



**STATE CORONER'S COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Inquest:	Inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Katrina Anne BOHNENKAMP
Hearing dates:	27- 29 November 2019 16, 17, 19 - 20 March 2020 3 - 5 August 2020
Date of findings:	2 October 2020
Place of findings:	NSW State Coroner's Court, Lidcombe
Findings of:	Deputy State Coroner Carmel Forbes
File number:	2014/00061678
Catchwords	CORONIAL – missing young person in state care – suspicious circumstances – finding of death – referral to NSW Police Unsolved Homicide Unit-reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible
Representation:	Mr P Strickland SC with Mr R Ranken, Counsel Assisting, instructed by Ms B Holliday-O'Brien, Ms S McKinnon and Ms A Smith, Legal, NSW Department of Communities and Justice Ms J Needham SC, representing the Commissioner of Police and the New South Wales Police Force, instructed by Ms E O'Brien and Ms E Trovato, NSW Office of the General Counsel Dr P Dwyer, representing the NSW Department of Communities and

	<p>Justice, instructed by Ms A Talbot, NSW Crown Solicitor's Office</p> <p>Findings: Katrina Bohnenkamp died on or after 26 October 2012. The available evidence does not enable me to make findings as to the place, manner or cause of her death.</p> <p>Recommendation: To the New South Wales Commissioner of Police:</p> <p>I recommend that the death of Katrina Anne Bohnenkamp be referred to the NSW Police Unsolved Homicide Unit.</p>
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Introduction

1. This is an inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Katrina Bohnenkamp.
2. Katrina was born to Belinda McBride and Maiko Bohnenkamp on 11 May 1997. She resided with them until she was two years of age. In 1999 she was removed from her parents care and placed under the parental responsibility of the Minister. Over the next 13 years Katrina was placed into foster care, care of either maternal or paternal relatives or she was placed into youth care facilities. Between the ages of two and fifteen she was placed with thirteen different carers or care facilities. Katrina was just 15 years of age when she disappeared. She was last seen by Police at an address on Homebush Road, Strathfield just after midnight on 26 October 2012 and was reported missing to Police by staff at Guardian Youth Care (GYC) on 2 November 2012.
3. Katrina's whereabouts remain unknown.
4. Section 27(1)(c) of the *Coroners Act 2009* NSW requires an inquest to be held if it has not been sufficiently disclosed whether a person has died. At inquest a coroner's first task in the case of a missing person, is to consider whether or not she is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, the missing person is deceased.
5. If the coroner is so satisfied, she will then examine the available evidence and, if appropriate, proceed to make findings in accordance with s 81(1) *Coroners Act 2009*. That section requires the coroner at the conclusion of the inquest, should sufficient evidence be available, to make findings that a person has died, the identity of that person, the date and place of the death and the cause and manner or circumstances of their death.

Katrina Bohnenkamp

6. From the age of two, the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) (known in 1999 as the Department of Community Services (DoCS), now known as the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), but referred to as FACS in these findings) arranged for the care of Katrina. She lived in a series of foster homes and out of home care organisations until July 2012, when she came to live in group youth shared accommodation at premises in Chullora operated by Guardian Youth Care (GYC).

7. At the time Katrina went missing in 2012, she had been residing at a group youth care facility known as GYC in Chullora since July 2012 until her disappearance in October 2012. GYC has since gone into administration, and no representative appeared on behalf of GYC at the inquest. Accordingly, these findings do not focus on the failings of GYC in relation to the circumstances around Katrina going missing.
8. It is however acknowledged that a staff member at GYC gave information to the police in relation to the last time Katrina was seen at the GYC premises, based on information from other staff that Katrina had returned and then left the premises again on 2 November 2012. That information was incorrect and it regrettably led to some confusion relating to the last time Katrina was actually at the GYC premises. This meant that it was some time before the police investigation ascertained the true date of Katrina's disappearance and the last time she was seen alive. On balance I am satisfied that this information provided by the GYC staff member was inaccurate in so far as it suggested that Katrina had been at GYC at any time between 26 October 2012 and 2 November 2012.
9. The evidence suggests that Katrina only met her mother on a couple of brief occasions during her life. Katrina did not have a close or continuous relationship with her mother, who did not engage with the inquest.
10. When Katrina was about 12 or 13 years old, she was contacted by her half-sister on her father's side, Jaide Simpson. Jaide made contact with Katrina through Facebook. At the time, Katrina was living in foster care. Katrina told Jaide that she had been in DoCS care all of her life and she did not know her father.
11. Jaide and Katrina arranged to meet in person and from that time on formed a close relationship. From time to time, Katrina visited Jaide in Oak Flats and they kept in contact by phone or Facebook.
12. In 2011, Jaide arranged for Katrina and her to meet their father, Mr Maiko Bohnenkamp. The three of them and Mr Bohnenkamp's partner, Karen Walters met at Hungry Jacks at Central Station for about an hour. From that time, Katrina kept in relatively frequent contact with Mr Bohnenkamp and stayed overnight on occasion with Mr Bohnenkamp and Ms Walters.
13. Katrina showed a desire in wanting to live permanently with her father but this was not supported by FACS. FACS deemed Mr Bohnenkamp an unsuitable carer for Katrina. Mr Bohnenkamp had an extensive criminal history, including convictions for assault, theft and

drug related offences, in addition to sustained substance abuse. In this inquest Mr Bohnenkamp candidly acknowledged the reality that he was not a good role model for Katrina.

