



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

**Inquest:** Inquest into the death of Amelia Blake

**Hearing dates:** 29 May 2020

**Date of findings:** 5 June 2020

**Place of findings:** Coroner's Court of New South Wales at Lidcombe

**Findings of:** Magistrate Derek Lee, Deputy State Coroner

**Catchwords:** CORONIAL LAW – homicide, cause and manner of death

**File number:** 2018/14040

**Representation:** Mr D Welsh, Coronial Advocate Assisting the Coroner

**Findings:** Amelia Blake died on 9 January 2018 at Newtown NSW 2042. The cause of Amelia's death was the combined effects of asphyxia and trauma to the head, face and neck. Amelia died as a result of actions taken by BG on 9 January 2018 during an episode of interpersonal violence. The manner of death is therefore homicide.

**Non-publication orders:** Pursuant to sections 74(1) and 75(1) of the *Coroners Act 2009* the publication of any matter (including the publication of any photograph or other pictorial representation) which identifies any of the following persons is prohibited:

1. BG
2. Any relative of BG
3. GK

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Amelia Blake was a 22-year-old young lady and much loved daughter and sister. In 2017 and 2018 Amelia had been undertaking an overseas backpacking trip to Australia. Amelia had all life's possibilities and adventures ahead of her. On the evening of 9 January 2018 Amelia's life ended in sudden, violent and tragic circumstances when she died as a result of injuries caused by a man who she had been in a brief and casual relationship with.

## **2. Why was an inquest held?**

2.1 Under the *Coroners Act 2009 (the Act)* a Coroner has the responsibility to investigate all reportable deaths. This investigation is conducted primarily so that a Coroner can answer questions that they are required to answer pursuant to the Act, namely: the identity of the person who died, when and where they died, and what was the cause and the manner of that person's death. All reportable deaths must be reported to a Coroner or to a police officer.

2.2 Section 27(1)(a) of the Act provides that an inquest must be held if it appears to a coroner that a person has died, or might have died, as a result of homicide. In this case, the evidence gathered during the police investigation that took place established that Amelia died as a result of homicide. This made the holding of an inquest mandatory.

2.3 In this context it should be recognised at the outset that the operation of the Act, and the coronial process in general, represents an intrusion by the State into what is usually one of the most traumatic events in the lives of family members who have lost a loved one. At such times, it is reasonably expected that families will wish to grieve and attempt to cope with their enormous loss in private. That grieving and loss does not diminish significantly over time. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that both the coronial process and an inquest by their very nature unfortunately compels a family to re-live distressing memories several years after the trauma experienced as a result of a death, and to do so in a public forum.

2.4 It should also be noted at the outset that although the evidence gathered during a coronial investigation may give rise to the appearance that a person has died as a result of homicide, such a conclusion (if one is eventually made) does not impose any criminal liability on any person. Indeed, section 81(3) of the Act precludes a coroner from making a finding that indicates, or in any way suggests, that a criminal offence has been committed by any person.

## **3. Amelia's life**

3.1 Inquests and the coronial process are as much about life as they are about death. A coronial system exists because we, as a community, recognise the fragility of human life and value enormously the preciousness of it. Understanding the impact that the death of a person has had on their family only comes from knowing something of that person's life and how the loss of that life has affected those who loved that person the most. Therefore it is extremely important to recognise and acknowledge Amelia's life in a brief, but hopefully meaningful, way.

