



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

Inquest:	Inquest into the death of PREETHI REDDY
Hearing date:	10 June 2020
Date of findings:	24 June 2020
Place of findings:	NSW State Coroner's Court - Lidcombe
Findings of:	Magistrate Carmel Forbes, Deputy State Coroner
Catchwords:	CORONIAL LAW – s. 27 (1) (a) <i>Coroners Act 2009</i> - death as a result of homicide by a known person- mandatory inquest
File number:	2019/72081
Representation:	Ms S Harding, Advocate assisting the Coroner
Findings:	<p>Identity of deceased: The deceased person was Dr Preethi Reddy</p> <p>Date of death: She died on 3 March 2019</p> <p>Place of death: She died in the Swissotel , 68 Market Street, Sydney, NSW</p> <p>Cause of death: She died as a result of the combined effects of blunt force head injury and stab wounds to the neck and back</p> <p>Manner of death: Homicide by a known person</p>

Introduction

1. This is an inquest into the tragic and sudden death of Dr Preethi REDDY who was killed by her ex-partner Dr Harshwardhan Narde. Pursuant to s. 27(1)(a) Coroners Act 2009 an inquest is required to be held if it appears to the coroner that a person has died as a result of a homicide.
2. Dr Reddy was the treasured daughter of Dr Narismha REDDY and Mrs Sucharitha REDDY and was the older sister of Dr Nithya REDDY. She was born in India and her family migrated to Sydney in 1996 when she was aged nine.
3. Dr Reddy grew up in a traditional Indian family. They had very close relationships. Dr Reddy is described by her sister as elegant, bubbly, social, kind and witty. She was held in high regard by her friends and work colleagues. At the time of her death she was a practising dentist.
4. After finishing high school Dr Reddy returned to India to study dentistry and in 2010 she graduated as a qualified dentist. Dr Reddy then returned to Australia and commenced the Overseas Trained Dentist Course facilitated through the Royal Melbourne Dental Hospital. She completed these studies in late 2013 early 2014.
5. During this course Dr Reddy met and commenced a relationship with Dr Narde who was a practicing dentist.
6. Dr Reddy's sister Nithya met Dr Narde around May 2014. Nithya's observations of the two when they were together were that Dr Reddy was not her normal bubbly self. According to Nithya, Dr Narde was not as confident as Dr Reddy and he relied on her socially and emotionally.
7. After an argument in 2015 Dr Reddy and Dr Narde were in an 'on again- off again relationship'. Dr Reddy lived at home with her parents in Sydney. Dr Narde was working in Tamworth. At no point did they live together. Dr Reddy never introduced Dr Narde to her father. Her mother had only met him once.
8. In November 2018, Dr Reddy commenced a new relationship. Her new partner lived in Melbourne. Dr Reddy had started plans to move to Melbourne and had been successful in gaining employment in Melbourne.
9. In February 2019 Dr Narde told an acquaintance of his that the girl he loved is 'Preethi' and that she is going to get married to somebody else.
10. On 1 March 2019 Dr Reddy and Dr Narde attended the same two day conference run by the International Academy of Advanced Dentistry at the Urban Hotel, St Leonards. Dr Reddy stayed at the hotel in a room with two other conference participants. Dr Narde stayed in a room on his own.
11. The conference finished on 2 March 2019. At about 6:14pm on that evening CCTV footage from the hotel shows Dr Reddy and Dr Narde entering a lift with about six other course participants. CCTV footage then shows that at 6:22pm Dr Reddy drove her vehicle out of the underground carpark of the hotel. At the time a person was seated in the front passenger seat.