14. Katrina openly expressed that she was not happy with this decision made by FACS and she often absconded from her foster care or group youth care facilities to stay with her father. She was reported as a missing person on 33 occasions between 30 October 2010 and 2 November 2012. On many of these occasions she was located by police within one to three days of being reported missing.
15. Between 15 November 2010 and 21 May 2011, Katrina had twelve entries on her police records relating to various offences. She was charged twice with common assault and twice with malicious damage. She had two Youth Justice Conferences and three Cautions for offences of stealing and malicious damage. She was also dealt with by police for breaches of her bail or execution of warrants.
16. At the time of Katrina's disappearance she wasn't attending school. The last school she attended was Delroy Campus in Dubbo in 2011. Katrina was enrolled at the school while she was in the care of a maternal cousin. Due to non-attendance at the school in early 2012, she changed her enrolment to distance education.
17. Katrina was known to suffer from asthma but at the time of her disappearance she did not appear to be suffering from any major medical conditions. She did not have a known history of self-harm or suicidal ideation.
18. A review of Katrina's diary entries, along with GYC and FACS records show that while she displayed feelings of hopelessness and frustration over her situation, she also identified future goals that she hoped to achieve such as working at Taronga Zoo with animals and completing her HSC by distance education. Jaide Simpson spoke of Katrina's desire to become an equine vet, as she had a love of horses.
19. According to GYC records, on 19 August 2012, Katrina requested a home testing pregnancy kit. On 21 August 2012, staff located the completed home pregnancy testing kit in Katrina's bedroom and saw that the test result was negative. Statements obtained by investigators in conjunction with FACS records indicate the Katrina had been sexually active for some time prior to her disappearance.

20. In her family statement to the Court, Jaide described Katrina as “a young kid that was full of life and aspirations. She had a heart full of compassion, loyalty and love. She has a talent for turning something bad into something funny. Always sees the bright side of not so bright situations.” It seems that was how Katrina grappled with the struggles of her life situation.

2011-2012 – Katrina’s increasingly dangerous life

21. In the twelve months before she disappeared Katrina was regularly in and out of placements – foster homes and FACS care facilities. She also stayed at places that FACS did not know about or approve.
22. In early 2011, Katrina’s maternal cousin, Lee Schellnegger began to correspond with Katrina through Facebook and by phone.
23. In May 2011, with the approval of FACS, Lee Schellnegger travelled to Sydney and brought Katrina back to live with her and her young family in Dubbo.
24. By the time Katrina got to Dubbo, she had not been to school for about 2 years. She enrolled in school however, after a few weeks, she soon began to skip school.
25. In August-September 2011, Lee Schellnegger asked FACS that an alternate placement be found for Katrina. Lee Schnellnegger said that Katrina would sometimes throw tantrums and become violent during arguments. Her sister, Kim Schellnegger offered to look after Katrina.
26. In March 2012, Kim Schnellnegger also asked that an alternate placement be found for Katrina. Katrina was drinking alcohol, running away and socialising with older friends who would take Katrina places without Kim Schellnegger’s consent. A special needs assessment was conducted and FACS approved an allowance to assist with providing supports to Kim Schellnegger to sustain the placement for as long as possible.
27. On 10 April 2012, Kim Schellnegger contacted FACS requesting that Katrina be removed from her care by 13 April 2012. Kim reported that Katrina had been uncontrollable and even more difficult and reckless; hanging around older young persons and being defiant and challenging towards her.
28. FACS initially placed Katrina in a youth refuge in Bowral on 13 April 2012, Katrina stayed overnight and absconded on the second day.

29. On 16 April 2012, Katrina moved into the house of Nicole Gordon and her family in the Annangrove area. Nicole's son Carson was at that time in a relationship with Marzena Marosz, with whom Katrina had developed a friendship when they were previously living together in a FACS share house. FACS approved Nicole Gordon and her husband being Katrina's foster carers and approved the arrangement.
30. Within a month of staying with the Gordons, some problems and issues started to occur. Katrina constantly wanted to go see friends, mostly in the Blacktown area. She would invariably not return to be picked up from the train station at the agreed time or simply not turn up. The Gordons purchased a phone for her, but Katrina said that she lost it.
31. In about May 2012, Nicole Gordon allowed Katrina to see Mr Bohnenkamp about once per week. Katrina would often not come home from spending time with her father at the agreed time, sometimes staying overnight. Sometimes when Nicole called Mr Bohnenkamp, he was intoxicated. Both he and Karen Walters often rang Nicole Gordon and are reported to have said about Katrina, *"Don't fucking let her come around. I don't want her around."*
32. Nicole Gordon's son, Carson, did not get along with Katrina. On 12 July 2012, Carson Gordon allegedly assaulted Katrina. Nicole Gordon's sister, Kristy Creamer picked up Katrina and took her in for the night before alternative accommodation could be found. On 13 July 2012, Katrina reported Carson's assault to Castle Hill Police Station.
33. Katrina told Ms Creamer that she had used ice before and smoked cannabis whenever she could obtain it; that her father Mr Bohnenkamp was a heroin addict and that she saw Mr Bohnenkamp "shoot up" and she had done drugs with him on numerous occasions.
34. FACS managed to arrange a place for Katrina in a refuge at Dural and Kristy Creamer drove Katrina there.
35. On 14 July 2012, Katrina was caught stealing soft drinks from the Nandos chicken shop storeroom at Blacktown's Westpoint Shopping Centre. Katrina was banned from the shopping centre for 12 months. Katrina initially telephoned the FACS Helpline in an attempt to get someone to attend Westpoint to sign the Centre's banning order. Mr Bohnenkamp later attended and picked her up from the shopping centre's security holding room.
36. After Katrina was arrested, for shoplifting at Blacktown, Kristy Creamer said Mr Bohnenkamp telephoned her and said he found out that Katrina had reported the argument with Carson

