



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

Inquest:	Inquest into the death of William Mainprize
Hearing dates:	12 December 2023
Date of findings:	12 December 2023
Place of findings:	State Coroners Court, Downing Centre
Findings of:	Deputy Chief Magistrate Freund
Catchwords:	CORONIAL LAW – disappearance, Gulf Livestock 1, Typhoon, Sinking
File number:	2022/184434
Representation:	Karissa Mackay- Advocate Assisting the Coroner
Findings:	I find William Mainprize died on or about 2 September 2020, in the vicinity of 100 nautical miles west of Anami Oshima, Japan. The manner of his death was misadventure, and the cause of his death will remain unascertained.

FINDINGS

1. On 1 September 2020, just over 3 years ago the vessel known as the Gulf Livestock 1 (“**the Vessel**”) with 43 crewmembers on board was enroute to Tangshun China and sailed into Typhoon Maysak, off the coast of Japan.
2. The evidence indicates that Typhoon Maysak reached typhoon strength on 29 August 2020 and intensified to a peak intensity of 1 September 2020 with winds measuring 230 kilometres per hour which is defined as a category 4 storm.
3. At 1.40am Japanese standard time the Vessel sent a distress call from the East China West Sea, west of the Japanese Island Amami Oshama. Shortly thereafter, its main propulsion engine failed, it stalled and was then tipped over by a powerful broadside wave which caused it to ultimately sink.
4. The Japanese Coast Guard notified the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs that the Vessel was missing, and a full search operation was commenced.
5. On 2 September 2020, the Vessel’s Chief Officer was rescued by the Japanese Coast guard.
6. On 4 September 2020, a second crew member was found unresponsive and died shortly thereafter. A second crew member was rescued later that same day.
7. On 9 September 2020, the Japanese Coast Guard suspended its full search activities.
8. William Mainprize was a crewmember on the Vessel when it disappeared in Typhoon Maysak. His body was never found.
9. William’s disappearance and suspected death was reported to the NSW State Coroner pursuant to section 35 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (“**the Act**”) and an inquest is required under the Act.
10. I have jurisdiction to hear this inquest pursuant to section 18(2)(a) of the Act as William at the time of his disappearance was an ordinary resident of NSW.

11. My jurisdiction as a Coroner in relation to William's disappearance and suspected death arises from section 21 of the Act. A Coroner's usual function is to seek to answer five questions namely:
 - a. Who died?
 - b. When did they die?
 - c. Where did they die?
 - d. What was their cause of death, namely the medical cause of the persons death? And finally,
 - e. What was their manner of death which refers to the surrounding circumstances of the death.
12. Accordingly, the primary issue for this inquest is to determine if William has died and if so how, when, where and the manner and cause of his death.
13. William was at the time of his disappearance and suspected death 27 years old.
14. He was born in Singapore on 30 October 1992, the youngest child of Belinda and Andrew Mainprize. He is survived by his parents and his sisters Sarah and Emily and brother Thomas. I note his mum Belinda and brother Thomas attended court for this inquest however, his dad Andrew was unable to attend as he is currently in hospital.
15. As we heard from my Advocate Assisting, William attended Mosman Public School, and completed his HSC. He continued his education with a Business and Communications degree from Charles Sturt University, Bathurst where he was recruited by Uni friends to become a stockman.
16. Whilst studying, William also worked as a teacher's aide assisting at risk young adults. I note that he was aspiring to finish a master's degree in education.
17. In 2018, William completed a stockman course, and during university breaks used these skills to work both internationally and nationally on livestock boats, with Austrax Pty Limited.
18. Following university William moved to Tasmania for a short time where he became qualified as a Wilderness Guide, working with Trek Tours, in addition to his employment as a stockman for cattle exports.
19. William was described by all that met him as the most warm-hearted person you could meet. He was clearly a beautiful, kind and compassionate young

man who cared about others. He also loved adventure and travel. Those who knew William called him a survival specialist as he was highly trained in wilderness survival and intense weather conditions. He was young man with a bright future who was passionate about the environment, social justice, animal and human rights. He loved his family and friends, and they loved him. He is profoundly missed.

The Evidence

20. I heard evidence today from Detective Senior Constable Brett Watson who investigated William's disappearance and suspected death and complied the brief of evidence which I have read.
21. Of significance in relation to these findings are the following documents:
 - a. Statement of Detective Senior Constable Brett Watson dated 27 September 2022;
 - b. ABC investigation titled "into the Storm" By Alison McCymont and Dan Harrison;
 - c. Statement of Belinda Mainprize dated 14 August 2022;
 - d. Supplementary statement of Detective Senior Constable Brett Watson dated 27 September 2022; and
 - e. Panama Maritime Authority – Maritime Affairs investigation department report.
22. I note that William's family were provided with a copy of the brief of evidence prior to the commencement of the inquest.

The events leading up to William's disappearance

23. On the 6 August 2020, William boarded the Vessel at Gladstone, Queensland. He was contracted as a stockman through Australasian Global Exports Pty Ltd.
24. The Vessel was a livestock carrier that launched in 2002. It was a Panamanian registered and constructed as a container ship named "Maersk Waterford" in Germany. In 2015, it was converted to carry livestock, and given the name "Rahmeh". In 2019, it was renamed for the final time "Gulf Livestock 1". It was owned by United Arab Emirates based "Gulf Navigation shipping company".