- 3.2 Amelia was born on 17 June 1995 at Queens Medical Centre in Nottingham, England to her parents, Christopher and Sharon Blake. Amelia grew up in the Loughborough area with her parents and younger sister, Lily. Amelia enjoyed a close relationship with her parents and sister and had a nurturing and loving upbringing.
- 3.3 Amelia completed primary and secondary school in the Loughborough area. After finishing school Amelia worked in the hospitality and optical industries until April 2017. At that time, and with a sense of adventure, Amelia decided to embark on a backpacking trip around Australia. She arrived in Sydney on 21 April 2017. After arriving, Amelia met and became close friends with Grace Marshall, who was also undertaking a similar backpacking trip around Australia at the same time. Amelia and Ms Marshall travelled along the east coast of Australia for a period of about six weeks before returning to Sydney to look for employment. In July 2017 Amelia began working at the Fogo Brazilia restaurant (**the restaurant**) located in Chippendale.
- 3.4 As part of her visa requirements, Amelia undertook a period of employment at a farm in regional Victoria between September and December 2017. On 27 December 2017 Amelia returned to Sydney with two friends that she had met whilst working at the farm. Following this, Amelia planned to travel to Hanoi, Vietnam on 11 January 2018 to meet another friend, Luran Whitworth, who she had previously met at a backpacker hostel in Sydney.
- 3.5 At the conclusion of the evidence in the inquest the Court was afforded the privilege of hearing some heartfelt and moving words spoken by Amelia's mother who, together with Amelia's father and sister, attended the inquest remotely from England. Mrs Blake described Amelia as a funny, generous, loving and kind young woman who was having the time of her life during her trip to Australia. Indeed, Mrs Blake said that Amelia had told her mother that 2018 would be an amazing year for her. It is therefore heartbreaking to now know of the catastrophic event that occurred in January 2018.
- 3.6 There is no doubt that the loss experienced by Amelia's family, and her many close friends, has been devastating, and will continue to be so. It is even more distressing to know that with the loss of such a young life, Amelia has been forever denied the opportunity to fulfil her life's hopes and dreams.

#### **4. The relationship between Amelia and BG**

- 4.1 It was while working at the restaurant that Amelia met BG, who was also a restaurant employee at the time. BG was a 30-year-old Nepalese national who had arrived in Australia with his wife, Mrs SG, in 2014. Following a deterioration in their relationship Mrs SG moved into separate accommodation and thereafter had limited contact with BG.
- 4.2 After meeting in July 2017 Amelia and BG developed a friendship which later progressed to a casual sexual relationship by mid to late August 2017. As this relationship continued it became apparent that BG was intent on pursuing a more serious relationship than Amelia, and wished to progress their relationship more quickly. During Amelia's stay in regional Victoria between September and December 2017 she remained in contact with BG using WhatsApp, and arrangements were made for Amelia to live with BG in his unit at 3/85 King Street Newtown for two weeks upon her return to Sydney, before she travelled to Vietnam.

4.3 There is documentary evidence from Amelia's diary that she was uncertain about the nature and extent of her relationship with BG. On 2 and 5 December 2017, Amelia wrote in her diary that she was considering a relationship with BG, but was unsure about the level of her commitment given her desire to also continue travelling. On 14 and 18 December 2017 Amelia wrote that the relationship between herself and BG was experiencing unspecified difficulties, which caused her to have doubts about continuing the relationship.

## **5. BG's other relationships**

5.1 The evidence establishes that BG was actually in a number of concurrent relationships at the time that he was seeing Amelia. It appears that around December 2016 BG formed relationships with Maria (Ines) Newman and GK, both of whom worked at the restaurant. Initially, both Ms Newman and Ms GK believed that they were in exclusive relationships with BG from December 2016.

### **GK**

5.2 BG's relationship with Ms GK continued up until June 2017 when it seems to have ended. Ms GK resigned from the restaurant at about the same time as she was apparently upset by the breakdown in the relationship. However, it appears that BG and Ms GK continued to have an intermittent casual sexual relationship from June 2017 until December 2017. Around this time, Ms GK became pregnant to BG but subsequently terminated the pregnancy without initially informing BG.

5.3 On the evening of 15 December 2017, Ms GK informed BG about the terminated pregnancy when she was visiting him in Newtown. According to Ms GK this disclosure angered BG causing a verbal altercation which escalated into a physical altercation. This altercation resulted in Ms GK being allegedly pushed onto a bed and then allegedly sexually assaulted by BG. Following this incident, Ms GK left the unit. Several days after this incident BG sent Ms GK a message in which he reportedly apologised for what had occurred. Ms GK did not make any report of this incident to police at the time. It was not until police spoke to Ms GK about the deaths of BG and Amelia that Ms GK made a disclosure regarding the events of 15 December 2017.