Gordon to the police. He said, no one in his family was going to be a “fucking dog cunt” who goes to the Police. During the phone call, Ms Creamer said she heard Mr Bohnenkamp repeatedly swear at Katrina and call Katrina offensive names. He appeared to be drug affected.

37. Kristy Creamer gave a statement that she then called Katrina on her phone. Katrina was also drug affected. Her speech was slurred and was slow, and she was hard to understand. Kristy Creamer told Katrina if she needed for anything just to call her. That was the last time that Kristy Creamer spoke to Katrina.
38. On about 16 July 2012, Katrina moved into premises at 7-9 Davidson Street, Chullora that were operated by GYC. Katrina told FACS that she would like to reside with her father Mr Bohnenkamp. FACS refused that request on the basis that he did not have the capacity to meet Katrina’s care needs and struggled with his own issues (including drug addiction).
39. Almost immediately upon moving into the GYC premises, Katrina absconded. On 18 July 2012, she failed to return to the GYC premises by 8:00 pm. She had apparently been at a male friend’s place in Sutherland and had decided not to return saying, “*I’m wasted and I’m not coming home tonight*”. She returned to GYC the following day at 10:40 pm. She told GYC staff that she went to a friend’s house and had alcohol.
40. On 20 July 2012, Katrina again absconded. Katrina returned to GYC after five days, tired and hungry. She did not tell staff where she had been, and staff did not press her for details.
41. On 27 July 2012, Katrina again absconded in the middle of the night. When asked by GYC staff where she planned on going, Katrina only stated Strathfield and would not give any more details. Subsequent attempts to call the mobile Katrina was using at that time were diverted straight to voicemail.
42. Katrina did not return to GYC until midday on 7 August 2012. She told staff that she had stayed, “*here, there and everywhere*” and did not disclose any particular location.
43. On 9 August 2012, she left the GYC premises, telling staff that she was going to meet her mother in Burwood. At this stage she referred to Mr Bohnenkamp’s partner Karen Walters as her mother. She absconded for a further two days. When she returned, she complained of a sore ankle from too much walking around.

44. On 20 August 2012, Katrina left the GYC premises to see her parents at Campsie but failed to return by 7:30 pm. At 12:55 am on 21 August 2012, staff received a call from her parents who informed staff that Katrina was at the Homebush Pub drinking shots of alcohol. When Katrina returned to the GYC premises at about 1:00 am, she smelled strongly of alcohol. She spoke to her parents by phone but the conversation started to upset Katrina and she ended it telling her parents she would talk to them in the morning.
45. On 21 August 2012, Katrina absconded for two days from the GYC premises with two other residents. When she returned on 23 August, she snuck two companions into her unit. When GYC staff told Katrina that her two friends had to leave; she again absconded for 3 days. When she returned on 26 August, she appeared tired. Staff asked where she had been, she said *"I've been out doing stuff"*. When asked for more details, she said: *"Out is out!"*
46. On 26 August 2012 at 6:00 pm, Katrina again left the GYC premises telling staff that she had made plans to have dinner with her boyfriend in Bankstown. The identity and location of the boyfriend is unknown. At 11:40 pm on 27 August 2012, GYC staff received a call from Central Police stating they had Katrina in custody. Police took Katrina to the GYC premises. She wasn't wearing any shoes and told staff that she did not know what had happened to her shoes; she had a fight and lost them.
47. On 28 August 2012, FACS case workers told Katrina that if she continued to abscond for large periods of time, her placement at the GYC premises could be cancelled. Katrina responded by telling her case worker that she had people she could stay with and they could go ahead and cancel her placement. She was heard by GYC staff conversing with an older male and arranging to meet in Kings Cross before absconding again for 11 days.
48. On 8 September 2012, Katrina handed herself in at Sutherland Police Station. Upon her return, Katrina told staff that she only handed herself in to police so she could be transported back to the GYC premises to gather her belongings and she had no intention of staying. According to GYC records, Katrina told staff that she spends most of her time with her new boyfriend and his mother at Kempsey, although it seems more likely this information was recorded incorrectly and that Katrina had referred to Campsie, not Kempsey. In any event, Katrina left the GYC premises at 8:30 pm and stated she may be returning the next day. She in fact absconded for 3 weeks.
49. On 26 September 2012, Katrina visited Jaide Simpson at Oak Flats near Shellharbour. Jaide is sure of the date due to Facebook and messages on her inbox. Katrina and Jaide had lunch and

went to the house of a friend of Jaide's before taking a drive around the beaches in Warilla. Jaide noticed that Katrina was presentable and seemed pretty clean. She was wearing lots of eyeliner and a pair of black tights with grey boots and a baggy t-shirt. Jaide dropped Katrina back at the Oak Flats train station sometime between 3:30 pm and 4:00 pm. This was the last time Jaide saw or heard from Katrina.

