



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Robert Webster, Coroner, having investigated the death of Karen Lee Elizabeth Quillerat

Find, pursuant to Section 28(1) of the Coroners Act 1995, that

- a) The identity of the deceased is Karen Lee Elizabeth Quillerat;
- b) Ms Quillerat died as a result of an injury sustained in a single motor vehicle crash;
- c) Ms Quillerat's cause of death was a head injury; and
- d) Ms Quillerat died between 19 and 20 June 2022 on Greens Beach Road near Greens Beach in Tasmania.

Introduction

This investigation concerns a fatal single motor vehicle crash that occurred on Greens Beach Road near Greens Beach after 10:30pm on Sunday, 19 June 2022. At the time of the crash it was not raining but the road was wet. There had been 9.6 mm of rain during the day with a maximum temperature of 14.6 degrees celsius. The road surface at the scene of the crash was constructed of a coarse aggregate bitumen mix that was in good condition with no visible surface defects. An inspection of the scene located nothing on the roadway surface that would cause the crash. The prescribed speed limit was 100 km/h.

The crash involved a red 1998 Toyota Camry Sedan, Tasmanian registered number DZ2390 which was being driven by Ms Quillerat. Ms Quillerat was the only occupant of the vehicle at the time of the crash. The vehicle was registered to her and she was licensed to drive a car.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the investigation into Ms Quillerat's death. The evidence includes:

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;

- Affidavits as to identity;
- Affidavit of the Forensic Pathologist Dr Christopher Lawrence;
- Affidavit of the Forensic Scientist, Neil McLachlan-Troup of Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Affidavit of James Ross;
- Affidavit of Brian Bell;
- Affidavit of Donovan Lightfoot;
- Affidavit of Kaysha Blunstone;
- Affidavit of Constable Andrew Hansen;
- Affidavit of First-Class Constable Nigel Housego;
- Affidavit of Detective First-Class Constable Benjamin Austin; and
- Photographs and forensic evidence.

Background

Ms Quillerat was 54 years of age (date of birth 19 August 1967), separated and she resided alone at Greens Beach at the date of her death. As a child she attended Mayfield Primary School and Brooks High School. Ms Quillerat did not work for most of her adult life as she was a stay-at-home mother. She did however work from time to time which included 12 months at Waverley Woollen Mills.

Ms Quillerat was in a long-term relationship with Paul Quillerat and she changed her surname so that it was the same as her children; a son who was born in 1987 and a daughter who was born in 1989. The couple however separated in 2005 and Ms Quillerat lived with her daughter at Newnham whereas Mr Quillerat went to live in Rossarden with the couple's son.

Ms Quillerat moved to York Town on the Tamar River in about 2017 where she resided for a period before moving to Greens Beach. She was a member of the Greens Beach golf club and used to play in competitions on Thursdays and Saturdays. She loved the beach, doing crafts, gardening and fishing. She also used to play eight ball at the Waterfront Hotel at Beauty Point.

After separating from Mr Quillerat she was in a relationship with Matt Fraser for about 10 years. It is when they separated that Ms Quillerat moved to Greens Beach. She looked after her grandson regularly in order to assist her daughter and son in law.

Ms Quillerat smoked when she was younger but she did not smoke in her later years. She was a social drinker of alcohol. Her daughter says Ms Quillerat was fit and healthy and she

had not been to the doctor for a number of years. She did not take prescribed medication and she ate healthily. Ms Quillerat was described as a really cautious driver by her daughter.

Circumstances Leading to Death

On Sunday, 19 June 2022 Ms Quillerat arrived at the Beauty Point Waterfront Hotel just after her friend Brian Bell arrived at between 12:30pm and 1:00pm. She was alone. She spent the afternoon in the bar with locals and then at around 8:00pm she joined Brian Bell, Nick Murphy and Jason Savage where she played eight ball and had a few drinks.

The Hotel closed at 10:00pm and the group took alcohol out onto the deck of the hotel and continued to drink. Between 10:30pm and 11:00pm the group decided to go home and Ms Quillerat offered them a lift. She drove up Bagot Street, Beauty Point with Mr Bell in the front passenger seat, Mr Savage in the rear left and Mr Murfet in the rear right seat. She dropped off Mr Savage first and then Mr Murfet and then she drove to Mr Bell's residence at Kitchener Avenue Beauty Point. After dropping him off she drove away. Mr Bell did not notice anything unusual about her driving or her manner. He says it was not raining at the time but it had been raining during the day.

The investigating officer, First-Class Constable Housego, believes Ms Quillerat has then commenced the journey home to Greens Beach and she has driven through York Town and Kelso which is a distance of approximately 16.5 km. Her vehicle has left the road on the exit to a slight left-hand curve outside property number 1637 Greens Beach Road.

Investigation

Ms Quillerat was located at approximately 7:45am on 20 June 2022 by passers-by Garth Berry and Donovan Lightfoot. They contacted police at 7:53am and reported they believed Ms Quillerat to be deceased. Police, Fire and Emergency Services attended and observed Ms Quillerat deceased and seated in the driver's seat with her seatbelt fastened. She was removed from the vehicle and transported to the mortuary.

