



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Jeff Malcolm Haig

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Jeff Malcolm Haig, date of birth 3 August 1961.
- b) Mr Haig was born in New Zealand as Malcom Ian Gray. He immigrated to Australia in the 1980s and, in 1997, changed his name by deed poll to Jeff Malcolm Haig. He completed an electrical apprenticeship and later gained qualifications as an electrical engineer. During his working life, Mr Haig was employed in the mining industry. He had never married and did not have children.

Mr Haig lived alone in Flowerdale, a small, rural town in north western Tasmania. He lived a solitary life and had contact with very few people. He returned to New Zealand to visit his mother and sister on occasions and maintained very regular contact with his sister, Tania Boss, by email and text message. However, Mr Haig had infrequent contact with his brothers. In 2018 Mr Haig was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, although this condition was documented in the medical records as being asymptomatic. As at his last review at Alfred Health MS clinic in March 2021, his condition remained unchanged.

The evidence in the investigation indicates that from about 2021, Mr Haig experienced increasingly paranoid and delusional beliefs and became suspicious of others. Specifically, he formed the view that the Neighbourhood Watch organisation was monitoring and harassing him. On 31 July 2022, Mr Haig sent Ms Boss a seven-page email indicating that he was being monitored by Neighbourhood Watch, police, and others. Mr Haig expressed the belief that Neighbourhood Watch had followed him all over Australia and to New Zealand. He referred frequently to agents of Neighbourhood Watch and their "handlers".

Mr Haig began to make detailed records of his movements each time he left his residence. Those records, from early August 2021, were retrieved and formed

exhibits in the investigation. He recorded vehicles he had seen in and around Flowerdale and those he saw on the road, which he believed were following him. The investigating officer checked the registrations recorded by Mr Haig on police systems and found nothing linking the vehicles or owners to each other. I am satisfied based upon the extensive writings and communications of Mr Haig, that he held delusional and paranoid beliefs and that his daily life was governed by such thoughts and beliefs.

Mr Haig travelled regularly from his address in Flowerdale through Burnie and Devonport and appeared to do most of his shopping and business in Launceston. His lawyer was located in Launceston and, when necessary, he attended the after-hours doctor's clinic in Launceston.

Mr Haig was last known to be alive on Tuesday 2 August 2022. On that day, he left his residence and travelled to Launceston. He then travelled to Low Head where he remained for a short time. Mr Haig then drove to George Town and stopped at the BWS bottle shop. He then drove to the United petrol station to refuel before travelling back to Low Head where he parked his vehicle. At 3.50pm he sent a text message to Ms Boss along with a photo of himself from Low Head. His last message to Ms Boss, stating that he loved her, was sent at 5.26pm. There was nothing untoward about the exchange between himself and his sister at this time.

On Thursday 11 August 2022, Ms Boss phoned police as she was concerned that she had not heard from her brother. Wynyard police officers attended Mr Haig's residence. No one was there but nothing looked untoward. The attending police officers spoke with Ms Boss on the telephone and obtained further information. Ms Boss told the officers that she may have over-reacted in her concern for welfare as Mr Haig sometimes "disconnected" for up to three weeks. Ms Boss did not wish police to take further action to locate Mr Haig at that time. This being the case, Mr Haig was not placed on police systems for further alerts.

On Thursday 18 August 2022 George Town police were called to Low Head regarding an abandoned motor vehicle. The vehicle, a black Hyundai Santa Fe, was located by the attending officers who ascertained that it was registered to Mr Jeff Haig. Nothing suspicious was noted by the officers about the vehicle. The George Town officers tasked Wynyard officers to attend Mr Haig's address. On this occasion, different officers attended the address than those

who had previously attended. They concluded that there was no one living at the address and the matter of the abandoned vehicle was not resolved at that time. The vehicle was in a car park and not in a location causing obstruction. Therefore, immediate action was not required to remove it. Because Mr Haig was not the subject of any alert in police systems at the time, the welfare attendance to his residence instigated by Ms Boss on 11 August 2022 was not linked to the report relating to discovering his abandoned vehicle.

On Friday 26 August 2022, Mr John Glisson was playing golf with a friend on the private golf course behind the residences on Low Head Road near the foreshore. Mr Glisson's friend sliced his ball, which landed on the rocks at the foreshore. Mr Glisson went in search of the ball and located Mr Haig's decomposed body.

Police were called and attended the scene. I am satisfied that a comprehensive investigation has taken place in respect of the death of Mr Haig. In addition to refuelling his vehicle, Mr Haig had animal feed in his vehicle for his sheep kept at his home address in Flowerdale. Mr Haig had made no arrangements for the ongoing care of his sheep. He had told his sister that he would talk to her later. He had plans for the immediate future. It was out of character for Mr Haig to take a trip to a place such as Low Head. However, this could easily be explained as a treat for himself for his birthday, which was the following day. I find that, upon all of the evidence, it is unlikely that Mr Haig was experiencing suicidal ideation or had suicidal plans.

