



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

COR 2024 007582

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 63(2)

*Section 67 of the **Coroners Act 2008***

Findings of:	Coroner Therese McCarthy
Deceased:	WQ
Date of birth:	2006
Date of death:	31 December 2024
Cause of death:	1(a) Head injuries sustained in a motorbike incident (palliated)
Place of death:	The Alfred Hospital 55 Commercial Road, Melbourne, Victoria
Keywords:	Motorbike Accident; Alpine National Park – Licola

INTRODUCTION

1. On 31 December 2024, WQ was 18 years old when he died in a motorcycle accident. At the time of his death, WQ lived in Bunyip. He is survived by his parents, HB and KR, his siblings, YH and BX, his stepfather, NY, his stepmother, IP, and extended family.
2. WQ was described by NY as a young man who was earth-moving and lived life to the fullest. He had recently finished an apprenticeship.¹
3. At the time of his death, WQ did not hold a motorcycle licence, but he was an experienced motorbike rider as he was introduced to motorbikes when he was four years of age and had grown up riding them. He would go motorbike riding with his father at a family member's block of land in Lavers Hill, with his uncle in the Licola area, and other times he would ride with friends.² WQ was described by his friends as a confident and very good motorcycle rider.
4. In September 2024, WQ saved up money and purchased himself a KTM 500 EXC-F motorbike (**the KTM**).

THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

5. WQ's death was reported to the coroner as it fell within the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic) (**the Act**). Reportable deaths include deaths that are unexpected, unnatural or violent or result from accident or injury.
6. The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.
7. Under the Act, coroners also have the important functions of helping to prevent deaths and promoting public health and safety and the administration of justice through the making of comments or recommendations in appropriate cases about any matter connected to the death under investigation.

¹ Medical records, Alfred Health.

² Coronial Brief, Statement of KR.

8. Victoria Police assigned an officer to be the Coronial Investigator for the investigation of WQ's death. The Coronial Investigator conducted inquiries on behalf of the Court, including taking statements from witnesses – such as family, the forensic pathologist, treating clinicians and investigating officers – and submitted a coronial brief of evidence.
9. In July 2025, I assumed carriage of the investigation into WQ's death after the retirement of then Coroner John Olle for the purpose of finalising the investigation and making findings.
10. This finding draws on the totality of the coronial investigation into the death of WQ including evidence contained in the coronial brief. Whilst I have reviewed all the material, I will only refer to that which is directly relevant to my findings or necessary for narrative clarity. In the coronial jurisdiction, facts must be established on the balance of probabilities.³

MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH A FINDING MUST, IF POSSIBLE, BE MADE

Circumstances in which the death occurred

11. Around 7.30am on 30 December 2024, WQ left Bunyip and travelled in convoy with friends to a camping ground in the Alpine National Park just north of Licola. WQ had loaded his KTM onto his friend's trailer the day prior to take with them. KR reported that WQ was very excited about the trip as it was to be his first New Year's Eve away with friends.⁴
12. WQ was camping with five of his close friends, EM, FY, GS, MZ and DR, each of whom made statements for this investigation. The group arrived in Licola around 12.00pm and set up at one of the campsites along Tamboritha Road known as 'Camp 13' or 'Greenhood Camping Area'. There are thirteen different campsites along Tamboritha Road which extends 47 kilometres from Licola through the Alpine National Park and along the Wellington River.
13. During the afternoon and early evening, WQ consumed a significant amount of alcohol and had taken an MDMA capsule. EM described WQ as slurring his words but that he was able to walk straight, however it was the most drunk he had seen him.⁵
14. Sometime after 7.10pm that evening, whilst at their campsite, WQ needed to use the bathroom which was at the next campsite along Tamboritha Road about a 4-minute drive away. He got

³ Subject to the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336. The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction as to those matters taking into account the consequences of such findings or comments.

⁴ Coronial Brief, Statement of KR.

⁵ Coronial Brief, Statement of EM.

onto his KTM motorbike and started it. EM turned off the KTM and the group told WQ that he was not to ride it as he was too intoxicated. EM advised WQ that he would drive him to the bathroom or take him on the back of his own motorbike. Whilst EM was getting ready to take WQ, WQ put his helmet on, sat back on his motorbike and started it again. The group attempted to grab him so he would not go, but WQ revved the motorbike and rode off. As WQ was riding off, he dropped his motorbike which caused the end of the clutch lever to break off. WQ was struggling to hold the KTM up but managed to ride. When WQ left, the group observed him to be riding sensibly and not too fast.⁶

