



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

**Inquest:** Inquest into the suspected death of missing person Quanne Diec

**Hearing dates:** 14 April 2021

**Date of findings:** 19 April 2021

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

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

**Catchwords:** CORONIAL LAW – whether missing person now deceased, date and place of death, cause and manner of death

**File number:** 2009/472935

**Representation:** Mr H Mullen, Coronial Advocate Assisting the Coroner

**Findings:** On the available evidence I find that Quanne Diec, who was reported as a missing person on 27 July 1998, is now deceased. Quanne died on or after 27 July 1998. The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the place of Quanne's death. It is most likely that Quanne went missing, and died, in suspicious circumstances. The manner of death is therefore homicide. However, the available evidence and the absence of any postmortem examination does not allow for any finding to be made as to the precise cause of Quanne's death.

**Recommendations:** *To the New South Wales Commissioner of Police:*

I recommend that the Commissioner of Police cause the investigation into the suspected death of missing person Quanne Diec be referred to the State Crime Command Unsolved Homicide Team for further investigation in accordance with the procedures and protocols of the Unsolved Homicide Team. I further recommend that a copy of the brief of evidence be provided to the Unsolved Homicide Team for this purpose.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Why was an inquest held?.....	2
3. Quanne’s life.....	3
4. What happened on Monday, 27 July 1998?.....	3
5. Overview of the police investigation.....	4
Initial stages of the investigation .....	4
Identification of Vincent Tarantino as a person of interest.....	6
Further investigation of Mr Tarantino.....	7
Reported sightings and other potential persons of interest.....	8
Review of the police investigation .....	8
Alleged admissions made by Mr Tarantino.....	9
Attempts to locate Quanne’s remains.....	10
6. Other court proceedings.....	10
7. Is Quanne now deceased? .....	11
8. When and where did Quanne die?.....	12
9. What was the cause and manner of Quanne’s death?.....	13
10. Findings.....	14
11. Epilogue.....	15

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Quanne Diec was last seen by her family almost 23 years ago, when she was 12 years old. The morning of 27 July 1998 for Quanne began like any other day. She left home and began walking to the train station in order to go to school. Tragically, Quanne never arrived at school and was reported as missing to police later that evening.
- 1.2 In the many years that followed, a meticulous police investigation has been conducted in order to gather evidence as to what happened to Quanne after she left home on the morning of 27 July 1998. That investigation has identified that Quanne went missing, and most likely died, in suspicious circumstances.

## 2. Why was an inquest held?

- 2.1 After all existing lines of enquiry to locate Quanne had apparently been exhausted, the NSW Police Force (**NSWPF**) notified the Coroner that Quanne was suspected of being deceased. When the case of a missing person, who is suspected to have died, is reported to a Coroner, the Coroner must determine from the available evidence whether that person has in fact died. In such cases there will often be very little information, despite extensive enquiries, about what happened to the person after they were last seen alive.
- 2.2 If a Coroner forms the view that a missing person has died then the Coroner has an obligation to make findings in order to answer questions about the identity of the person who died, when and where they died, and what the cause and the manner of their death was. The manner of a person's death means the circumstances in which that person died. If the coroner is unable to answer these questions then an inquest must be held.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 In Quanne's case, extensive investigation was conducted by the police concerning the circumstances surrounding the period both before and after when she was last seen alive. However, this investigation was unable to reveal precisely what happened to Quanne after she was last seen alive on 27 July 1998. As it has not been possible to answer the questions that a Coroner is required to answer, it became mandatory for an inquest to be held.
- 2.4 In addition, section 27(1)(a) of the *Coroners Act 2009* (**the Act**) provides that an inquest is mandatory if it appears to a Coroner that a person died or might have died as a result of homicide. In this case, the available evidence (discussed in greater detail below) indicates that Quanne might have died as a result of homicide, thereby making an inquest into Quanne's suspected death mandatory.
- 2.5 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 reported a loved one as missing. At such times, it is reasonably expected that families will wish to attempt to cope with the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Coroners Act 2009*, section 27.

consequences of such a traumatic event in private. The sense of loss experienced by family members does not diminish significantly over time. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that both the coronial process and an inquest by their very nature unfortunately compel a family to re-live distressing memories and to do so in a public forum.