Mr Haig had a number of valuables on his person, including more than \$700 in cash and his vehicle keys. There were also valuables inside his vehicle which was still parked nearby where Mr Haig had left it. The dashcam footage shows no-one approached the vehicle after Mr Haig left it.

Mr Haig did not have any police record beyond the recording of his driver's licence on police systems. He had no apparent enemies, despite his irrational beliefs that he was being monitored and targeted by a range of persons and organisations. In her report, the investigating officer suggested the possibility that Mr Haig developed psychiatric symptoms, being delusions and paranoia, as a result of his multiple sclerosis which involved a lesion on his corpus callosum (part of the brain connecting the left and right hemispheres). The investigator helpfully provided a research article on this topic. However, I do

not need to determine the origin of his beliefs and behaviour in this investigation as this issue is not sufficiently connected to death.

Experienced forensic pathologist, Dr Donald Ritchey, performed an autopsy upon Mr Haig. Dr Ritchey noted that Mr Haig's clothing was wet and he was cold to touch. Dr Ritchey reported that his examination and conclusions were limited by Mr Haig's body being in a moderately advanced state of post-mortem decomposition with complete skeletisation of the soft tissues of the anterior skull. He also observed prominent bloating, skin slippage and vascular marbling. These findings suggested immersion in water, particularly the extensive skin slippage of the hands.

Dr Ritchey did not see any signs of medical intervention on Mr Haig's body. All organs were present and in the normal position. Dr Ritchey did not see definite evidence of violent injury such as contusions, fractures or intercranial collections of blood to the scalp or skull.

He observed that the aorta had patchy calcified atherosclerosis but all other aspects of the heart were unremarkable. He also observed extensive anthracosis on the pleural surface of both lungs along with abundant putrefactive gas. The hepatic capsule of the liver was cloudy and opaque. The gallbladder contained thin bile. The prostate was enlarged and nodular.

On the basis of his findings, Dr Ritchey formed the view that death may well have been due to natural causes, namely centriacinar emphysema. However, he could not determine a definite medical cause due to decomposition.

The evidence does not indicate Mr Haig died as a result of foul play.

Mr Haig's shoelaces were found to be untied, which might be explained by the ebb and flow of the water. It is not clear whether Mr Haig died where his wet body was located. He may have been submerged in the water at another location with his body washing up to where he was eventually found.

Mr Haig was lying face down with his head resting on a rock and the ground was uneven. The area was not usually frequented by members of the public. The officers at the scene considered that Mr Haig may have tripped on his untied shoelaces or on the uneven ground. He may have then fallen and hit his head causing death. This scenario is possible, despite Dr Ritchey finding no violent trauma to the skull.

Toxicological testing suggests that he consumed some alcohol, likely a small or moderate quantity, before his death. His blood sample was not able to be analysed for the usual toxic drugs and therefore I am also not able to determine whether drug toxicity played any part in his death. I also note that an elevated level of carboxyhaemoglobin (carbon monoxide) was detected in Mr Haig's blood. Dr Ritchey stated that the significance of this elevated level "*is unlikely but unknown*".

- c) I am unable to determine the cause of Mr Haig's death. For the reasons discussed above, it is more likely that he died as a result of a natural condition such as emphysema. It is also quite possible that he died as a result of misadventure, such as a fall. Drowning is a possible cause of death, but absent suicidal intentions, Mr Haig had no logical reason to enter the water in his clothing. It is unlikely that he died as a result of suicide or homicide. The role of drugs and carbon monoxide in Mr Haig's death cannot be determined.
- d) Mr Haig died on 2 August 2022, or shortly thereafter, at Low Head in Tasmania.

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits confirming identity;
- Opinion of the forensic pathologist who conducted the autopsy;
- Medical records held by Mr Haig's general practitioner, Alfred Hospital and Tasmania Health Service;
- Affidavits of Tania Boss and Darryl Gray, siblings of Mr Haig;
- Affidavit of John Glisson, witness who discovered Mr Haig's body;
- Affidavits of I I attending and investigating officers of Tasmania Police: and
- Electronic and testamentary documents written by Mr Haig.

Comments and Recommendations

I extend my appreciation to investigating officer Constable Kelly Donaldson for her investigation and report.

The circumstances of Mr Jeff Haig's death are not such as to require me to make any recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I convey my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones.

Dated: 20 June 2025 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart

Coroner

These findings amends the findings of Coroner Olivia McTaggart of 20 June 2025 by an order under section 58(1)(c) of the Coroners Act 1995 dated 23 July to correct factual errors in the original findings.