### **Maria Newman**

5.4 BG and Ms Newman began a casual sexual relationship in about September 2016 which became more serious in February 2017 when Ms Newman moved into BG's unit in Newtown. The relationship continued until August 2017 when it encountered difficulties due to BG borrowing money from Ms Newman, which he claimed was for university fees. At around this time, Ms Newman was informed by some of BG's work colleagues that they were owed money from BG which they had been experiencing difficulty in recovering.

5.5 By September 2017, Ms Newman suspected that BG was involved in another relationship and reportedly "*emotionally checked out*" of her relationship with BG.<sup>1</sup> In around mid-December 2017 Ms Newman was informed by a friend that BG was dating Amelia. Ms Newman subsequently confirmed this report with other employees of the restaurant, including Ms GK. At around the same time, Ms GK discovered that BG had also been in a concurrent relationship with Ms Newman.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit 1, page 20 at [47].

## **6. BG's finances**

- 6.1 The evidence establishes that one of the contributing factors to the breakdown in the relationship between BG and his wife was BG's frequent gambling activities. At the time of their separation BG was reportedly in debt to the amount of about \$9,000. This evidence is consistent with the observations of BG's sister, SS-G, who reported that after BG's arrival in Australia he frequently contacted her with requests for money.
- 6.2 The evidence also establishes that between 4 January 2018 and 11 January 2018 BG made multiple cash withdrawals of relatively large amounts of money from automatic teller machines (**ATM**), usually at the Marlborough Hotel in Newtown or from a Commonwealth Bank ATM on King Street, Newtown. Up until 8 January 2018 these withdrawals were made from BG's own account. Some of these transactions are summarised below:
- A withdrawal of \$1,900 on 4 January 2018;
  - A withdrawal of \$1,000 on 7 January 2018;
  - A total withdrawal of \$700 on 8 January 2018;
  - Total withdrawals of \$2,500 from BG's own account (including a further attempted withdrawal of \$200), and \$2,500 from Amelia's account on 9 January 2018.
- 6.3 Many of the above transactions were made in the early hours of the morning and in circumstances where BG was subsequently recorded on CCTV footage in the gaming room area of the Marlborough hotel, and also at The Star Casino. Indeed, BG was well known to an employee of the Marlborough Hotel who worked in the gaming room area who noted that BG would regularly attend the hotel three to four times per week to use the poker machines. The hotel employee noted that on the evening of 8 January 2018 BG reported having spent \$3,000 on the poker machines and continued to gamble in an attempt to recover his losses.

## **7. Events leading up to 12 January 2018**

### ***7 and 8 January 2018***

- 7.1 On 7 January 2018 Amelia and BG had breakfast in Newtown before travelling to Obelisk Beach for the day.
- 7.2 In the early hours of the morning on 8 January 2018 Amelia and BG attended Royal Prince Alfred Hospital after Amelia had been experiencing pain in her right iliac fossa since 6 January 2018. Despite attempting to treat the pain with analgesia, Amelia was experiencing increased pain together with periods of nausea. Following examination, Amelia was sent home with instructions for a general practitioner to follow up any possibility of a urinary tract infection, and advised to take paracetamol and ibuprofen as required.

### ***9 January 2018***

- 7.3 During the afternoon of 9 January 2018 Amelia and BG went to Watsons Bay before returning to Newtown at around 8:19pm. At 8:28pm Amelia and BG went to a supermarket where CCTV footage relevantly recorded that Amelia appeared well, with no apparent facial injuries. At 8:33pm after

leaving the supermarket, Amelia and BG walked to BG's unit via Longwood Street, Newtown. This is the last occasion that Amelia is seen on CCTV.