### **3. Quanne's life**

- 3.1 As will be discussed later in these findings, all of the evidence gathered to date suggests, tragically, that Quanne is now deceased. Inquests into the deaths of persons, even those persons who are missing and suspected of being deceased, by their very nature only tend to focus on the last moments of a person's life, or the last moments when they were seen alive. These moments are sometimes measured in weeks or months, but more often they are measured in hours and days. As a consequence, often there is very little known about the (usually) years of life that preceded these final moments. Therefore, it is appropriate at this stage to recognise Quanne's life in a brief, but hopefully meaningful, way.
- 3.2 Quanne was born on 12 May 1986 to her parents, Ann Muoi Ngo and Sam Nguyen Diec, who had previously migrated to Australia from Vietnam. She had two older siblings: her sister, Tina, and brother, Sunny.
- 3.3 Quanne initially attended Auburn Public School and later Blaxcell Street Public School. In January 1988, at the age of 12, Quanne commenced Year 7 at Strathfield Girls High School. Quanne was known to be a diligent and quiet student, who performed well in her studies.
- 3.4 Quanne enjoyed a close relationship with her loving family, and in particular with Tina, who she shared a room with. She also had numerous school friends, who all considered Quanne to be a reliable and true friend.
- 3.5 There can be no doubt that the loss and pain experienced by Quanne's family is immeasurable. Quanne's separation from her family in such sudden, unexpected and tragic circumstances is truly heartbreaking.

### **4. What happened on Monday, 27 July 1998?**

- 4.1 During Quanne's first week of high school Ann accompanied her to school via public transport so that she could become familiar with the route to take. Following this, Sam dropped Quanne off at Clyde station and Quanne made her own way to school, meeting her friends along the way.
- 4.2 In April 1998 Quanne's parents purchased a convenience store in Casula. As the store had early opening hours Quanne began to go to school on her own from about 1 May 1998, walking from the family home in Granville to Clyde station in order to catch the train to school. Quanne's home in Seventh Street, Granville is located near the intersection with Factory Street at one end, with Clyde station at the other end. A distance of some 800 metres separates the two ends of Factory Street. On school days, Ann had a practice of walking to the intersection of Seventh Street and Factory Street so that she could watch Quanne walk towards the station. Quanne habitually

waved goodbye to her mother and told her to go back inside the house, before continuing along Factory Street.

- 4.3 On the morning of 27 July 1998 Quanne woke got ready to go to school. Ann recalls that there was nothing unusual about this particular morning. As per her usual routine, Ann gave Quanne \$25 to buy her weekly train ticket, with the change to be used as pocket money. After packing her schoolbag and lunch Quanne left home at about 7:35am. Ann walked to the intersection of Seventh Street and Factory Street and watched Quanne walk towards Clyde station, until she was no longer in sight (which was approximately four houses up Factory Street). Ann then returned home. This was the last time that Quanne was seen by any member of her family.
- 4.4 On this day Quanne was wearing her uniform which consisted of a white blouse, grey checked shirt, dark blue jumper and black shoes. Quanne was also carrying a dark blue school bag which contained her schoolbooks and other personal items.
- 4.5 Ann returned home at around 3:05pm. Quanne typically returned home from school at around 4:00pm. She was known to be punctual and would call her mother if she was going to be late. By 4:15pm Quanne had not returned home and, uncharacteristically, had not contacted her mother. Concerned, Ann left home to look for Quanne along Factory Street, Granville. Ann also alerted family members and they made their own enquiries to look for Quanne as well. These enquiries did not identify any sign of Quanne. At around 7:00pm Sunny reported Quanne as missing to Granville Police Station.

## 5. Overview of the police investigation

### *Initial stages of the investigation*

- 5.1 A police strike force, named Strike Force Lydney, was formed to investigate the circumstances of Quanne being reported missing. The initial investigation conducted by Strike Force Lydney revealed the following:
  - (a) A canvass of neighbours who lived on Seventh Street, Granville revealed that several witnesses saw Quanne on the morning of 27 July 1998 walking along Factory Street towards Granville station.
  - (b) Several of Quanne's friends, who she would meet on her trip to school, never saw Quanne on 27 July 1998. This was considered to be unusual as Quanne was known to be reliable.
  - (c) Employees at Clyde station who were familiar with Quanne informed police that they did not see Quanne on 27 July 1998. Further inquiries revealed that no child weekly ticket, which Quanne routinely bought on Monday mornings, was bought on 27 July 1998.
  - (d) A storeowner at Clyde station who was also familiar with Quanne (because she had previously purchased chocolates from the store) told police that he did not see Quanne on 27 July 1998.