15. Although WQ was wearing a helmet, he was not wearing protective clothing. He was wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and slides as footwear.⁷
16. Approximately 20 minutes after WQ had left, EM, FY and MZ were at the river at the bottom of their campsite when they heard what they believed to be WQ's motorbike loudly screaming and then scraping across the road. They reported that it sounded like he was riding fast.
17. WQ had been travelling in a westerly direction along Tamboritha Road (21 kilometres north-east of Licola) when he negotiated a sweeping right-hand bend before veering off to the left of the road and onto the narrow grass shoulder. The motorbike subsequently collided with rocks along the southern edge of the road. As a result of the collision, WQ was thrown off his motorcycle and slid along the road before coming to rest approximately 44.6 metres from the point of impact.⁸
18. Upon hearing WQ's motorbike, EM, FY and MZ ran back to their campsite where GS and DR were. They all immediately rushed to Tamboritha Road to the accident site. EM was the first to arrive at the scene where he located WQ lying motionless on the road. WQ's helmet had come off during the collision and was in long grass approximately 15 metres from where WQ came to rest.⁹
19. EM straightened WQ's head to aid his breathing and remained with him for approximately ten minutes until the other four friends arrived. EM then rode his motorbike back to their

⁶ Coronial Brief, Statement of EM, Statement of FY, Statement of GS and Statement of MZ.

⁷ Coronial Brief, Statement of FY.

⁸ Coronial Brief, Statement of Leading Senior Constable Chris King and Statement of Detective Leading Senior Constable Timothy Bail.

⁹ Coronial Brief, Statement of Leading Senior Constable Hayden Crouch.

campsite to get his phone and call emergency services but there was no reception in the area. He sent an SOS message using the emergency satellite function on his phone.

20. At the same time, MZ walked back to the campsite, while GS and DR remained with WQ, and FY rode WQ's motorbike to 'Camp 10' where he found a camper named JA who happened to be trained in first aid and asked him for assistance. JA had a first aid kit and followed FY in his own vehicle to the collision site. When JA arrived at the scene at around 8.20pm, he began providing first aid to WQ, including putting him in the recovery position, cleaning the wound on his head and keeping his airway clear.¹⁰ Meanwhile, MZ drove to another campsite which had access to Starlink.¹¹ She noticed that the people at that campsite were already calling Triple Zero and she presumed FY may have stopped there and asked for help before her. With assistance from the other campers using their Starlink, emergency services were eventually contacted.¹²
21. Around 9.40pm, a Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) flight paramedic was winched down into the collision scene by an aircraft and began immediate airway positioning assistance. The MICA paramedic observed WQ to be seriously injured, unconscious with an injury to the back of his head, with poor oxygen saturation, an increased heart rate, fixed and dilated pupils, and a collapsed lung.¹³
22. Shortly after, further paramedics and members of Victoria Police arrived. The paramedics continued to work on WQ and intubated him at 10.35pm. WQ subsequently suffered a cardiac arrest but was successfully resuscitated. He was transported by ambulance to the Ambulance Victoria helicopter waiting approximately 15 kilometres away in Licola which flew him to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. Medical treatment was provided to WQ whilst in flight.
23. WQ was admitted to the intensive care unit at the Alfred Hospital at 1.03am on 31 December 2024 but succumbed to his injuries and passed away at 3.10pm.

Victoria Police investigation post-accident

24. The section of Tamboritha Road where the accident occurred is a bitumen carriageway in good condition with no centre line separating vehicles travelling in opposite directions. There are no fog lines on either side of the road and no gravel shoulders. The southern side of the

¹⁰ Coronial Brief, Statement of JA.

¹¹ Starlink is a satellite internet constellation operated by SpaceX particularly targeting rural and remote areas.

¹² Coronial Brief, Statement of MZ.

¹³ Coronial Brief, Statement of MICA flight paramedic Shaun Whitmore.

road has a steep rocky embankment and there is a steep decline on the northern side down to the Wellington River below.

25. At the time of the accident, the weather was clear and the road was dry.¹⁴
26. Detective Leading Senior Constable Timothy Bail of the Victoria Police Collision Reconstruction and Mechanical Investigation Unit (CRMIU), using the post-impact distance of WQ, estimated that WQ's motorcycle was travelling at a minimum speed of 81 km/h when it struck the rock wall.¹⁵
27. Senior Constable David Giulieri, also of the Victoria Police CRMIU, conducted a mechanical examination of WQ's motorcycle. He reported that there was little damage to the motorcycle, but the headlight housing had broken away, the left side cover was scuffed, and the switches and lever on the left handlebar were ground away consistent with an extended period of sliding across bitumen. His examination did not reveal any faults, failures or conditions of the KTM that could have caused or contributed to the collision.¹⁶
28. WQ's helmet was examined by attending police officers. The helmet strap was sturdy, and the helmet was in good condition and appropriate for motorcycle riding. Attending police officers believed that the likely reason WQ's helmet came off was because it was not strapped on.¹⁷
29. Having investigated the circumstances of the collision that resulted in WQ's death and provided the brief of evidence on which this finding is based, the Coronial Investigator Senior Constable Christopher Mutsch concluded the fatal collision was the result of a combination of factors namely the effects of alcohol and drugs, WQ wearing unprotective clothing and an unstrapped helmet, and the speed at which he was riding.