- 7.4 A resident of a neighbouring unit to BG's saw Amelia in the kitchen/living room area using what appeared to be a computer screen at what the neighbour believed was about 8:00pm. BG was also seen walking around the unit at this time.
- 7.5 At about 8:40pm Amelia sent her mother a WhatsApp message in response to a comment made by Mrs Blake to a photo that Amelia had sent of herself earlier in the day whilst at Watsons Bay. At about 8:47pm Amelia sent another WhatsApp message to Ms Whitworth. The two had been discussing their upcoming trip to Vietnam since about 6:23pm earlier that evening. According to Ms Whitworth, the 8:47pm message appeared to be abruptly end the conversation between herself and Amelia, which Ms Whitworth considered to be unusual and out of character for Amelia. Amelia's phone records subsequently showed that her phone was using data from 8:33pm but ceased at 8:48pm.

### ***10 January 2018***

- 7.6 At 2:23am on 10 January 2018 BG went to the Marlborough Hotel and withdrew \$1,000 from Amelia's account, followed by a second withdrawal of \$1,000 from Amelia's account. BG later left the Marlborough hotel at 3:08am and a short time later transferred \$500 from Amelia's savings account to her personal account. Following this, BG went to an ATM on King Street, Newtown and withdrew \$500 from Amelia's account and \$500 from his own account. BG returned to the Marlborough Hotel and remained in the gaming room until about 4:00am.
- 7.7 At 11:49am and 11:52am two messages were sent from Amelia's WhatsApp account to her mother's and Ms Whitworth's WhatsApp accounts, respectively. The messages referred to Amelia being in pain (referring to her previous presentation to hospital) and to postponing her flight to Vietnam until 12 January 2018. Upon receiving the message Ms Whitworth formed the view that the message had not actually been sent by Amelia. This is because the message was in broken English, it contained an emoji symbol which Amelia was not known to use, and because the content of the message was inconsistent with previous conversations between Amelia and Ms Whitworth.
- 7.8 At 12:17pm Ms Whitworth received another message from Amelia's WhatsApp account containing a photo of Amelia in a hospital bed. Upon receiving this message, Ms Whitworth again considered it to be unusual because Amelia had earlier that week sent her a similar photo (via Snapchat) of herself wearing the same clothes. Ms Whitworth received two further messages from Amelia's WhatsApp account at 12:19pm and 12:46pm. Again, Ms Whitworth considered these messages to be unusual because they were in broken English, they contained expressions which Amelia was not known to use, and because they were inconsistent with the manner in which Amelia had previously conversed with Ms Whitworth.
- 7.9 At around the time of this last WhatsApp message to Ms Whitworth, BG contacted Ms Newman and made arrangements to meet in Dee Why later that afternoon at around 3:00pm. Amelia's phone records indicate that data from her phone was being used in Cremorne, which is consistent with the bus route taken by BG from Newtown to Dee Why. These records also establish that data from Amelia's phone was later used in Dee Why at around 4:35pm.

7.10 During BG's meeting with Ms Newman she noted that BG was behaving in an unusual manner and that he repeatedly told Ms Newman how much he loved her. Ms Newman also saw that BG received a number of private phone calls following which he made reference to "*stuff about his past*", and which appeared to have made him unsettled.

7.11 At about 6:00pm BG and Ms Newman returned to Ms Newman's home during which time Ms Newman asked if BG had met with Amelia. BG replied, "*Yes I hope she will be OK*".<sup>2</sup> When Ms Newman asked why he responded in this way BG replied, "*She is going through some problems*".<sup>3</sup> Upon returning to Ms Newman's home BG and Ms Newman had sexual intercourse, and BG again repeatedly told Ms Newman that he loved her. Following this, as BG was preparing to leave, Ms Newman enquired about his future plans. BG replied that there would not be any plans, which prompted Ms Newman to enquire whether he was voicing suicidal ideation. BG replied, "*No it's not my plan, there are some people waiting for me*".<sup>4</sup> Following this BG began to cry, and went on to say, "*There may have been some things I have done wrong...*". When Ms Newman asked him to stay with her, BG replied, "*I can't, I have to go back, I'm just sorry that it will hurt you and scared [sic] that you will be sad*".<sup>5</sup> When Ms Newman sought to explain that he could seek assistance BG replied, "*There's no way of getting out... They're waiting for me. If something happens to me don't come to my funeral*".<sup>6</sup>