(e) When CCTV footage from train stations at Clyde, Granville and Lidcombe (all stations on Quanne's usual trip to school) was reviewed by police, Quanne was not sighted.

5.2 On the morning of 28 July 1998 members of the Diec family continued their own canvass of Factory Street and approached a woman named Elaine Third. They enquired whether Ms Third had seen Quanne the previous day. Ms Third indicated that she had seen a girl matching Quanne's description in the vicinity of a white van. Quanne's family obtained Ms Third's details and passed them on to police, who later spoke to Ms Third. These enquiries revealed the following:

(a) At about 7:30am on 27 July 1998 Ms Third was walking along the eastern side of Factory Street towards Clyde station when she saw a young girl, about 80 to 90 feet away, standing beside the front passenger door of white van. The van was stopped near the driveway of an Australia Post International Mail Centre (IMC).

(b) Ms Third described the girl as being between 10 and 15 years of age, of slim build, around 5'2" to 5'4" tall, and appearing to be "foreign".

(c) Ms Third said that the girl had black, collar-length hair that was tied in a ponytail, and that the girl was wearing a dark blue jumper or skivvy.

(d) Ms Third saw the girl appearing to speak to the driver of the van, who Ms Third believed was a male person.

(e) Ms Third considered what she observed to be unusual as she believed that the girl could not be dropped off at the commercial site as she appeared to be too young to work.

(f) As Ms Third walked closer (about 20 feet away) she saw the girl get into the van, and the van drive away in a southerly direction on Factory Street.

(g) Ms Third observed blue writing, possibly with the letters "QUIP", and stripes along the lower half of the van.

(h) Ms Third also observed the licence plate of the van to contain the letters "PAQ".

5.3 Investigating police subsequently showed Ms Third a number of photos of Quanne. However, Ms Third was unable to positively identify Quanne as the girls she saw on Factory Street on the morning of 27 July 1998.

5.4 Police subsequently obtained and reviewed CCTV footage from the IMC for the morning of 27 July 1998. This review identified a small figure, which investigators believed to be Quanne, walking past the IMC at about 7:40am. However, due to the poor quality of the footage and video artefact contained within the footage itself, investigators were unable to positively identify Quanne or obtain any further information regarding the white van seen by Ms Third, or any other matter that may have assisted the investigation.

5.5 Investigating police also conducted enquiries with the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) (as it then was) in relation to the white van. These enquiries did not identify a white van bearing a licence plate with the letters “PAQ”. Further, any company or organisation containing the letters “QUIP” also could not be identified.

#### ***Identification of Vinzent Tarantino as a person of interest***

5.6 On 5 October 1998 Laila Faily attended Granville Police Station to make a report of incidents of domestic violence regarding her partner, Vinzent Tarantino.<sup>2</sup> Ms Faily and Mr Tarantino had been in a relationship since July 1998. In the course of her report Ms Faily disclosed that Mr Tarantino had admitted to murdering Quanne, by strangling her on his bed, and then subsequently disposing of the mattress.

5.7 Ms Faily met with police investigators on a number of further occasions and confirmed that Mr Tarantino had admitted to killing Quanne and disposing of her body at an undisclosed location near Wollongong. Ms Faily said that Mr Tarantino told her that he had “*fucked up*”, and that he had strangled Quanne after she would not stop screaming. Ms Faily also told police that Mr Tarantino had borrowed a van from a friend named “Geoff”, with whom he had had an argument regarding the late return of the van.

5.8 Investigating police made a number of further enquiries in relation to Ms Faily’s disclosures. These enquiries revealed the following:

(a) Mr Tarantino resided in the family home at 10 Second Street, Granville, which runs perpendicular to Factory Street. This residence was located a short distance from Quanne’s home, and approximately 100 metres from the IMC.

