



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11

(These findings have been de-identified in relation to the name of the deceased and family by the direction of the Coroner pursuant to s 57(1)(c) of the Coroners Act 1995)

I, Madeleine Wilson, Coroner, having investigated the death of SU

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is SU whose date of birth is 9 April 1994.
- b) SU was 30 years of age and lived in Brunswick West, Victoria. He was born in Australia but spent his early years in China, before his family returned to Australia when he was five years old. He was schooled in Melbourne, Victoria and had a Bachelor of Science and an Honours degree. He worked as a Business Development Manager at Monash University and had been accepted into the Victorian Police Service and was due to commence a recruit course at the end of January 2025.

SU was a keen bushwalker and met his partner of eighteen months, BR, through a hiking group in Melbourne. SU was described as healthy and fit who would go on bushwalks with BR most weekends. They completed a 12 day walk along the Larapinta Trail in July 2024 and decided to travel to Tasmania in December 2024 to complete the Eastern Arthur Range Traverse, incorporating climbing the notoriously difficult Federation Peak. They took appropriate clothing and supplies, including a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) and allowed themselves 10 days to complete the walk.

SU and BR commenced the trek on 22 December 2024 from Scotts Peak Dam, after signing the register. On 28 December 2024 they met another walker, Jing Jin at the Goon More campsite. Ms Jin, who was walking alone and wet was invited by SU to join them. On 29 December 2024 all three set off for Bechervaise Plateau and camped the night. On 30 December 2024 SU, BR and Ms Jin set off from camp early in the morning to climb

Federation Peak. They carried day packs containing water, food, mobile phones and rain jackets and left the remainder of their packs and the PLB at the campsite. SU said that it was on his bucket list to climb Federation Peak and he appeared really excited. SU was using his mobile phone to access a guidebook to locate the junction to Federation Peak but the group encountered difficulties locating the path as there was no established track in that area. The party stayed close together and were climbing carefully, one ledge at a time, with SU tending to take the lead, in search of a safe route. After several hours they encountered two other bushwalkers who explained that the track was in another location and that it was close by. After backtracking, the party located a route with cairns and they began to follow them vertically. The track was steep and they took turns trying to find the way up. They also encountered a rock wall, as described in the guidebook. Ms Jin described climbing to a higher-level ledge and observing that all around them were exposed drops. The group decided to return back down fearing that it was unsafe to continue. BR described the rock surface as grassy and slippery. As they were all seeking a route down, SU went around a rock and out of sight of his companions. SU fell. Ms Jin heard a gasp-like sound followed by at least two distant thuds. BR and Ms Jin could not see SU and he did not respond to their calls.

BR and Ms Jin returned to the camp as quickly as they could and set off the PLB. A search and rescue helicopter arrived about one hour later and dropped off some searchers but was unable to search the location of the fall due to cloud. The following morning 31 December 2024, the helicopter returned and SU's body was located at the base of Federation Peak and retrieved by search and rescue personnel. Police estimate that SU fell between 80-100metres.

SU's body was examined by a forensic pathologist.

Postmortem scans showed multiple blunt force injuries, the most serious of which was catastrophic head injuries. Given the scale of these injuries, it is highly unlikely that SU was conscious or had a significant survival time following the injuries.

- c) SU's cause of death is multiple blunt force injuries.
- d) SU died on 30 December 2024 at Southwest National Park, Tasmania.

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavits confirming identity;
- Affidavit of BR;
- Affidavit of Jing Jin;
- Statement of Paul Helleman;
- Forensic report of Constable Dean Wotherspoon;
- Affidavit of forensic scientist Neil McLachlan-Troup;
- Report of forensic pathologist Dr Rebecca Irvine; and
- Response - Jason Jacobi, Secretary Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania dated 16 June 2026.

Comments and recommendations

Eastern Arthur Range Traverse

The Eastern Arthur Range Traverse is in Southwest National Park, approximately 90 kilometres southwest of Hobart, within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. It is a six to nine day walk covering approximately 72 kilometres. The Grade 5 walk is for physically capable and highly experienced walkers with specialised skills including navigation and emergency first aid. Walkers can expect steep cliffs exposed rock, difficult navigation and extreme weather.

An optional feature of the walk is the imposing Federation Peak , a quartzite mountain with sheer faces and formidable jagged edges. Federation Peak is 1225 metres high and has a reputation as one of Australia's most challenging bushwalking goals. The southern aspect rises 670 metres above Lake Geeves to the summit in a horizontal distance of 450 metres. The track from Bechervaise Plateau (and camp) is a steep incline up the northern aspect of the mountain. The track then drops steeply down Geeves Gully before a very short traverse then ascends steeply up Chockstone Gully.¹ The last few hundred meters of the ascent is almost vertical in places.²

Parks and Wildlife Service

Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is a division of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

¹ Forensic Report of Constable Dean Wotherspoon.

² Statement of Paul Helleman.

The PWS website is designed to provide walkers contemplating walking the Eastern Arthur Range Traverse with accurate and relevant information, including safety messaging and walker preparation content. Changes made to the PWS website in May 2026, included increasing the warnings and providing detailed descriptions of all multi-day Grade 4 and 5 walks, based on the Australian Walking Track Grading System which uses descriptors from the Australian Standard 2156.1-2001 Walking Tracks-Classification and Signage. The changes were also designed to ensure that imagery included on the website reflected the likely conditions and challenges of various walking tracks, to counteract images often posted by social media users.

The walk notes published on the PWS website warn that the Eastern Arthur Range Traverse tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked, that campsites can be prone to flooding in heavy rain and that there are several creek crossings which can be difficult to cross and hazardous when water levels are high. Sections of the track involve climbing along rock walls, crossing steep, scrubby slopes, rock scrambling and involve steep ascents and exposed descents where pack hauling is common.

The walk notes published on the PWS website do not include the Federation Peak ascent, but contain a warning that the route to the summit involves significant exposure and requires technical climbing skills and that Federation Peak has been the site of multiple fatalities³.

The website is subject to ongoing review.

The Eastern Arthur Range Traverse, and particularly the ascent of Federation Peak, is a challenging walk which should only be undertaken by highly experienced walkers and if within the individual's capabilities. In particular, walkers should consider whether their experience is relevant and comparable to the hike to be undertaken. Walkers should be prepared to turn back or change their plans if the weather conditions deteriorate or if the walk is more challenging than expected.

For individuals undertaking their first hike in Tasmania, Federation Peak is an ambitious choice.

³ Coronial records indicate that there have been five reportable deaths at Federation Peak since 2007, with three occurring since 2024, (these figures include the death of SU).

It is **recommended** that walkers contemplating the Eastern Arthur Range Traverse refer to the PWS website for accurate and relevant information, including walker notes, walker preparation content and safety messaging before embarking on the walk.

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

Dated: 6 July 2026 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

Madeleine Wilson

Coroner