



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11

I, Simon Cooper, Coroner, having investigated the death of Dion Charles Mead

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Dion Charles Mead;
- b) Mr Mead died as a result of injuries sustained as the driver in a single motor vehicle crash;
- c) Mr Mead's cause of death was thermal burns; and
- d) Mr Mead died on 27 May 2023 near 1420 Tasman Highway, Cambridge, Tasmania.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the investigation into Mr Mead's death which includes:

- Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits confirming identity;
- Forensic Odontology Report – Dr Tom Pacza, 2 June 2023;
- Report – Dr Christopher Lawrence, Forensic Pathologist;
- Toxicology Report – Forensic Science Service Tasmania;
- Medical Records – Glebe Hill Family Practice;
- Medical Records – Tasmanian Health Service;
- Affidavit – Kristi Mead, sworn 29 June 2023;
- Affidavit – Jamie Liebe (witness), sworn 1 June 2023;
- Affidavit – Maddison Liebe (witness), sworn 10 June 2023;
- Affidavit – Victoria Mills, sworn 6 November 2024;
- Affidavit and Photographs – First Class Constable Dean Walker, Forensic Services, sworn 7 August 2024;
- Affidavit and Photographs – Senior Constable Rance Swinton, Forensic Services, sworn 31 July 2024;

- Collision Analysis Report – Senior Constable Kelly Cordwell, sworn 27 May 2023;
- Transcript – Telephone conversation between Constable Dennis and Mr Mead;
- Affidavit – Jason Armstrong, Transport Safety and Investigation Officer, sworn 9 August 2023;
- Fire Investigation Report and Photographs – Timothy McKay, Regional Fire Investigator dated 6 December 2023; and
- Body Worn Camera Footage and Forensic Evidence.

Mr Mead was 45 years old at the time of his death. He was married and had 2 children. Mr Mead had a history of poor mental health. Kristi Mead, Mr Mead's wife, provided an affidavit to assist the investigation in relation to her husband's death. She said he was anxious about a recent complaint at his workplace that he felt (irrationally in my view) was directed at him. In addition, he experienced substantial grief as a result of the death of his younger brother Shaun in February 2023.

It is evident that in the hours prior to the crash in which Mr Mead died his mood and mental health deteriorated sharply. He left his home in his Mitsubishi Express van with his dog, having told his daughter he was intending to drive to his father's home where he would spend the night.

Tasmania Police Radio Dispatch Services (RDS) contacted Mr Mead via phone. He was described as being "*completely irrational*" over the phone. He stated that his brother had passed away recently and that he was having a hard time dealing with that. RDS asked Mr Mead to pull over but he would not. The line disconnected and RDS had no success in re-contacting him. A broadcast was then put out over police radio with the description of the vehicle in an attempt to locate Mr Mead.

The evidence satisfies me that Mr Mead drove his van at considerable speed deliberately in to a brick wall at the entrance to the Tasmania Golf Club, on Tasman Highway, at Cambridge. The impact of the crash forced the components of the vehicle into the footwell of the driver's seated position, trapping his lower legs. The vehicle caught fire and Mr Mead was unable to escape.

Despite the efforts of Mr Jamie Liebe and Sergeant Matthew Rolls, Mr Mead could not be saved and died at the scene.

Tasmania Fire Service personnel extinguished the fire and Mr Mead's body was extracted from the wreck of his van. It was transported by mortuary ambulance to the Royal Hobart Hospital where formal identification was confirmed by Forensic Odontologist Dr Tom Pazca.

An autopsy was conducted by experienced Forensic Pathologist Dr Christopher Lawrence. Dr Lawrence expressed the opinion that the cause of Mr Mead's death was thermal burns sustained in the fire in his vehicle.

Regional Fire Investigator Timothy McKay provided a comprehensive report. In the report he said that sparking from electrical components was the most probable ignition source of the fire. He did not find any evidence suggestive of ignition from an incendiary, chemical or natural source. I accept Regional Fire Investigator McKay's opinion. I am quite satisfied that he is well qualified to express the opinion that he has.

A full examination of the remains of the vehicle was carried out by Mr Jason Armstrong, a Transport Safety and Investigation Officer. He found that the vehicle was defective in that both front tires were void of tread. I do not think this defect caused or contributed to the happening of the crash.

Senior Constable Cordwell investigated the crash and provided a comprehensive report. She expressed the opinion that road and weather conditions did not contribute to the crash. She did not find any evidence at the scene to indicate Mr Mead had taken any form of evasive action so as to avoid colliding with the brick wall.

In all of the circumstances, I am satisfied to the requisite legal standard, that Mr Mead deliberately steered his vehicle in to the brick wall with the express intention of ending his own life.

The crash crushed the front of the van, trapping his legs and causing a fire which rapidly engulfed the van from which could not escape.

No other person caused or contributed to the happening of the crash in which Mr Mead died.

Comments and Recommendations

I commend Mr Jamie Liebe and Sergeant Matthew Rolls for their brave efforts to rescue Mr Mead in very dangerous and traumatic circumstances.

The circumstances of Mr Mead'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 Mr Mead.

Dated: 4 June 2025 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper
Coroner