(b) Mr Tarantino and his brother stayed at 10 Second Street, Granville between 27 and 30 July 1998 whilst their father, Godwin Gerada, was overseas.

(c) On 3 to 4 August 1998 Mr Gerada’s credit card was used to hire a van for Mr Tarantino. This van bore Queensland licence plates 648-EDM.

(d) Mr Gerada informed police that some time earlier he had disposed of a mattress belonging to Mr Tarantino in an industrial bin at his workplace.

(e) The friend referred to as “Geoff” was identified to be Geoff Maurer. He told police that several months prior to October 1998 Mr Tarantino had asked to borrow a van in order to move furniture from Edgecliff to the Tarantino family home in Granville.

5.9 After initially being reluctant to assist the police investigation, Mr Maurer provided the following further information to investigators on 14 July 1999:

---

<sup>2</sup> At the time, Vinzent Tarantino was known by his birth name, Victor Gerada. However, for convenience and to avoid confusion, the name Vinzent Tarantino will be used in these findings.

- (a) Mr Maurer reported that his cousin, Daniel Sorauner, had previously lent Mr Tarantino a van he (Mr Sorauner) had obtained from Roger Benchoam. The van itself was owned by the Benchoam family business.
- (b) Mr Tarantino reportedly borrowed the van to move furniture over a weekend and did not return it on time.
- (c) On 24 August 1998 Mr Maurer was involved in a physical altercation with Mr Tarantino and allegedly struck by Mr Tarantino, who also allegedly threatened to kill Mr Maurer if he mentioned anything about the van.
- (d) Sometime after August 1998 Mr Tarantino allegedly admitted to taking an Asian girl from Granville, killing her and disposing of her body, using the van. According to Mr Maurer, Mr Tarantino allegedly said that the girl “*wouldn’t shut up, she wouldn’t cooperate*”.

#### ***Further investigation of Mr Tarantino***

- 5.10 On 21 July 1999 Mr Tarantino contacted police investigators and advised that he “*wanted to get something off his chest*”. Arrangements were made for Mr Tarantino to speak with investigators the following day at the Sydney Police Centre. However, on that day Mr Tarantino retracted his previous statement and declined to be electronically interviewed, although he agreed to answer questions from investigators. In answering these questions, Mr Tarantino:
- (a) Agreed that he had been involved in an altercation with Mr Maurer on 24 August 1998;
  - (b) Denied borrowing a white van from Mr Maurer, Mr Sorauner or Mr Benchoam;
  - (c) Agreed that he had previously hired a van in Parramatta in order to move furniture from his previous home in Edgecliff to his father’s home in Granville;
  - (d) Denied having any involvement in Quanne going missing;
  - (e) Denied murdering Quanne.
- 5.11 On 29 April 2003 Mr Tarantino contacted the NSW Police Missing Persons Unit (as it then was) and advised that he had information regarding the circumstances of Quanne going missing. Mr Tarantino was provided with a number to contact investigators and speak to them directly. The following day, Mr Tarantino made contact with investigators but declined to provide any further information.
- 5.12 In 2010 Mr Tarantino commenced a relationship with Vicki Ross. During the first six months of the relationship, Ms Ross observed Mr Tarantino to be displaying behaviour consistent with paranoia. This paranoia related to Mr Tarantino’s belief that people were watching him and that the “*bikes were after him*”.



5.13 In late 2011 Mr Tarantino allegedly confessed to Ms Ross that he had murdered Quanne. Ms Ross asked Mr Tarantino what he did with the body, and Mr Tarantino reportedly said, *“I can’t tell you because you will be implicated in the murder. I was in a white rental and I had a really close call being pulled over. I drove out to the bush. Everyone wants to know where the [burial location] is”*.

#### ***Reported sightings and other potential persons of interest***

5.14 In the early stages, and throughout the course, of the police investigation a number of reported sightings of Quanne were made to police. Each of these reports were investigated by police and excluded as being reliable sightings of Quanne.

5.15 Further, investigators from Strike Force Lydney identified a number of possible persons of interest (apart from Mr Tarantino) who might have had some involvement in the circumstances of Quanne going missing. However, following extensive investigation, investigators identified no reliable evidence to implicate any of these persons.