12. CCTV footage then shows Dr Reddy's vehicle entering a carpark in Alexander Street, Crows Nest at 8:32 pm. Both Dr Reddy and Dr Narde are seen to get out of the car.
13. At about 9:45pm they entered Ravvi's Cumin Restaurant, in Crows Nest. The owner observed little conversation between the two, and he was under the impression they were not a couple. In his observation, there was no happiness or laughter between them. He observed Dr Reddy to be seated with closed body language and her arms crossed. It appeared to him that they entered the restaurant to talk rather than eat. About 10:16pm Dr Reddy paid for the meal with her credit card.
14. About 10:32pm they re-entered the car park area and appeared to be talking outside her vehicle. It appears from the footage that at one stage during the two hours they were standing in the carpark that Dr Narde may have extended both arms towards Dr Reddy, and Dr Reddy took a few steps backwards. The camera angles of the CCTV footage make it difficult to discern exactly what occurred. At 12:32am they entered the car and exited the carpark with Dr Narde seated in the passenger seat.
15. They drove into the city and parked in Market Street. They remained in the vehicle until 1:53am. Dr Reddy then left the vehicle and walked to George Street and purchased two bottles of water at McDonalds and then returned to her car where Dr Narde was waiting.
16. They then drove to the Swissotel, at 68 Market Street Sydney. (Dr Narde had booked a room at this hotel the day before) Dr Narde approached the reception area at 2:46am and filled out the guest registration form for himself and did not provide the details of Dr Reddy. CCTV captures Dr Reddy and Dr Narde walking through the reception area, and Dr Narde handing the keys to Dr Reddy's car to the hotel valet. Dr Narde had a carry on suitcase and Dr Reddy was carrying a small black backpack. Records show they entered the hotel room at 3:06am.
17. The following morning at 10:57am, Dr Reddy called her father and told him she was going to have breakfast then drive home. At 11:06am Dr Reddy called her partner and told him she had been with her friends the night before and that her phone had run out of battery. She told him that she loved him.
18. This is the last time Dr Reddy is known to be alive.
19. At 1:34pm Dr Narde is seen to leave the hotel room. He went to the reception and arranged to extend his stay at the hotel by paying for an extra night. He is given a new room key for the new booking.
20. At 1:51pm Dr Narde walked through the ground floor lobby of the hotel and walked through Myers to the food court. At 1:56pm he purchased some food and ate it in the food court. He then walked back into Myers, into the luggage section and purchased a large suitcase at 2:23pm.
21. He then went to the 7-Eleven store in George Street and purchased garbage bags and returned to the Swissotel.

22. At 3:30pm Dr Narde walked through the ground floor lobby and back out of the hotel and to Woolworths located on the corner of George and Park Streets. He purchased towels and cleaning products and he returned to his room.
23. Dr Narde did not stay at the hotel for the extra night. At 4:43pm he handed in the valet parking slip at reception. A concierge was called for and arrangements were made for Dr Reddy's vehicle to be collected. The concierge attended Dr Narde's room and assisted Dr Narde lift the suitcase purchased at Myers onto the porter's trolley together with Dr Narde's carry on suitcase, Dr Reddy's small black back pack and a tied up black garbage bag. The bags were taken to Dr Reddy's car that had been retrieved by valet parking and the concierge and Dr Narde lifted the bags into the boot of her car.
24. Dr Narde then drove to Strachan Street Kingsford. He parked the car and walked to Kingsford Discount Shop where he approached a staff employee and asked whether he could use her mobile phone to call a taxi to which she agreed.
25. At 6:08pm Dr Narde took a taxi and went to the airport. He entered the Qantas terminal at 6:27pm. He attempted to purchase a ticket on a 7:10pm flight to Tamworth however was unable to do so. About 6:51pm he exited Terminal 2 and he walked across the road and hired a vehicle and drove to Tamworth.
26. Between 9:30-10:00pm that night, Dr Narde entered Puma Fuels in Muswellbrook and spoke with the store owner. During the conversation Dr Narde's phone rang continuously. It is now known, Dr Reddy's sister Nithya was ringing Dr Narde repeatedly in an attempt to determine whether he could offer any 'clues' as to her whereabouts.
27. About 11:33pm, Nithya spoke with the organiser of the dental conference who confirmed that Dr Narde had also attended the dental conference. Nithya wanted to speak with Dr Narde and felt he knew something about Dr Reddy's situation as he was not answering his phone. Nithya continued to call Dr Narde.
28. Around 3-4 am on 4 March 2019, Dr Narde contacted Nithya and asked her "what was up". Nithya informed Dr Narde that Dr Reddy was missing and asked him when he last saw her and whether he had any further information. Dr Narde told Nithya that the last time he saw Dr Reddy was after the conference, in a side street at the back of the Urban Hotel. Dr Narde told Nithya that he and Dr Reddy had spoken for about an hour and then he left.
29. Around 5am Nithya received another call from Dr Narde. He enquired as to why Nithya was contacting his family and friends and became increasingly angry towards Nithya.
30. Around 10:30am Nithya received another call from Dr Narde. He said that he didn't tell her the full truth and that they did have dinner last night. Dr Narde stated that they left around 10:30pm and that he went home, and he didn't know where Dr Reddy went. Nithya urged Dr Narde to attend Tamworth Police Station and tell them what he knew about Dr Reddy's last known movements.
31. About 11:20 am 4 March 2019 Dr Narde attended Tamworth Police Station and provided a statement to police regarding the disappearance of Dr Reddy. Constable Blackwell described Dr Narde to be extremely anxious and nervous with unsettled body language. Dr Narde told police:

