



# 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, Madeleine Wilson, Coroner, having investigated the death of Michael Barry Radford

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Michael Barry Radford, whose date of birth is 14 December 1971.
- b) Mr Radford died in the circumstances set out below.
- c) Mr Radford's cause of death is multiple injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident.
- d) Mr Radford died on 20 February 2025 at Hobart, Tasmania

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

- The Police Report of Death for the Coroner;
- The Hospital Report of Death for the Coroner;
- Affidavit confirming identity;
- Affidavit of Natalie Rigby;
- Affidavit of Barry Radford;
- Affidavit of Constable Dawson;
- Affidavit of Senior Constable (Q) Marshall;
- Affidavit of Constable Haywood;
- Affidavit of Freddie Todman;
- Affidavit of forensic scientist Neil McLachlan-Troup dated 26 March 2025 and 17 March 2026;
- Review of Medical Records;
- Report of forensic pathologist Dr Donald Ritchey.

## **Background**

Michael Barry Radford was 53 years of age and had been in a long-term relationship with Natalie Rigby, with whom he had six children. He also had another child from a previous relationship. Despite their lengthy relationship, Mr Radford and Ms Rigby did not live together. Before his death Mr Radford's home at Campbell Town had burnt down and he moved to Mowbray for a short period. In the three weeks before his death, he had been staying with his father and his partner at their home in Avoca.

Mr Radford did not have any formal qualifications but had worked a number of different jobs. In recent times he had been working with his father, driving his truck and collecting scrap metal and old cars.

On 4 February 2025 Mr Radford had been helping his father to drop an engine off at a friend's place. Upon their return, Mr Radford went to the shed to fix his mowers. Later that afternoon Mr Radford told his father that Natalie Rigby had telephoned him and asked him to visit her and to stay the night at her house in Campbell Town. Mr Radford appeared excited. He left in his white Suzuki Baleno at approximately 4:45pm taking with him between 10-12 stubbies of XXXX Summer mid-strength lager. Mr Radford told his father he would see him the next night and they would discuss his living arrangements at that time. He seemed happy and there was nothing about his behaviour that raised any concerns.

Mr Radford arrived at Ms Rigby's home at approximately 5:00pm and carried in a six pack of XXXX Summers lager; he appeared to have been drinking. In the course of the evening Mr Radford became angry and packed his bags and left in his car.

Sometime before 8:40pm, Mr Radford was involved in a single vehicle crash on the Midland Highway between Campbell Town and Conara. The crash was discovered when a passerby stopped to clear debris from the road. Emergency services were called.

Tasmania Police attended the scene of the crash and observed a small white vehicle on its roof in a ditch or culvert on the Eastern side of the highway. At that time paramedics and civilians were in attendance. Mr Radford was treated at the scene and taken by ambulance to the Royal Hobart Hospital in a critical condition.

Mr Radford was hospitalised with severe injuries including bilateral rib fractures, bilateral pneumothoraxes, lung bruises, facial fractures and diffuse axonal injury (closed head injury).

He made no substantive neurological recovery and a decision was made to treat him palliatively. Mr Radford died 17 days later.

A police investigation was conducted into the crash.

### **Crash investigation**

The crash site was located on a straight section of the Midland Highway two kilometres south of the intersection of Midland Highway and Esk Main Road. The road at the crash site consists of a single northbound traffic lane and a single southbound traffic lane.

The section of the road where the crash occurred has a maximum speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour.

Mr Radford's Suzuki Baleno hatchback was positioned on its roof in the table drain off the southbound lane. The front of the vehicle was facing South. The vehicle had sustained heavy impact damage to the front and rear of the vehicle, with the entire rear of the vehicle crushed inwards. The impact of the rear of the vehicle had caused the rear suspension to misalign and noticeably cause the rear tyres to protrude vertically beyond their normal position.

Crash Scene investigations identified a number of road markings and points of impact from which it was possible to ascertain that Mr Radford's vehicle had been travelling north from Campbell Town towards Conara when it veered across the southbound lane in a north-easterly direction onto the gravel verge. The vehicle began to progressively slide sideways at 90 degrees to the roadway, with the front of the vehicle facing the roadway. The vehicle then appeared to become airborne and roll a number of times before coming to rest upon its roof. Impact marks indicate that it became airborne six times over a distance of 87.5 metres.

The crash was unwitnessed and there was no CCTV, dashcam footage or crash data available to investigators.

There was insufficient evidence to ascertain the speed of the vehicle, however I accept the opinion of the Crash Investigator that given that the vehicle became airborne, it is likely that it exceeded the posted speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour on that stretch of road.

The vehicle was examined by a Transport Safety and Investigation Officer. The vehicle was found to have a number of defects which were consistent with impact damage, however, the vehicle inspection found that it was likely that prior to impact the vehicle had been in a roadworthy condition.

The vehicle was fitted with standard lap sash inertia reel seatbelts. Witness marks on the driver's side front seat belt, which had been cut by emergency services when freeing Mr Radford from the wreckage, indicate the seat belt had been worn at the time of the accident. Witness accounts attest that Mr Radford was in the habit of wearing his seat belt when driving.

A sample of Mr Radford's blood was taken at the Royal Hobart Hospital at 1.09am and sent for toxicology examination. Testing of the sample revealed a blood alcohol level of 0.059 grammes per 100 millilitres of blood (g/mL) at the time the blood was taken.

A Forensic Scientist conducted a back calculation and determined the estimated alcohol concentration at the time of the accident was between 0.100g/100mL and .190g/mL blood (0.127g/100mL with average alcohol metabolism)<sup>1</sup>.

Assuming Mr Radford had average alcohol metabolism and no residual absorption from alcohol consumed prior to the accident a blood alcohol concentration of 0.127g/mL alone has the potential to significantly impair driving performance and increase relative crash

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<sup>1</sup> The capacity to metabolise alcohol is subject to many variables and differs between individuals. The range of possible expected blood alcohol concentrations provided is expected to encompass potential metabolism rates of 95% of the population. These calculations use a minimum alcohol elimination rate of 0.009g/100mL/hour, maximum of 0.029 g/100mL/hour and population average elimination rate of 0.015g/100mL/hour. Alcohol back calculations are performed based on the assumption that over the period between the time of an incident and the time the sample was taken, the alcohol concentration in the person's blood is decreasing and that all the alcohol consumed has been absorbed. If there is alcohol absorption during this period, either from alcohol being consumed post-incident or residual absorption from alcohol consumed immediately prior to the incident, then the result of the back calculation may be overestimated. It may take up to 90 minutes for alcohol to be fully absorbed.

risk. It has been estimated that the relative risk of a driver with a blood alcohol concentration of between 0.120 g/100mL and 0.180 g/100mL being involved in a crash is approximately 12 to 50 times that of a driver with nil blood alcohol.

Although the crash was unwitnessed and the exact circumstances of it are not known, it is likely that the crash was caused by driver error which may have been impacted by the ingestion of alcohol prior to driving, combined with excessive speed.

The thorough police investigation identified no other possible causes for the accident. In particular, I do not find any evidence to support a theory that Mr Radford died by suicide.

#### **Comments and recommendations**

The dangers of drink driving either alone or in combination with other factors such as excessive speed are well known and do require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I extend my appreciation to Senior Constable David Marshall for his investigation and report.

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

**Dated:** 12 May 2026 at Hobart, in the State of Tasmania.

**Madeleine Wilson**  
Coroner