#### ***Review of the police investigation***

5.16 In 2014 and 2015 police investigators conducted a review of all the evidence that had been gathered by Strike Force Lydney to date. This review identified Mr Tarantino as the only person of interest in relation to the circumstances of Quanne going missing. As a result of the review, investigators had cause to reinterview Ms Faily. Ms Faily provided a number of statements to police which disclosed the following:

(a) In around July 2008 Mr Tarantino had possession of a white van that he needed to return to a friend, as he was of the belief that police were aware of the van and its registration.

(b) On an unspecified date after July 1998, Ms Faily recalls going for a drive with Mr Tarantino in a white van containing a wheelie bin to a national park somewhere south of Sydney. During the course of this drive, Mr Tarantino reportedly stopped by the side of the road, removed the wheelie bin from the van and went into the bush, returning about an hour later. Ms Faily described the bin as having a terrible smell, similar to that of a dead animal, although she was unaware of the bin’s contents.

(c) After driving the van back to his father’s residence in Granville, Mr Tarantino and Ms Faily had a drug-induced sexual encounter, during which Mr Tarantino made admissions to killing Quanne.

(d) Mr Tarantino reportedly said, *“That stupid girl. She should have stayed quiet. She was making too much noise... No choice... Had to kill her... Suffocated her... She was very noisy”*.

5.17 As part of the review conducted in 2014 and 2015, investigators also examined the 1998 RTA records in relation to vehicles with license plates containing the letters “PAQ”. It became apparent that the list of vehicles that had previously been provided to police was incomplete. Investigators subsequently submitted a new request for all vehicles bearing license plates containing the letters “PAQ”, and which were described as a white van, and registered between

1996 and 2000. Seventeen vehicles were identified from this search and police made relevant enquiries of the owners of each of these vehicles. These enquiries identified one vehicle of interest, a 1998 white coloured Mitsubishi Express van, with licence plate PAQ-205, registered to Benelec Pty Ltd, the Benchoam family business. It was identified that this van bore signwriting in blue and black on the sides and rear of the vehicle. Further enquiries revealed that the van had been disposed of and destroyed in 2000.

- 5.18 Investigators also identified the Toyota Hiace type van, bearing Queensland licence plate 648-EDM, which Mr Tarantino had rented in 1998 from Network Rental. Further enquiries revealed that this van had been sold a number of times and re-registered in New South Wales after being converted to a camper. Investigators seized the current version of the van from its owner and caused it to be deconstructed and forensically examined. However, this examination identified no evidence to assist the investigation.
- 5.19 Investigators also conducted a number of further enquiries in relation to Mr Soraurer, Mr Benchoam and Benelec Pty Ltd. however, despite using a number of overt and covert investigation strategies, these enquiries did not identify any further evidence that was of assistance to the investigation.

#### ***Alleged admissions made by Mr Tarantino***

- 5.20 On the afternoon of 20 November 2016 Mr Tarantino called City Central Police Station and indicated that he wished to make a confession to a murder. He was directed to attend Sydney Police Centre. Before attending, Mr Tarantino made a phone call to his two brothers in which he disclosed that he had to confess to something that he had done, and stated, *“When I was out of it on drugs I did a horrible thing...I have to go in and open up...I’m going to be charged with murder... I killed a fucking kid”*
- 5.21 Mr Tarantino attended Surry Hills Police Station at 3:40pm and presented himself to police, stating, *“I need to hand myself in for a homicide. It’s been building up for me and it’s too much”*. Further, Mr Tarantino told police, *“It happened about 16 years ago. I just needed money... Quanne Diec... A schoolgirl... She was in a school uniform... I found her at Granville, walking down the street... I strangled her... I killed her Granville... At my dad’s house... I didn’t mean to... I took her for ransom... I am a grub. I don’t deserve a trial”*.
- 5.22 Police subsequently conducted an electronically recorded interview with Mr Tarantino in which he disclosed the following:
- (a) Mr Tarantino made admissions to strangling and killing Quanne at the back of his father’s house;
  - (b) Mr Tarantino described his reported behaviour to be part of a “stupid ransom attempt” which went wrong;
  - (c) Mr Tarantino said that he now just wanted “to resolve it and [sic] for the family and try and bring the girl home for the family”;

- (d) Mr Tarantino said that he borrowed a van from a friend named Geoff, and his cousin, Daniel;
- (e) Mr Tarantino said that he took Quanne's body to somewhere off the Princess Highway, where he dug a hole in the ground and disposed of the body.