50. On 29 September 2012, Katrina returned to GYC. She told staff that that she had been spending her time at Central Station. Katrina told staff that she wanted to stay at the GYC premises.

51. On 30 September 2012, Katrina saw a Dr Quazi Alam at a medical practice in Waterloo Road, Greenacre.

52. On 30 September 2012, Katrina again absconded until midnight on 24 October 2012.

53. Between 3 and 4 October 2012, Katrina had the following exchange with her stepsister Savannah Olden via Facebook:

Savannah OLDEN: Have you spoken to my muzzzzaaaabear

Katrina BOHNENKAMP: Not that long ago but shit going down with dad

54. Between 4 and 5 October 2012, Katrina had the following exchange with Lee Schellnegger via Facebook:

Lee SCHELLNEGGER: Whats goin on kat kat? Hows Sydney life treatin ya? Might have to come visit us one day? Yu fightin witg yur father?

Katrina BOHNENKAMP: Yes ill explain it to you on the phone hey can you mesage me your number ill call you

Lee SCHELLNEGGER: Sorry I just got yur message.. 0423008305

55. In a subsequent telephone conversation on that day, Katrina told Lee Schellnegger that she was upset because she was arguing with Mr Bohnenkamp, who accused her of hanging around with a copper dog and a snitch and that if she lay down with dogs she would get fleas. This appears to be a reference to Colin Nelson. Colin Nelson was a previous tenant of 260 Homebush Road Strathfield, who continued to visit the address and associate with Maiko Bohnenkamp. Katrina also told Lee Schellnegger that she was staying in a little flat and she seemed to be happy about where she was staying. Katrina told her that she had got a job at

McDonalds as a crew member but had not yet started. This was the last time Lee Schellnegger spoke with or heard from Katrina.

56. Between 8 October 2012 and 10 October 2012, Katrina had the following exchange with another former resident of 260 Homebush Road, Peter McCully (aka Peter Mac) via Facebook:

Peter MACC: dad says colin nelson is a police informant and if u hang with him u will becum a dog so take advise

Katrina BOHNENKAMP: im not hangin wif colin ???

*Katrina BOHNENKAMP: haha wats with lol
nd y do u think I'm hangung out wif colin 4???*

57. Katrina told Jaide Simpson that Colin Nelson creeped her out and said weird things to her including making sexual comments to her and looking at her weirdly.
58. The pattern of Katrina's life from July 2012 was that she absconded from GYC for increasingly longer periods of time. She concealed from GYC staff and others where she was staying. That makes it very difficult to pursue lines of inquiry about where she may have been staying before her last confirmed sighting on 26 October 2012. On each occasion, Katrina absconded, GYC completed a serious incident report, which was sent to FACS, and GYC reported her missing to police. Upon her return, GYC staff contacted police and FACS to advise of that fact and police attended the GYC premises to sight Katrina before closing off any missing person report.
59. During that period, Katrina was undoubtedly spending some time at 260 Homebush Road, Strathfield.
60. Katrina told various people that she sometimes slept on the street. There are reports from other young people that she associated with that that she slept at random places like trains or train stations or at places of people she had only just met. She apparently visited places in the Blacktown, Marayong and Riverstone areas.
61. At midnight on 23-24 October 2012, Katrina returned with the police to GYC.
62. On 24 October 2012, Katrina got out of bed and agreed to see a doctor for a general health check-up. At 1:00 pm, she attended her medical appointment with activity staff, returning to the medical centre just after 2:00 pm. She did some shopping at Woolworths.

63. At about 4:20 pm, Katrina said she was going to see her father and would be back around 6:30-7:30 pm. She said she was going to see her dad that afternoon because her step-brother from Tasmania (Hendrik Olden) was in Sydney at the moment. She did not return home by curfew.
64. At about 8:30 om or 9:10 pm on 24 October 2012, Katrina left the GYC at 7-9 Davidson Street, Chullora. She did not disclose to her carers where she was going or when she would return which was in contravention of the curfew that existed at GYC.
65. In line with procedure a worker at GYC, reported Katrina missing to the police at 8:30 pm and to FACS helpline at 8:55 pm.
66. Constables Canavan and Constable Cetlin arrived at the Chullora complex at 9:15 pm. Constable Canavan created a COPS event (E51448589) and reported Katrina missing. The report stated, reasonably:

“Police hold no grave fears for Katrina as this is a regular occurrence.”
67. It is apparent from the COPS Event that the GYC did not express any concerns for Katrina as she had absconded on numerous occasions in the past did not suffer any mental health issues or general health problems and generally returns home within a few days.
68. Upon her return to the GYC premises on 24 October 2012, Katrina told the police she would not run away again.
69. Despite that assurance, later that day, Katrina left the GYC premises to go see her father at 260 Homebush Road and did not return by curfew. She was not reachable by mobile phone.