7.12 At 6:17 PM Amelia's mother replied to the earlier message sent from Amelia's WhatsApp account. In response to this, at 7:06pm, a message was sent from Amelia's WhatsApp account to her mother. It should be noted that this message, like the earlier messages sent to Ms Whitworth, was also written in broken English and contained similar emoji symbols which Amelia was not known to use.

### **11 January 2018**

7.13 BG later went to sleep at Ms Newman's apartment before waking up at about 2:00am on 11 January 2018, telling Ms Newman that he had to return home. Ms Newman walked with BG to a bus stop and before he left told him to seek assistance and to respond if she contacted him via text message. BG replied, "*If I'm able to read the message I will. If by Saturday you don't hear anything call my landlord to check the apartment*".<sup>7</sup> BG subsequently provided his landlord's phone number to Ms Newman before boarding a bus. Travel records and CCTV footage indicate that BG caught a bus and then a taxi back to Newtown. At 5:57am BG was captured on CCTV footage walking along Longdown Street Newtown towards his home. This is the last occasion that BG is seen on CCTV.

7.14 Later on 11 January 2018 Ms Newman became concerned for BG's welfare following their conversation and his unusual behaviour. Ms Newman attempted to contact BG without success. Ms Newman then contacted BG's work colleagues, his landlord and BG's family members, eventually speaking to BG's sister.

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<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 1, page 46 at [137].

<sup>3</sup> Exhibit 1, page 46 at [137].

<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1, page 46 at [140].

<sup>5</sup> Exhibit 1, page 46 at [140].

<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 1, page 46 at [140].

<sup>7</sup> Exhibit 1, page 48 at [145].

## **8. The events of 12 January 2018**

- 8.1 At around 5:30pm on 12 January 2018 Ms SS-G spoke to the landlord for BG's unit, Quinton Chen. Ms SS-G told Mr Chen that she had not spoken to her brother in four weeks and was concerned for his welfare. Following this conversation Mr Chen agreed to attend the unit to check on BG.
- 8.2 Shortly after 5:30pm Mr Chen attended BG's unit noting that the front door was closed and locked. Mr Chen knocked on the door several times and called out BG's name. After receiving no response, Mr Chen entered the unit and found BG lying face up on the ground with no signs of life, and with his hands tied together with plastic cable ties. Mr Chen immediately contacted emergency services.
- 8.3 Initial attending police arrived on the scene at about 6:00pm. BG was found lying on his back, dressed in a t-shirt, boxer shorts, and socks, with his hands bound together at the wrists with plastic cable ties. It was also noted that BG's ankles were tied together and that there were a number of cable ties around his neck. A number of cable ties which had been fastened end-to-end were also noted to be hanging from the cross beam of a door frame.
- 8.4 Inside a bedroom police found Amelia lying on the floor under a blanket, dressed in her underwear and a black singlet, with no signs of life. Attending paramedics subsequently pronounced both Amelia and BG to be life extinct.
- 8.5 From the subsequent police examination of the scene an amount of blood was found within the kitchen area, together with a bloodstained tissue that had been wrapped in bubble wrap and left in the kitchen garbage bin. Subsequent forensic testing identified the blood stains as belonging to Amelia.