First-Class Constable Housego arrived at the scene of the crash at approximately 9:05am. One lane of the road had been closed to traffic, by police who initially attended the scene, in order to preserve the crash area. The road was damp, whether overcast and visibility was clear.

The area of the collision is rural with farm land adjacent to the roadway. The road primarily runs in a north/south direction with Ms Quillerat travelling north, towards Greens Beach, at the time the crash. Greens Beach Road travels between Weld Street in Beaconsfield at the southern end to Greens Beach at the northern end. It is about 18 km long with numerous

intersecting roads. Traffic travels west from Beauty Point along the West Tamar Highway to intersect with Greens Beach Road, 11.6 km south of the crash site. Between that intersection and the crash site travelling north are the towns of York Town and Kelso.

There is one lane for each direction of travel separated by a white painted single continuous line. There are no edge lines. The northbound lane is 2.9 m wide and the southbound lane is 2.8 m wide. There is a 1 m wide gravel verge on the edge of the northbound lane and a 1.1 m gravel verge on the edge of the southbound lane. The bend is a slight left hand bend for northbound traffic. The roadway is slightly uphill for northbound traffic. There is a strip of land approximately 5.7 m wide, that is overgrown with numerous trees, which separates the gravel verge of the northbound lane and a wire farm fence.

Senior Constable Lambert of George Town police assisted First-Class Constable Housego to mark the various scuffs, and gouges left by the vehicle with yellow paint. A sketch plan was prepared which included relevant measurements. Senior Constable McGregor and Constable Austin of Northern Forensic Services attended the scene and took photographs at First-Class Constable Housego's direction. Sergeant Lynch of Longford Police station attended and used a drone to 3D map the crash scene. The vehicle was removed from the scene and conveyed to the Launceston Police compound.

From marks left on the roadway First-Class Constable Housego calculated Ms Quillerat was driving at a minimum speed of 137 km/h when the vehicle entered into a left-hand yaw in the gravel verge. Measurements indicate that her vehicle commenced crossing the centre line 32.9 m prior to the commencement of the yaw. The location the vehicle crossed the centreline was the point at which the roadway curved slightly left, and the vehicle continued in a straight line. The vehicle crossed the centreline as no steering input was applied. The vehicle has then run off the edge of the southbound lane with its right side tyres. It was after this point it entered into the left-hand yaw due to excessive left-hand steering being applied. The vehicle commenced a counterclockwise rotation, with the rear wheels overtaking the front wheels. The vehicle then crossed back over the roadway and rotated over 90°. It has continued to rotate counterclockwise while on the gravel verge of the northbound lane. The right wheel rims have dug into the gravel and the vehicle has rolled around its centre of mass 180° while moving north through trees and shrubs. The vehicle has continued to rotate counterclockwise 180° coming to rest on its roof facing south.

Dr Lawrence conducted a post-mortem examination on 22 June 2022. As a result of that examination and after considering the results of toxicology, microbiology and a CT scan he determined the cause of death was a head injury following this single motor vehicle rollover. I accept his opinion.

The results of toxicology returned a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.215 g of alcohol in 100 mL of blood. Mr McLachlan-Troup has advised that the relative risk of a driver with a BAC of 0.180 g in 100 mL of blood being involved in a crash is approximately 50 times that of a driver with no alcohol in his or her blood. Here, with a higher reading, the risk would have been even greater. He goes on to say alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and its general effects include loss of critical judgement, incoordination, reduced perception and awareness, impaired balance, sedation, nausea and vomiting, reduced responsiveness and decreased intellectual performance. The depression of psychomotor and cognitive functions due to alcohol cause impairment of critical functions required for driving including reaction time, coordination, information processing and reflexes. There is also an associated increase in risk-taking and speed variation. I accept his opinion with respect to these matters.

Mr Ross examined the vehicle on 23 June 2022. He is an automotive technician with over seven years' experience in the automotive industry. After his inspection he advised that prior to this crash the vehicle would have been in a well maintained condition. Although well-maintained the vehicle was not roadworthy due to the right-hand front shock absorber leaking oil but that defect was not causative of this crash.

Comments and Recommendations

In this case no other vehicle caused or contributed to the crash. There were no defects in the road surface that may have caused the crash. There were no defects with the vehicle that caused this crash. It has occurred after Ms Quillerat spent almost 10 hours at a hotel after which she chose to drive home late at night on a wet country road. She has returned a BAC in excess of four times the legal limit and was travelling at an excessive speed just prior to the crash. This is yet another reminder that drinking alcohol to excess and driving at an excessive speed has tragic consequences.

First-Class Constable Housego has advised the manner of Ms Quillerat's driving prior to the crash is not typical of a driver avoiding an animal. Drivers who avoid animals tend to make sharp turns and then attempt to recover from the sharp turn. That evidence is not present in this case. First-Class Constable Housego says Ms Quillerat had an excellent knowledge of the road but she still failed to take appropriate action to negotiate a slight curve. He is therefore of the opinion that her high level of intoxication and high-speed caused her to overrun the curve and when she has perceived this she applied harsh left-hand steering which caused the vehicle to enter into the counterclockwise yaw and subsequent collision with the trees and shrubs on the edge of the road. I agree.

The circumstances of Ms Quillerat's death are not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Ms Quillerat.

Dated: 5 August 2024 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

Magistrate Robert Webster

Coroner