260 Homebush Road, Strathfield

70. From mid-2012, Mr Bohnenkamp and his partner, Karen Walters, were living in a five-bedroom boarding house at 260 Homebush Road, Strathfield. Mr Bohnenkamp described the Homebush Road share house as a *“dive”*. Karen Walters has said that people were moving in and out of the boarding house, coming and going all the time. The evidence suggests that at the time of Katrina’s last confirmed sighting, the following people were definitely living at the house: Karen Walters, her son, Hendrik Olden and Mr Bohnenkamp. Ms Baldock lived in a granny flat out the back.

71. The inquest also heard evidence of a number of other persons who had from time to time resided at or frequented 260 Homebush Road, including Colin Nelson, Peter McCully, Peter McCully's son and Craig Hickson and his partner. I am satisfied, however, that none of these persons were residing or present at that address at or around the time of Katrina's disappearance. In particular, I am satisfied that Peter McCully had moved out some time prior to Katrina's disappearance.
72. In addition to these persons, (Mark) Barry Fitzgerald and his partner Kristina Moore frequently attended 260 Homebush Road and associated with Mr Bohnenkamp and Karen Walters, including on 25 October 2012.

A search warrant at 260 Homebush Road, Strathfield on 25 October 2012

73. On 17 October 2012, Mr Bohnenkamp committed an offence at a Chinese restaurant just a few doors down from 260 Homebush Road.
74. The incident was captured on CCTV and the victims reported the incident to Police within 10 minutes, informing the police that their assailant was a neighbour.
75. At about 6:20 pm on 25 October 2012, police from Auburn Police Station executed a search warrant at 260 Homebush Road. The search of the premises was relatively brief and was video recorded.
76. At that time, Katrina, Mr Bohnenkamp, Karen Walters, Hendrik Olden, Barry Fitzgerald and his partner Kristina Moore were present at that address. The occupant of the granny flat, Ms Baldock was not present.
77. The video of the search warrant is obviously significant if only because it provides indisputable proof that Katrina was alive at that time. It also establishes who else was present at 260 Homebush Road at that time and it provides an admittedly limited opportunity to observe Katrina as she interacted with Mr Bohnenkamp and others and her general demeanour in the midst of this activity.
78. At 6:56 pm, police completed the search of 260 Homebush Road and took Mr Bohnenkamp to Auburn Police Station, where he was entered into custody at about 7:45 pm.

The return of Katrina to the GYC premises on 25 October 2012, subsequent absconding and last confirmed independent sighting

79. Police returned Katrina back to the GYC premises at about 7:00 pm. Upon her return to the GYC premises, Katrina was apparently well and settled.
80. At 7:30 pm Katrina went into the office and asked the staff where all her shopping was. The staff member said she had no idea. Katrina then knocked on the unit of another GYC resident and asked whether he knew who might have taken her shopping.
81. At about 8:45 pm, that young person told staff that he and Katrina were going to the petrol station and that they would be back within 30 minutes. Despite staff requesting them not to go out and reminding them of the curfew, they left. At 9:00 pm, the male resident returned to the GYC premises without Katrina, he told staff she had left him at the petrol station. He did not know where Katrina had gone. The male resident later told police that he walked Katrina to the bus stop next to the Petrol Station and that Katrina caught a bus which was headed in the direction of Strathfield that night, with a backpack containing some but not all of her belongings, which he had seen her pack at the GYC.
82. Auburn police custody management records for Mr Bohnenkamp indicate that at 8:48 pm, Mr Bohnenkamp had made telephone contact with Katrina on the number 0450 696 063. That is a number that was known to be used by Mr Bohnenkamp and his partner Karen Walters, and was subscribed in Karen Walters' name.
83. This suggests that either Katrina had her father's mobile phone with her when she returned to the GYC premises or, she went directly from the GYC premises back to 260 Homebush Road when she left at about 8:45 pm.
84. At about 10:15 pm, GYC staff contacted police to report the fact that Katrina had absconded and the job was broadcast for police to attend the GYC premises to take a report. At 11:55 pm, Sergeant Sabongi and Senior Constable Polley attended the GYC premises to take the report concerning Katrina. The staff member, with whom they spoke, told them Katrina had been returned by police at 7:00 pm and she had left the premises at 8:45 pm wearing grey tracksuit pants and a grey hooded jacket. The staff member also told the police officers she believed Katrina had probably gone back to her father's house as that's where police had returned her from earlier in the night. The staff member nominated the address as 260 Homebush Road, Strathfield. She said she had no fears for Katrina and that Katrina did not have any mental health issues, did not require any medication and was not a self-harmer.