## **9. What was the cause of Amelia's death?**

- 9.1 Amelia was subsequently taken to the Department of Forensic Medicine in Sydney. On 16 January 2018 Dr Sarita Maistry, forensic pathologist, performed a postmortem examination. The autopsy revealed evidence of multiple areas of blunt trauma to the face and head, with abrasions and bruises to the forehead, left cheek, nasal bridge, lips and chin. There was also left periorbital bruising and a left conjunctival haemorrhage, with palpable fractures of the nasal bone. Dr Maistry noted that these injuries *"although non-fatal may have significantly incapacitated [Amelia] and rendered her susceptible to loss of consciousness and aspects your complications such as aspiration (blood and gastric contents) with airway compromise. In addition, the injuries to the face may have also occurred during attempts to occlude the external airways (nose and mouth), as in smothering"*.
- 9.2 The autopsy also identified evidence of trauma with asphyxia signs present, which was noted to have likely occurred from airway occlusion as a result of neck compression. As evidence of decomposition was noted Dr Maistry indicated that the cause of Amelia's death could not be stated with medical certainty. However Dr Maistry opined that it is likely that Amelia's death *"occurred from the combined effects of the head, face and neck trauma (with compression of the neck and/or occlusion of the external airways, as in smothering), with asphyxia a predominant mechanism of death"*.
- 9.3 Having regard to the autopsy findings and the opinion expressed by Dr Maistry the cause of Amelia's death was the combined effects of asphyxia and trauma to the head, face and neck.

## 10. What was the manner of Amelia's death?

10.1 The police investigation did not identify any physical or forensic evidence to suggest that any person had accessed BG's unit at around the time of Amelia's death. There were no signs of forced entry to the unit and also no evidence to suggest that any person other than BG was involved in Amelia's death. Having regard to these matters, and in particular to the circumstances in which Amelia and BG were found on 12 January 2018, it must be concluded that Amelia died as a result of actions taken by BG during an episode of interpersonal violence. The manner of Amelia's death is therefore homicide.

10.2 It is not possible to reach any definite conclusions regarding the motivation for BG's apparent actions, nor about the circumstances in which Amelia died. As the events in BG's unit on the evening of 9 January 2018 were unwitnessed, one can only speculate about the events leading up to Amelia's death. However what is clear is that by 9 January 2018 BG was experiencing pressure and challenges from a number of different aspects of his life. In particular:

(a) BG was experiencing considerable financial difficulties. His rent was in arrears and he owed significant amounts of money to a number of family members, friends, work colleagues, and financial organisations. Indeed, it appears that BG had accumulated debts totalling about \$43,950 by 9 January 2018. Following the discovery of BG's body, police located a handwritten note itemising names and amounts of money which appeared to be a list of BG's creditors.

(b) BG's financial difficulties led to increased gambling behaviour. He was a frequent patron of the gambling room at the Marlborough Hotel, and was also known to frequent other establishments for the purposes of gambling, often into the early hours of the morning. The evidence establishes that between 4 and 10 January 2018 BG gambled almost \$11,000 on poker machines.

(c) BG was encountering difficulties in his various relationships. Amelia had previously expressed uncertainty about the seriousness of her relationship with BG. Further, probably by September 2017 and certainly by at least December 2017, both Ms Newman and Ms GK had discovered BG's infidelity. In addition Ms GK's termination of her pregnancy had angered and upset BG leading to the alleged incident involving Ms GK on 15 December 2017. Of course, throughout these relationships BG remained married to his wife and although there had been limited contact between them following their separation, it appears that this was at times weighing heavily on his mind. On 12 December 2017 BG contacted his wife via Facebook Messenger to apologise for "*everything*", and expressed a desire to right past grievances.<sup>8</sup>

(d) BG was likely concerned about his visa status. He may have considered that his financial difficulties, the deterioration of his various relationships, and the incident involving Ms GK on 15 December 2017 would place his visa, and ability to remain in Australia, in jeopardy.

10.3 By the evening of 9 January 2018 BG had withdrawn or transferred \$5,500 from Amelia's account. It is most likely that this was done without Amelia's knowledge or consent. Given Amelia's intention to travel to Vietnam, it appears unlikely that she would have given or loaned BG such a significant sum of money. Further, the withdrawals were made in Amelia's absence and typically in the context where BG had been gambling. Further, there is evidence from one of BG's work colleagues

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<sup>8</sup> Exhibit 1, page 59 at [201].

establishing that BG was known to often attempt to bypass security measures on the mobile phones of his work colleagues.