5.23 Mr Tarantino was subsequently charged with the murder of Quanne.

5.24 On 21 November 2016 police crime scene officers attended 10 Second Street, Granville. The premises were searched and a number of examinations were performed. A similar examination was performed at Mr Tarantino's home in Canada Bay. These examinations did not identify any forensic or other evidence that was of assistance to the investigation.

### ***Attempts to locate Quanne's remains***

5.25 Police conducted a second electronically recorded interview with Mr Tarantino on 20 November 2016. During this interview Mr Tarantino told investigators that he would help them to locate Quanne's remains, agreeing to take police to the purported location where Quanne was buried, south of Sydney along the Princess Highway. However, Mr Tarantino also told police that he was concerned for the safety of his family and that "*the bikies*" were after them.

5.26 Mr Tarantino told police that he had initially disposed of Quanne's body in the vicinity of Heathcote National Park, but later moved the body, using a wheelie bin, to a bushland location in the vicinity of Bulli Tops. With the assistance of the Police Aviation Support Branch and a cadaver detection dog, searches were conducted in a number of bushland areas nominated by Mr Tarantino. However none of these searches were successful in locating Quanne's remains or any other evidence to assist the investigation.

5.27 On 28 November 2016 Mr Tarantino took part in a further electronically recorded interview with police whilst in custody at the Metropolitan Reception and Remand Centre. During this interview, Mr Tarantino provided further information indicating that he had wrapped Quanne's body in a sheet, placed her in a van, and then buried Quanne's body in a hole that had been dug in a bushland location.

5.28 On 31 July 2017 and 1 August 2017 police conducted a further forensic search in the Bulli Tops area using heavy machinery. Again, no evidence was located that was of assistance to the investigation.

## **6. Other court proceedings**

6.1 Following a committal hearing on 5 and 6 March 2018 Mr Tarantino was committed for trial to the Supreme Court. This commenced on 9 September 2019, before a jury, after Mr Tarantino entered a plea of not guilty to a charge of murder.

6.2 As part of his defence, Mr Tarantino asserted that the admissions that he had previously made to police were only made as a result of a perceived fear of reprisal from members of an outlaw

motorcycle gang. Mr Tarantino also asserted that these admissions were only made in order to prevent harm to himself and others.

6.3 At the conclusion of the evidence in the trial, the jury commenced deliberations on 29 October 2019. On 6 November 2019 the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

## 7. Is Quanne now deceased?

7.1 A finding that a person is deceased is a finding of great significance and gravity, not only for the family members of that person and the emotional toll that such a finding will invariably bring, but also because such a finding carries with it important legal and administrative consequences. Such a finding is made on the balance of probabilities, but there must be clear, cogent and exact evidence that a person has died before it can be made.<sup>3</sup>

7.2 A consideration of the available evidence gathered during the course of the investigation into Quanne being reported missing reveals the following significant matters:

- (a) Despite extensive and comprehensive physical, documentary and electronic searches no evidence has been identified indicating that Quanne is still alive. These searches have included what are commonly described as “signs of life checks”. These checks involve enquiries being made with financial institutions, government organisations, and law enforcement agencies to identify whether there are any records indicating that a missing person has had some interaction with these organisations and institutions. Each of these checks has not produced any evidence that Quanne is still alive.
- (b) Forensic samples have been obtained from Quanne’s personal belongings and from her family members. DNA and fingerprint profiles have been obtained from these samples which have, in turn, been entered onto missing person databases. No match has been found for Quanne on any of these databases.
- (c) Quanne had no known medical condition or health issues. There is no evidence to suggest that she might have suddenly and unexpectedly become incapacitated, or died, as a result of a medical event on or after 27 July 1998. If such an event had occurred, it is reasonable to expect that Quanne would have been found shortly afterwards.
- (d) According to her mother, Quanne always wanted to be at school as early as possible. Quanne was not known to take any other route from her house to Clyde station. The evidence establishes that, absent misadventure or unwanted intervention of some kind, there was no reason for Quanne to depart from her usual route to school.
- (e) The available evidence indicates that after leaving home on 27 July 1998, Quanne did not arrive at Clyde station. If she had met with some type of accidental misadventure (such as suffering a fall or being involved in a motor vehicle incident) before arriving at the station, again it is reasonable to expect that Quanne would have been found shortly afterwards.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336.

