If there was to be an improvement that could be made that could prevent deaths, then it should be explored regardless of whether it presents SAPOL with a commercial opportunity. Road safety initiatives cost money and that money cannot always be recovered.

- 78 In any event, it is likely that newer more-modern camera systems, which were being procured at the time of the inquest, may be able to be configured for this capability.
- 79 In my view, if SAPOL had systems in place that raised an immediate alert that Mr Kitt’s vehicle had travelled through the Victor Harbor Road fixed-point camera at 187 km/h and provided the registration number with the alert, SAPOL would have had a chance to identify the registered owner, identify the address of registration as a possible destination, initiate attempts at monitoring through the Traffic Management Centre and attempt to intercept the vehicle if appropriate. Even if no interception was practicable, a patrol could be dispatched to wait discreetly near Mr Kitt’s home in case he went there, with the purpose of apprehending him when he exited the vehicle. If that had occurred, police would have identified his psychotic symptoms and he would not have left for the fateful journey. I accept that the instances of a person driving dangerously over the distance that Mr Kitt did might be rare, and it follows that there will not be many instances where there will be time to intercept or even potentially clear a path, although Mr Southern explained good reasons for not doing that generally.²⁵ However, there is value in having such a system and potentially preventing any death, or serious injury, as often caused by dangerous driving.
- 80 In short, I was unpersuaded by the arguments made about the lack of benefit when weighed against the cost, utility and ability to police the capability.²⁶ I found it particularly interesting to learn that, where a similar capability is available, SAPOL readily use it. That is, where a mobile speed camera detects a vehicle travelling at more than 40 km/h over the speed limit, the operator is required to immediately notify the Police Communications Centre.²⁷ This reveals a recognition of the obvious potential benefit that such notifications have.
- 81 Investigations conducted by Senior Sergeant Ferguson following the conclusion of his evidence revealed that, while there are issues to be worked through and additional hardware and software would be required, at least some of the current SAPOL cameras could be configured to provide an automatic alert.²⁸ Other cameras were said to not have such an ability ‘in their current state’²⁹ which is not an expression of impossibility.
- 82 I received evidence asserting that SAPOL’s capabilities of identifying, locating and tracking a speeding vehicle have improved since this incident. I was advised that SAPOL continuously looks at ways to improve its operations and that ‘the learning experience

²⁵ T55.10

²⁶ Exhibit C152 at 5

²⁷ Exhibit C151

²⁸ Exhibit C149 at Annexure CF2

²⁹ Exhibit C149 at Annexure CF3

never stops'.³⁰ The first step that was said would occur if the same event happened today was:

Following the receipt of reports from members of the public regarding a speeding vehicle or as reported by the [Traffic Management Centre], [SAPOL's Communications Centre] would work with the [Traffic Management Centre] to utilise their camera system to locate and identify the vehicle and where possible obtain a registration number and description.³¹

83 It follows therefore that an immediate automated notification of the registration number of an excessively speeding vehicle would assist to speed up this process and allow tracking to be quickly commenced. While the Traffic Management Centre might still be used to track and provide updates of the location of the vehicle, it would not have the initial task of trying to find where it is and get a clear enough image of the registration plate, which Mr Southern described as a difficult task.³² I am satisfied that there would be great potential benefit to an automatic notification being sent to SAPOL, and also to the Traffic Management Centre which is accustomed to tracking and raising issues for the attention of emergency services.

84 For those reasons, I make the following recommendation to the Minister for Police:

One That strong consideration be given to implementing a system where extreme speed notifications are automatically issued by fixed-point speed cameras to SAPOL Communications Centre and to the Traffic Management Centre.

Condolences

85 The violent deaths of Mrs Shanahan and Mrs McNeill came suddenly and unexpectedly, with extremely traumatic effects on family, friends and the community generally. I recognise the devastating impact on each of the families and I acknowledge their presence throughout the inquest. I convey my sincere condolences to each of the families for their loss.

Keywords: Psychosis; High Speed; Traffic Cameras

³⁰ Exhibit C150 at [13]

³¹ Exhibit C150 at [12]

³² T58.1