85. Almost immediately after leaving the GYC premises, Officers Sabongi and Polley acknowledged a separate job that had been broadcast over the police radio relating to 260 Homebush Road. At about 11:35pm, the occupant of the granny flat contacted police to report a suspected break in at the granny flat.
86. Shortly after midnight on 26 October 2012, Officers Sabongi and Polley attended 260 Homebush Road in response to the break and enter report. Officer Sabongi first spoke to Ms Baldock and obtained details about the alleged break in. Ms Baldock stated that she had applied for an AVO against Mr Bohnenkamp, who had been threatening to kill her cats and turn her power off. She was concerned that he was responsible for the alleged break in.
87. Whilst there, Officers Sabongi and Polley sighted Katrina inside the main residence. Karen Walters and Hendrik Olden were also present and indicated Katrina was welcome to stay overnight, although the name Hendrik gave to police was the name of his brother Marcus Olden, who lives in Tasmania. It appears police did not perform a COPS database check in respect of Hendrik or Karen, prior to allowing Katrina to stay overnight with them at 260 Homebush Road. This is the last confirmed sighting of Katrina that is independent of persons associated with 260 Homebush Road. According to the officers, Katrina expressed concerns about going back to the GYC premises and suggested she was having problems with other residents there and that she felt safer at 260 Homebush Road.
88. The officers then made a risk assessment of the environment and in consultation with Chief Inspector Christopher Hill via phone, decided to leave Katrina in the care of Karen Walters and Hendrik Olden. Officer Sabongi also decided to make a Child at Risk report to FACS. The police asked Hendrik Olden to drop Katrina back to GYC the next day and he said that he would.
89. Officer Sabongi and Officer Polley left 260 Homebush Road a little after 00:35. Upon their return to Flemington, Sergeant Sabongi created an "Occurrence Only" event in COPS rather than a Missing Person event. At about 1:20 am, he telephoned GYC and advised staff that Katrina had been located and had been left there by police, providing the staff member with the COPS Event number and advising that he was going to make a Child at Risk Report to FACS.
90. At about 2:00am, Officer Sabongi completed a Community Services Report Questions and Answers for Child at Risk Report. In particular, he recorded his concerns regarding Katrina as follows:

“the CAR (child at risk) is a recidivist missing person and the level of care she receives from guardian youth care is such if she is exposed to danger that she does not stop where she leaves in times of darkness. Staff at the centre seem to be of the opinion that a missing person report will suffice. The children’s physical and emotional state appears to be good. The child at risk was in good health and spirits during police interaction. She was keen to stay with her parents and appeared well cared for there”

91. According to the custody management records, Mr Bohnenkamp was released on bail at 10 minutes past midnight on the morning of 26 October 2012 – at about the very time Officers Sabongi and Polley were in attendance at 260 Homebush Road Strathfield.
92. Custody Management Records completed at Auburn Police Station by police at 7:57 pm on 25 October 2012, indicate that Mr Bohnenkamp did not appear under the influence of any substances to officers while at the Police Station, and noted he appeared in good spirits.
93. Mr Bohnenkamp, states that after his release from bail he went home to 260 Homebush Road Strathfield.
94. I am satisfied on the available consistent evidence that when Mr Bohnenkamp arrived home that Katrina was there with Karen Walters and Hendrik Olden.
95. The available evidence from those witnesses as to what happened after that point and the circumstances in which they last saw Katrina is inconsistent and unreliable.
96. As noted above, Katrina was first reported missing to Police by staff at GYC on 2 November 2012. I am satisfied, however, that Katrina did not return to the GYC premises at any time between her absconding late on the evening of 25 October 2012 and that date. That is evident from contemporaneous daily records of GYC that indicate that she was absent from the GYC premises that entire time.
97. Notably, no steps were taken by FACS or GYC to follow up the Child at Risk Report that had been submitted by Officer Sabongi on the morning of 26 October 2012.
98. Indeed, the circumstances in which Katrina was reported missing on 2 November 2012 themselves suggest it was only by chance the report was made on that date, the police having attended GYC premises for the purposes of confirming that another resident was at the premises. Upon their arrival, the officers spoke with a GYC staff member who informed them that Katrina had left the premises that day and not returned to the GYC premises by curfew.

That staff member gave evidence in this inquest that she did not herself see Katrina that day but someone had told her Katrina had left.

99. On balance, I am satisfied that the information provided by this staff member was inaccurate in so far as it suggested that Katrina had been at the premises at some time on 2 November 2012 or any time between the evening of 25 October 2012 and that date.
100. It is regrettable that no formal search of 260 Homebush Road Strathfield was ever undertaken by Police after Katrina was reported missing, as it was the last place Katrina was sighted. I note the premises has since been demolished and a unit complex constructed.

FACS evidence

101. Evidence was received from Ms Antoinette Azzi (nee Nicholas), who was Katrina's caseworker from April 2011 until the time of disappearance in October 2012. Ms Azzi gave evidence that Katrina was one of 18 different children and young persons across a range of ages from newborns to 18-year-olds for which she was the responsible caseworker.
102. Although Ms Azzi had little independent recollection of Katrina or her involvement in Katrina's care, she acknowledged that there were aspects of Katrina's care which made her difficult to manage. These included Katrina's absconding behaviours particularly in regard to her strong pull towards wanting to spend time with her natural father as well as concerns about Katrina's developing habit of "chroming" (sniffing aerosol cans to produce a "high" feeling). Ms Azzi's task was no doubt made more challenging by the fact that Katrina moved to Dubbo shortly after she was assigned to Ms Azzi's caseload, so much of the early period of her involvement with Katrina was performed remotely as Ms Azzi was based in Sydney. Ms Azzi did not conduct any home visits while Katrina was in Dubbo.
103. It is clear that Ms Azzi was a well-intentioned caseworker with a significant caseload, who nevertheless managed to attend to a number of matters in relation to Katrina. These were detailed in her statement dated 9 March 2020 and included arranging for Katrina to travel from Dubbo to Sydney independently in order to attend her younger half-brother's birthday party, participating in a case meeting in February 2012 to discuss future placement options when Katrina's carer in Dubbo was no longer able to care for her and completing a Special Needs Allowance Assessment Report, meeting with Katrina and her new carers, Mr and Mrs Gordon in April 2012 and speaking with Katrina and GYC staff members in August 2012 about Katrina's frequent absconding.