- (f) By all accounts, Quanne enjoyed a strong and loving relationship with her family. There is no evidence to suggest that she had ever contemplated leaving home. Evidence gathered from Quanne's friends confirms that they were unaware of any issues which might cause Quanne to embark on such a course of action.
- (g) There is also no evidence that since 27 July 1998 Quanne has obtained any financial means to support herself, found any accommodation or managed to provide for basic living needs. Indeed, on 27 July 1998 Quanne left home wearing only her school uniform, carrying her school bag containing her schoolbooks and a small amount of personal belongings, and with only a small amount of cash. There is no evidence that Quanne had performed any preparatory acts prior to 27 July 1998 in order to leave home without informing her family. Again, if Quanne had in fact (for some reason) determined to leave home, it is reasonable to expect that the extensive investigation has been conducted would have identified some sign of life.
- (h) Since 27 July 1998 Quanne's family have not received any contact from her. This is in circumstances where Quanne was known to be close to her family, and that Quanne responsibly and routinely informed her parents if there was any departure from her usual daily routine, particularly in relation to the time that she was expected to return home. There is no plausible explanation as to why Quanne has not made contact with any of her family members for over almost 23 years.
- (i) Quanne's failure to arrive at Clyde station and the observations made by Ms Third are, on their own, strongly suggestive of Quanne meeting with foul play during the short journey between her home and the station. This suggestion is increased when consideration is given to the evidence that has been gathered by Strike Force Lydney in identifying Mr Tarantino as a person of interest.

7.3 Having regard to the matters set out above, the conclusion that must, sadly, be reached is that, on the balance of probabilities, Quanne is now deceased. Similarly, this conclusion has taken into account the extensive police investigation that has been conducted, which identified a substantial amount of evidence suggesting that Quanne died as a result of homicide.

## **8. When and where did Quanne die?**

8.1 Having concluded that Quanne is now deceased, the questions that now arise, as part of the function of the coronial jurisdiction, is whether the available evidence allows for any finding to be made as to where and when Quanne died, and the cause and manner of her death.

8.2 The last confirmed sighting of Quanne was on the morning of 27 July 1998. Although Ms Third was unable to positively identify Quanne during a photo identification procedure, the description provided by Ms Third indicates that the young girl she observed was most likely Quanne. This is supported by the fact that the police investigation identified no other cogent reason for why Quanne failed to arrive at Clyde station. Further, despite a number of reported sightings being made of Quanne after 27 July 1998, the police investigation has excluded all of these sightings as

being reliable. As no sign of Quanne has been found after July 1998, the only conclusion that can be reached is that she died sometime on or after 27 July 1998.

- 8.3 As Quanne has not been found, and because there is limited direct evidence as to what occurred after 27 July 1998 the available evidence does not allow for any conclusion to be reached as to where Quanne died.
- 8.4 According to the alleged admissions made by Mr Tarantino, Quanne was abducted on Factory Street Granville and taken a short distance to the home of Mr Tarantino's father in Second Street. The alleged admissions suggest that Quanne was murdered in Granville with her body later disposed of at an undisclosed location, somewhere south between Sydney and Wollongong. However, no forensic evidence has been gathered which confirms the disclosures made by Mr Tarantino. Therefore, an open finding must be returned in relation to the place of Quanne's death.