Identity of the deceased

30. On 31 December 2024, WQ, born 2006, was visually identified by his stepfather, NY.
31. Identity is not in dispute and requires no further investigation.

¹⁴ Coronial Brief, Bureau of Meteorology Automatic Weather Observations Report.

¹⁵ Coronial Brief, Statement of Detective Leading Senior Constable Timothy Bail.

¹⁶ Coronial Brief, Statement of Senior Constable David Giulieri.

¹⁷ Coronial Brief, Statement of Senior Constable Christopher Mutsch.

Medical cause of death

32. Forensic Pathologist Dr Chong Zhou from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) conducted an examination on 3 January 2025 and provided a written report of her findings dated 7 January 2025.
33. The post-mortem examination revealed injuries consistent with being sustained in the reported circumstances. The findings from the post-mortem computed tomography (CT) scan included a left scalp haematoma, an acute right subdural haematoma, a patchy acute subarachnoid haemorrhage, cerebral oedema, and a fracture through the left petrous temporal bone.
34. Toxicological analysis of ante-mortem samples identified the presence of ethanol (0.14 g/100mL),¹⁸ and 3,4-Methylenedioxy-NMethylamphetamine (MDMA).¹⁹ Atropine, midazolam and ketamine were also detected but these were medications administered to WQ in hospital by medical staff for treatment.
35. Dr Zhou provided an opinion that the medical cause of death was '*1(a) Head injuries sustained in a motorbike incident (palliated)*'.
36. I accept Dr Zhou's opinion.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

37. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the Act I make the following findings:
 - a) the identity of the deceased was WQ, born 2006;
 - b) the death occurred on 31 December 2024 at The Alfred Hospital, 55 Commercial Road, Melbourne, Victoria, from head injuries sustained in a motorbike incident (palliated); and
 - c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

¹⁸ Alcohol. In Australia, it is illegal for full license holders to drive with a blood alcohol concentration of more than 0.05 g/100mL. As WQ was 18 years of age, it was illegal for him to drive a vehicle or ride a motorcycle with a blood alcohol concentration of more than 0.00 g/100mL. WQ's blood alcohol concentration at the time of the collision was 0.14 g/100mL. A blood alcohol concentration between 0.09 and 0.25 g/100mL can cause loss of critical judgment, impairment of perception, memory and comprehension, reduced visual acuity, and sensory-motor incoordination.

¹⁹ MDMA is a synthetic ring-substituted amphetamine derivative used for its euphoric and entactogenic effects. Prior to July 2023, there was no therapeutic use of MDMA in Australia, and it was listed in Schedule 9 (Prohibited Substance) of the Poisons Standard. On 1 July 2023, MDMA was rescheduled to Schedule 8 (Controlled Drug) for human therapeutic use for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, otherwise it remains in Schedule 9. Adverse effects of MDMA include anorexia, anxiety, disorientation, dizziness, headache, hyperactivity, hypertension, insomnia, tachycardia, and prolonged neurobehavioral disturbances.

38. The available evidence supports a finding that the collision which caused WQ's death was the result of the effects of alcohol and drugs, WQ wearing unprotective clothing and an unstrapped helmet, and the speed at which he was riding along Tamboritha Road. There is no evidence to suggest that the collision was anything other than a tragic accident.

I convey my sincere condolences to WQ's family and friends for their loss and acknowledge the tragic circumstances in which his death occurred.

Pursuant to section 73(1A) of the Act, I order that this finding be published on the Coroners Court of Victoria website in accordance with the rules.

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

HB, Senior Next of Kin

KR, Senior Next of Kin

Alfred Health

Senior Constable Christopher Mutsch, Coronial Investigator

Signature:



Coroner Therese McCarthy

Date: 08 July 2026

NOTE: Under section 83 of the ***Coroners Act 2008*** ('the Act'), a person with sufficient interest in an investigation may appeal to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court against the findings of a coroner in respect of a death after an investigation. An appeal must be made within 6 months after the day on which the determination is made, unless the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal out of time under section 86 of the Act.