10.4 As already noted, there is obviously no direct evidence of the circumstances leading up to Amelia's death. However given the proximity of the withdrawals by BG from Amelia's accounts, it appears likely that the discovery of these withdrawals by Amelia precipitated the events in BG's unit on the evening of 9 January 2018. It also appears likely that the additional pressures that BG was experiencing in other aspects of his life contributed, at least in part, to his actions resulting in Amelia's death. Having regard to the autopsy findings it is most likely that BG used violent force to inflict injuries to Amelia in the context of either smothering and/or compressing her neck, resulting in asphyxiation and Amelia's eventual death.

## **11. When did Amelia die?**

11.1 The available evidence establishes that Amelia died on the evening of 9 January 2018, after she and BG returned to BG's unit following their day trip to Watsons Bay. The evidence relevantly establishes:

- (a) Amelia was last known to be alive at 8:33pm when she was captured on CCTV footage walking from the supermarket to BG's unit.
- (b) Mobile phone records establish that the last known data activity on Amelia's phone was at 8:48pm.
- (c) The abrupt nature of Amelia's message to Ms Whitworth at 8:47pm, and the absence of any further messages from Amelia, indicates that their text message conversation regarding upcoming travel plans was interrupted by a sudden and unexpected event.
- (d) There is no physical or CCTV evidence of BG leaving his unit on the evening of 9 January 2018 until 2:21am on 10 January 2018.
- (e) There is no record of any data activity or usage on BG's phone after 8:48pm for the remainder of 9 January 2018.
- (f) BG's withdrawals from Amelia's account totalling \$2,500 in the early hours of the morning on 9 January 2018 which are proximate to the time of Amelia's death later that evening, followed by BG's withdrawal of a further \$3,000 from Amelia's accounts in the early hours of the morning on 10 January 2018.
- (g) The autopsy identified decompositional changes by the time of Amelia's discovery on 12 January 2018, suggesting that she had died sometime earlier.

11.2 Having regard to the above, it is most likely that Amelia died sometime after 8:48pm on 9 January 2018.

## **12. Acknowledgments**

12.1 Before turning to the findings that I am required to make, I would like to acknowledge, and express my gratitude to Durand Welsh, Coronial Advocate, for his considerable assistance during both the preparation for inquest, and during the inquest itself. I also thank and commend Detective Senior Constable Adam Packer and his team of investigators for conducting a thorough investigation and for compiling a comprehensive brief of evidence. I thank both of them for the sensitivity and empathy that they have shown in this extremely tragic matter.

## **13. Findings pursuant to section 81 of the *Coroners Act 2009***

13.1 The findings I make under section 81(1) of the Act are:

### ***Identity***

The person who died was Amelia Blake.

### ***Date of death***

Amelia died on 9 January 2018.

### ***Place of death***

Amelia died at Newtown NSW 2042.

### ***Cause of death***

The cause of Amelia's death was the combined effects of asphyxia and trauma to the head, face and neck.

### ***Manner of death***

Amelia died as a result of actions taken by BG on 9 January 2018 during an episode of interpersonal violence. The manner of death is therefore homicide.

## **14. Epilogue**

14.1 There is no doubt that Amelia is greatly missed by her loving family and friends. To know that Amelia has been separated from them, at a stage in her life when she had so much more to accomplish, so many more dreams to fulfil, and so much more life to live, and in such distressing circumstances, is truly devastating.

14.2 On behalf of the Coroner's Court of NSW, I offer my deepest heartfelt sympathies and most respectful condolences to Amelia's parents, sister, and the rest of her family and friends for their most painful and overwhelming loss.

14.3 I close this inquest.

Magistrate Derek Lee  
Deputy State Coroner  
5 June 2020  
Coroner's Court of NSW