25. The Vessel had a gross tonnage of 6380 tonnes and a deadweight tonnage of 837 tonnes. It was 133.6metres long, with a beam of 19.4metres and was powered by a single diesel engine giving a maximum speed of 18 knots.
26. After departing Gladstone, the Vessel travelled to Napier, New Zealand where it docked on the 12 August 2020 and was loaded with 5867 live dairy cattle. It was destined for Tangshun, China.
27. The captain of the Vessel, Dante Addug was a Filipino national.
28. Due to COVID restrictions in place at the time, William remained on board the Vessel while it docked in New Zealand.
29. On the 14 August 2020, the vessel departed New Zealand with an estimated time of arrival at Tangshun of 4 September 2020.
30. During the voyage William remained in regular contact with his family via “WhatsApp”.
31. William’s family also tracked the Vessel’s movements via the Marine Navigation App, which shows real time tracking of all vessels in international waters.
32. In his regular communications with his family, William shared videos of taps flowing dirty water and described the Vessel as a rust bucket.
33. About 8pm on the 1 September 2020, while speaking to his mother on “WhatsApp” William told her that the Vessel was taking on water and heading toward Typhoon Maysak. Belinda could see the perilous conditions via the video call with her son. Following the call, William shared videos of the conditions, along with hourly updates until 10pm.
34. Typhoon Maysak reached typhoon strength on 29 August 2020 and intensified to become the strongest typhoon in the 2020 Western Pacific season. At peak intensity on 1 September 2020, Typhoon Maysak’s winds measured 230 kilometres (145 miles) per hour, a category 4 storm.
35. Belinda Mainprize was tracking the Vessel at this time clearly concerned about William’s safety and could see via the Marine Navigation App that all other vessels in the vicinity, had changed direction likely in what appeared to be to avoid the Typhoon. On the contrary, the Vessel with William onboard maintained its direction, directly towards the centre of Typhoon Maysak.
36. At 1.40am Japanese standard time, the Vessel sent a distress from the east China West Sea, west of the Japanese Island Amami Oshama. Shortly

afterwards the Vessel's main propulsion engine failed due to the rough seas the Vessel then stalled when an engine cut out and was then tipped over by a powerful broadside wave.

37. Typhoon Maysak was blowing off southern Japan at the time of the sinking of the Vessel and its automated tracker showed it sailing into winds of 107km per hour at its last known position.
38. The Japanese Coast Guard notified the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs that the Vessel was missing, and a full search operation was immediately commenced. On the 2 September 2020, the Vessel's Chief Officer was rescued by Japanese Coast guard. On the 4 September 2020, a second crew member was found unresponsive in waters.
39. It must be noted that William's family privately funded a search that lasted several weeks. This operation involved two helicopters and several local boats to search which found an empty life raft and multiple cattle carcasses in the water.
40. Following this tragedy, the Ministry of primary industries (New Zealand) halted all exports via water until the completion of an independent review. As of April 2021, the New Zealand government drafted a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act and ban livestock (cattle, deer, goat, or sheep) exports by sea. In April 2023 this legislation came into effect.
41. It is significant that in the 18 months prior to the Vessel's sinking, Indonesian and Australian authorities recorded dozens of safety breaches onboard the Vessel, including critical failures of its propulsion and navigations systems as well as issues relating to the Vessel's stability.
42. A report commissioned by the New Zealand government said it appeared likely that the sinking of the Vessel had a combination of causes, including:
 - a. mechanical,
 - b. meteorological and
 - c. human factors.
43. Because the Vessel was registered in Panama, responsibility for an authoritative investigation into its sinking rested with the Panama Maritime Authority. It is a common practice for commercial vessels to be registered in countries such as Panama, Liberia, Antigua and others where regulations are lax compared to those of countries like Australia.

44. Dr Paul Luckin, Royal Australia Navy Captain and Medical advisor to the AMSA provided a report where he opined:

“A person in the water without a life jacket would have no chance of survival during a typhoon. It would not be possible to don a life jacket once in the water, or to hold onto flotsam long enough to survive the wind and wave conditions.

A person in the water with a life jacket, uninjured, could possibly survive for approximately 48-60 hours; longer than this is highly unlikely.

...

A person in a life raft would have the best chance of surviving. The duration of survival would depend on whether or not they had a significant injury and the availability of drinking water.

Without water, survival would be limited to 3 or 4 days at most ...

By the morning of 14 September, it will have been 12 days since sinking.

...

Summary: There is no possibility of a survivor in the water. Given the adverse weather conditions of two successive typhons, the elapsed time, and the critical need for an adequate volume of drinkable water, I do not believe there is any reasonable prospect of any of the missing personnel being alive in a life raft at this time. I do not believe there is any prospect that any person would be alive at this time”.

45. NSW Police have conducted signs of life checks that have revealed nothing since the sinking of the Vessel on or about 2 September 2022.
46. Accordingly, I am satisfied that William Mainprize died on or about 2 September 2020. On the evidence before the Court, I am unable to determine the exact cause of William’s death, but I am satisfied that the manner of his death was misadventure.
47. I extend my condolences to William’s parents Belinda and Andrew Mainprize, his siblings Sarah, Emily, and Thomas his extended family and friends. On all accounts William was bright, adventurous young man with a giving heart and generous spirit whose life was cut short by this tragedy.

Findings

I now turn to the formal findings I am required to make pursuant to s81 of the *Coroners Act 2009*.

I find William Mainprize died on or about 2 September 2020, in the vicinity of 100 nautical miles West of Anami Oshima, Japan. The Manner of his death was misadventure, and the cause of his death will remain unascertained.

12 December 2023

Deputy Chief Magistrate Sharon Freund

Coroner