## **9. What was the cause and manner of Quanne's death?**

- 9.1 The manner of a reportable death typically falls into a number of well-established categories: natural causes, misadventure, intentionally self-inflicted and homicide. As already noted above, the evidence that has been gathered over many years since Quanne was reported missing has sufficiently excluded any of the first three categories as being the likely manner of Quanne's death. If Quanne had died in such circumstances then it is reasonable to expect that she would have been located shortly after her death.
- 9.2 Instead, the evidence that has been gathered establishes that it is most likely that Quanne died in suspicious circumstances. Specifically, this means that the manner of Quanne's death is homicide. The police investigation has identified a single person of interest and gathered circumstantial evidence that is consistent with the accounts of witnesses (in particular with that of Ms Third) and with the alleged admissions made by Mr Tarantino, both to his former partners, family members and to police. Having regard to the sudden and unexpected circumstances in which Quanne went missing, the available evidence is more consistent with the manner of Quanne's death homicide, than with any other possible manner of death.
- 9.3 It is evident that criminal proceedings were commenced a number of years after Quanne was reported missing and that those proceedings have now concluded. However, as Quanne has never been located, the possibility remains that further investigation might reveal some evidence that might provide a clearer understanding of the circumstances surrounding Quanne's death. Therefore, it is desirable that the following recommendation be made. It should be noted that the police officer in charge of the investigation, Detective Inspector Andrew Mackay, supports such a recommendation.

9.4 **Recommendation:** I recommend that the Commissioner of Police cause the investigation into the suspected death of missing person Quanne Diec be referred to the State Crime Command Unsolved Homicide Team for further investigation in accordance with the procedures and protocols of the Unsolved Homicide Team. I further recommend that a copy of the brief of evidence be provided to the Unsolved Homicide Team for this purpose.

9.5 Given the evidence contained within the coronial brief of evidence Mr Tarantino was notified in writing prior to the commencement of the inquest, in accordance with section 57(1) of the Act, that he was considered to be a person with sufficient interest in the subject matter of the proceedings. However, at the inquest neither Mr Tarantino nor any legal representative on his behalf sought leave, in accordance with section 57(2) of the Act, to appear.

9.6 It should be emphasised that a finding that a person died as a result of homicide does not impose any criminal liability on any other person. Indeed, section 81(3) of the Act explicitly precludes a coroner from making a finding that indicates, or in any way suggests, that a criminal offence has been committed by any person. It should be remembered that a conclusion as to the manner of a person's death is a factual finding made on the available evidence. It should also be remembered that the functions of the coronial jurisdiction are, in this way, entirely separate from the functions of the criminal jurisdiction.

9.7 As to the cause of Quanne's death, the available evidence indicates that admissions have been made to police that Quanne died as a result of strangulation. However, it is apparent that Quanne's body has never been found and therefore, obviously no postmortem examination has ever been conducted with a view to determining the medical cause of death. It is also the case, that no forensic or other evidence has been gathered to support the cause of death referred to in the admissions made to police and other witnesses. Therefore, the available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the cause of Quanne's death. Instead, an open finding must be made in this regard.

## 10. Findings

10.1 Before turning to the findings that I am required to make, I would like to acknowledge, and express my gratitude to Mr Howard Mullen and Ms Sasha Harding, Coronial Advocates, for their assistance both before, and during, the inquest. I also thank them for the sensitivity and empathy that they have shown, in this particularly distressing matter.

10.2 In addition, I thank Detective Inspector Mackay and the many investigators from Strike Force Lydney who have, over many years, conducted an exhaustive investigation into the circumstances surrounding Quanne being reported missing and her suspected death.

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

***Identity***

The person who died was Quanne Diec.

***Date of death***

Quanne died on or after 27 July 1998.

***Place of death***

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

***Cause of death***

The available evidence and the absence of any postmortem examination does not allow for any finding to be made as to the precise cause of Quanne's death.

***Manner of death***

It is most likely that Quanne went missing, and later died, in suspicious circumstances. The manner of death is therefore homicide.

**11. Epilogue**

11.1 On behalf of the Coroner's Court of New South Wales I extend my most sincere and respectful condolences to Quanne's family and in particular to Ann, Sam, Tina and Sunny. The unbearable anguish, uncertainty and loss that a family experience after a loved one is reported missing is indescribable. This is particularly so when that loss is felt by a parent in relation to a child. It is hoped that one day some further information will be provided to Quanne's family to hopefully allow them to find some measure of solace from such a tragic and devastating event.

11.2 I close this inquest.

Magistrate Derek Lee  
Deputy State Coroner  
19 April 2021  
Coroner's Court of NSW