



# MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

## CORONIAL DIVISION

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### **Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)**

*Coroners Act 1995*  
*Coroners Rules 2006*  
*Rule 11*

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Ronald James Wright

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Ronald James Wright, date of birth 5 August 1942.
- b) Mr Wright was 81 years of age, was a retired sawmiller and salesman, and lived with his partner in Mowbray. He has two children from previous marriages. On 24 January 2024, Mr Wright used a 173-centimetre A-frame aluminium ladder to erect a sunshade on the roof of his house. He was working at a height of 280 centimetres. Mr Wright had not taken steps to properly secure the feet of the ladder or to have another person present when he was working. As he was working on the ladder at the height of the roof, the ladder overbalanced when he attempted to obtain a foothold on the top rung. The top rung displayed a partially erased sign, cautioning the user of the ladder to *not stand* on that rung. Unfortunately, Mr Wright fell to the concrete patio below. His fall was captured on the home closed-circuit television system.

Shortly after his fall, his partner found him conscious, in pain and bleeding from the head. An ambulance was called, and he was conveyed to the Launceston General Hospital. In hospital, he was assessed as having numerous injuries. These included skull fractures, brain contusions, subdural haematoma, subarachnoid haemorrhage, fracture of the right humerus and fracture of the pelvis. He was airlifted to the Royal Hobart Hospital for specialist intensive care treatment. He remained an inpatient for twelve days but his recovery was complicated by delirium. On 4 February 2024, there was a dramatic deterioration in his condition because of the development of a pulmonary thromboembolism. He subsequently underwent multiple medical reviews by the trauma team but, due to his very poor prognosis, he was transitioned to palliative care in consultation with family. He passed away on 5 February 2024.

- c) Mr Wright's cause of death was pulmonary thromboemboli (blood clots in the arteries of the lungs) as a result of multiple traumatic injuries caused by his accidental fall from a height.
- d) Mr Wright died on 5 February 2024 at Hobart, Tasmania.

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Tasmanian Health Service Death Report to Coroner;
- Affidavits verifying identity;
- Opinion of the forensic pathologist regarding cause of death;
- Affidavit from Penny Frank, partner of Mr Wright;
- Affidavit and photographs of a Forensic Services police officer; and
- CCTV footage from the scene.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

It was inadvisable for Mr Wright, at 81 years of age, to work at a height from a ladder, and particularly inadvisable not to use it safely.

Over recent years, Coroners have emphasised in numerous findings that older males using ladders unsafely have resulted in preventable deaths. Tragically, Mr Wright's death is another such case.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Mr Wright.

**Dated:** 19 September 2024 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

**Olivia McTaggart**  
**Coroner**