104. Ms Azzi fairly acknowledged, however, that there were a number of instances where Katrina's case did not get the attention it warranted. In particular, the records produced by FACS included a Contact Record in which it was reported to FACS on 16 July 2012 that Katrina was in the company of her father and it appeared both he and Katrina were drug affected. At that time, FACS did not appear to have the address for Mr Bohnenkamp and did not take any further action to locate him or where he was living or to assess its suitability as a place where Katrina might spend time with her father. Despite this, it was recorded in the Screening and Priority Response Tool completed in relation to the report that the living situation was not immediately dangerous. It appears that Ms Azzi was on leave at the time but did not follow up with any further inquiries upon her return.
105. On 21 August 2012, there was a report that Katrina had spent the evening at Homebush Pub with her father and that Katrina had been consuming alcohol at the pub.
106. Given Katrina's history and the circumstances of her removal from the care of her natural parents, reports of drug and alcohol use while in the company of her natural father ought to have been of particular concern and warranted priority being given to ensuring that her natural father's home environment did not expose Katrina to a risk of serious harm. That was particularly so given the evidence of her repeated absconding from GYC and either staying with her natural father or spending time at her natural father's home at some time during the period she was away from GYC.
107. Ms Azzi was surprised that according to the records provided, FACS did not have the address at 260 Homebush Road as an address for Maiko Bohnenkamp until Senior Constable Sabongi made his child at risk report in the early hours of 26 October 2012. She said that she recalled attending that address on at least one occasion but could not recall whether it was before or after Katrina's disappearance. Ms Azzi gave evidence that she believed she had conducted a home assessment at 260 Homebush Road, but accepted there was no written record of that assessment, suggesting that it maybe it was unsuccessful and nobody was there. Indeed, in an email dated 21 June 2013, Ms Azzi acknowledged that no attempt had made to visit the father's home and FACS were not aware he had moved until they received the report of Katrina being sighted at that address in the early hours of 26 October 2012.
108. Of greater potential significance, however, is the failure to follow up on the Child at Risk report submitted by Senior Constable Sabongi in the early hours of 26 October 2012. Ms Azzi accepted that the decision of the police to leave Katrina at 260 Homebush Road when they

sighted her there in the early hours of 26 October 2012 was not a placement decision and what was required was a home visit to conduct a further assessment. None was undertaken.

109. Ms Azzi further accepted that following receipt of the Child at Risk Report submitted by Senior Constable Sabongi, FACS should have contacted GYC and a record made of that contact. No such record exists and it appears there was no contact made by FACS with GYC prior to Katrina being reported missing despite her not returning to that placement after she left on the evening of 25 October 2012.
110. In addition, there was evidence that despite Ms Azzi providing a photograph of Katrina to Police in late-November 2012, authority to release the photograph publicly was not given until April 2013. The evidence was that in 2012, Ms Azzi could not give authority to the Police to release the photograph as that authority rested with the Manager of Client Services.
111. Given the current state of the evidence does not allow for a positive finding as to the manner of Katrina's death, it is not possible to make any finding as to just how significant these shortcomings are on the part of FACS. Many of these shortcomings involved a failure to follow proper procedures rather than the procedures themselves. In this regard, evidence was received from Ms Simone Czech, the current Deputy Secretary, Child Protection and Permanency, District and Youth Services at the Department of Communities and Justice. Ms Czech acknowledged that FACS responses to reports of concern regarding Katrina were not followed up in a timely manner and the Department tended to rely on others rather than visiting known addresses.
112. In addition, Ms Czech gave evidence of a number of changes that have been made in relation to residential care, particularly in respect of children and young persons who, like Katrina, are at risk because they engage in frequent absconding from placements. In particular, in 2016, the Department developed the "Joint protocol to reduce the contact of young people in residential out of home care with the criminal justice system" together with NSW Police, Legal Aid and various non-government organisations. Ms Czech explained that the measures identified in that protocol are targeted at the reasons that a young person absconds and identifying appropriate therapeutic supports are put in place. In particular, one of the key directives of the protocol is for residential staff workers and their senior staff members to review each incident where NSW Police are called within two weeks of the incident occurring to consider what other strategies could have been available and what, if any, additional supports may be required to implement these.