- On the weekend before the conference Dr Reddy contacted him 'out of the blue', and they spoke about the upcoming conference. (Call charge records indicate that Dr Narde called Dr Reddy on 15 February 2019, however the call was unanswered. Dr Narde then called Dr Reddy again on the 24 February 2019 where they spoke for some length. Within minutes of the call ending, Dr Reddy called Dr Narde back and they continued talking. The two calls on 24th of February lasted for a total of around 4 hours.)
 - On 2nd March 2019, he and Dr Reddy attended an Indian restaurant after which Dr Reddy dropped him off around the block in Crows Next so he could get a taxi back to the city. He states that he thought Dr Reddy was driving back to her parents' home. He said this was the last time he saw her.
32. Later on at about 4:00pm on 4 March 2019 Dr Narde returned to Tamworth Police Station saying he wanted to clarify a number of points made in his statement. Police obtained a second statement from Dr Narde. Whilst taking this statement, Constable Blackwell described Dr Narde as looking more unsettled, flustered and worried.
33. In the second statement to police, Dr Narde told police:
- That he caught the taxi to the city and stayed at backpacker's accommodation and paid cash for the room. He shared a room with another male; however the male was asleep when he arrived at the accommodation. He did not leave the accommodation until the following morning at around 8:00am.
34. Later in that evening at about 9:43pm on 4 March 2019 Dr Narde drove his vehicle into an oncoming truck on the main road south of Tamworth. Dr Narde put his lights on high beam and accelerated towards the truck. I accept the determination made by the investigation that this was a deliberate act by Dr Narde to end his life. Dr Narde did not survive the collision. No one else was injured in the collision.
35. On 5 March 2019 at 9:19pm Dr Reddy's vehicle was located in Strachan Street, Kingsford. Dr Reddy's body was located, in the suitcase that had been purchased at Myers by Dr Narde, in the boot of her vehicle.
36. On the 7 March 2019 an autopsy was performed by Forensic Pathologist Dr Pokorny. Dr Pokorny found the cause of death was combined effects of blunt force head injury and stab wounds to the neck and back.
37. Upon examination of the hotel room police located Dr Reddy's blood in the bathroom.
38. Dr Reddy's last phone call was a 2-3 minute conversation at 11:06 am on 3 March 2019 to her new partner.
39. Cell tower records indicate that data was accessed from Dr Reddy's phone at 2:41 pm at the cell tower located at 450 George Street Sydney. Though this does not indicate that Dr Reddy herself accessed her phone, as data can continue to be downloaded on a phone without interaction by a person, it indicates that Dr Reddy's phone was in the vicinity of the hotel.

40. Records confirm that at no time is Dr Reddy seen to leave the hotel room.
41. I am satisfied that Dr Narde took her life in the bathroom of the hotel room sometime after her last call at 11:06 am to her new partner. Dr Narde's actions subsequent to that time are consistent with him attempting to conceal his heinous act.
42. The circumstances of Dr Reddy's death are truly tragic and horrifying. There is ample evidence that supports the opinion expressed by Dr Reddy's sister, Nithya, that Dr Reddy was with Dr Narde that night trying to be compassionate and understanding towards him and trying to give him closure on their ended relationship. Her death has been an unbearable loss to her family and partner. I express my deepest sympathy to them all in their grief.

Findings required by s 81 (1)

As a result of considering all of the evidence I make the following findings in relation to it.

Identity of deceased:

The deceased person was Dr Preethi Reddy

Date of death:

She died on 3 March 2019

Place of death:

She died in Swissotel , 68 Market Street, Sydney, NSW

Cause of death:

She died as a result of combined effects of blunt force head injury and stab wounds to the neck and back

Manner of death:

Homicide by a known person

I close this inquest.

C A Forbes

Deputy State Coroner

Lidcombe Coroners Court

Date 24 June 2020