113. Also, in 2016, the Department introduced the “Connections and Contact for Children Care” practice mandate to better manage children and young people in out of home care seeking out and having contact with their birth family.
114. In 2019, the Department introduced the “Missing Children and Young People” practice mandate. The report of a missing child or young person who is in out of home care is considered a critical event and further action is needed, including a requirement that the caseworker make a critical incident report to the Child Protection Helpline as well as immediately reporting the child or young person as missing to the Police, initiating a media response and attempting to find the child or young person by checking locations where they could likely be, contacting the child’s family, friends and networks and making enquiries with Centrelink.
115. In addition, in September 2018, the Department introduced its “Away from Placement” Policy, which applies to children or young persons who, like Katrina, are in out of home care where primary case responsibility lies with a funded service provider. Under that policy, where a child or young person is away from their placement for a single period or repeated periods of over 24 hours and their whereabouts are unknown and there are fears for their safety or concern for their welfare, they should always be reported to NSW Police as a missing person.
116. It may be expected that these improvements would mitigate the risk of another young person in Katrina’s position continuing to abscond or, failing that, would lead to a more timely response in the event of a child or young person in out of home care being away from their placement and their whereabouts unknown.
117. Ms Czech also told the Court that a caseworker now has authority to release information such as photographs of missing children and young persons. It is expected that this will avoid a similar delay in the release of such information as occurred in this case.
118. For these reasons, it is not proposed that the Court make any recommendations under s 82 in respect of the Department.

Conclusion

119. FACS has had no contact from Katrina since that night.

120. Katrina's half-sister Jaide and her cousin Lee Schellnegger have given evidence that they have not heard from Katrina since that night. In particular, her failure to contact Jaide over the last eight years is unexplainable. By all accounts, Katrina had a close relationship with Jaide.
121. Katrina has not used her bank accounts since that night.
122. Facebook subscriber records indicate that the last time Katrina logged in for a reliable and significant period of time was 24 October 2012 and yet, she was a regular user of Facebook, often relying on it as her main means of communication.
123. I do not accept that any of the alleged sightings of Katrina since 26 October 2012 have been substantiated or were reliable. In particular, the inquest heard from two such persons who had known Katrina. Neither was certain they had in fact seen Katrina and one candidly acknowledged she thinks it is likely she made a mistake.
124. Katrina was only 15 years of age and did not have any reason, the means or connections to disappear.
125. Katrina had no significant medical or mental health issues. She had no reported history of suicidal ideation.
126. Since 26 October 2012, she has had no further dealings with Police in NSW or any other state of Australia.
127. Checks conducted with Centrelink reveal that no records are held in relation to Katrina.
128. Checks conducted with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection reveals that there are no records of movements by Katrina in or out of Australia.
129. Checks conducted with financial institutions reveal Katrina has not operated an account since 26 October 2012.
130. Checks conducted with Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme indicates that she has not made any claims since 26 October 2012.
131. Checks with the New South Wales Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages produced no record in relation to Katrina since 26 October 2012.

132. Checks conducted with the records held by New South Wales Missing Persons Unit confirm that no match has been made with any identified deceased person or remains.
133. Since 26 October 2012 all relevant activity that you would expect from Katrina ceased.
134. I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that she is deceased. I am also satisfied that she died in suspicious circumstances. The persons who were last with her have given inconsistent and varying versions of events on the last time they saw her.
135. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the evidence surrounding the suspicious circumstances of Katrina's death as there is an ongoing investigation.
136. The available evidence only allows me to make findings in relation to her identity and date of death. At this point of the investigation I am unable to make findings in relation to the place, cause or manner of her death. I therefore recommend that her death be referred to the NSW Police Unsolved Homicide Unit for ongoing investigation in accordance with the protocols and procedures of that Unit.

Concluding remarks

137. Katrina's disappearance and apparent death is a tragedy and her family and friends, particularly felt by her cousins in Dubbo and half-sister Jaide Simpson, who have clearly been deeply affected by Katrina's disappearance from their lives and the unanswered questions surrounding her disappearance. I acknowledge the painful and persistent uncertainty felt by them in not knowing what happened to Katrina and the anguish around not being able to give Katrina a proper burial and farewell.
138. I offer my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Katrina's family and thank them for participating in this inquest, when it has been so difficult and sad for them. I hope that the inquest has assisted by bringing them some measure of closure, and I hope that in the future some evidence can be uncovered to provide more information about what happened to Katrina.
139. I highlight the reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible for Katrina's disappearance or death is currently \$500,000. Anyone with information is urged to contact NSW Police.

140. I would like to acknowledge and express my thanks to the officer in charge, Detective Senior Inspector Christie Houldin for her very thorough investigation of this matter, her work is to be commended. Further, I extend my thanks to the police team who assisted in the leadup to the inquest and at inquest and comprised of Detective Senior Constable Peter McLaughlin, Detective Senior Constable Jeremy Muscat and Senior Constable Alex Turner for their dedicated efforts.

Finally, I thank my counsel assisting, Mr Philip Strickland SC and Rob Ranken, and their instructing solicitors, Ms Bianca Holliday-O'Brien, and Ms Abigail Smith for the work they put into assisting me in this inquest.

Findings pursuant to s 81 (1) Coroners Act 2009

Identity

The person who died was Katrina Anne Bohnenkamp

Date of death

Katrina died sometime on or after 26 October 2012

Place of death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the place of Katrina's death

Cause of death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the cause of Katrina's death

Manner of Death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the manner of Katrina's death

Recommendation

To the New South Wales Commissioner of Police:

I recommend that the death of Katrina Anne Bohnenkamp be referred to the NSW Police Unsolved Homicide Unit.

I close this inquest.

Magistrate Carmel Forbes

Deputy State Coroner

2 October 2020

NSW State Coroner's Court Lidcombe