



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

<b>Inquest:</b>	Inquest into the death of Liselle HOUBERT
<b>Hearing date:</b>	22 October 2021
<b>Date of findings:</b>	22 October 2021
<b>Place of findings:</b>	NSW State Coroner's Court - Lidcombe
<b>Findings of:</b>	Magistrate Carmel Forbes, Deputy State Coroner
<b>Catchwords:</b>	CORONIAL LAW – s. 27 (1) (a) <i>Coroners Act 2009</i> - death as a result of homicide by a known person- mandatory inquest
<b>File number:</b>	2020/161009

<b>Representation:</b>	Ms K Mackay, Advocate assisting the Coroner
<b>Findings:</b>	<p><b>Identity of deceased:</b></p> <p>The deceased person was Liselle Houbert</p> <p><b>Date of death:</b></p> <p>She died on 28 May 2020</p> <p><b>Place of death:</b></p> <p>She died on Alfords Point Road Menai, Sydney, NSW</p> <p><b>Cause of death:</b></p> <p>She died as a result of multiple injuries</p> <p><b>Manner of death:</b></p> <p>Homicide by a known person</p>

## Introduction

1. This is an inquest into the tragic and sudden death of Liselle Houbert who was killed by her partner. Liselle Houbert was only 23-years-old at the date of her death. She was a much-loved daughter, sister and friend.
2. This is a mandatory inquest pursuant to *s. 27(1)(a) Coroners Act 2009* which requires an inquest to be held if it appears to the coroner that a person has died as a result of a homicide.

### Liselle Houbert

3. Liselle was born on 27 April 1997 to Noel Houbert and Noura-Lara Ceballos, the pair also share a younger daughter.
4. Noura and her new partner have three children.
5. Liselle was a loving big sister to all her siblings, and regularly helped them with their homework, babysitting or giving sisterly advice.
6. At the age of 9, Liselle was diagnosed with Alopecia. Alopecia is an autoimmune disorder. Liselle lost all her hair, including her eyelashes and eyebrows. Not long after this diagnosis, she was given a wig which she would wear whenever away from her home. She also suffered childhood asthma and eczema. She was otherwise a healthy and happy child with many close friendships.
7. Liselle was an intelligent, independent child who excelled at school. She attended Bankstown North Primary School followed by Birrong High School for year 7. In year 8 she moved to Moorebank High School. She lived between both her parents' homes as a teenager, and then primarily with her father in her later teenage and

early adult years. Following high school, she commenced studying psychology, and then switched courses to audio engineering.

8. Liselle had several casual jobs during her high school years, and always liked to maintain employment. In 2016, she commenced employment at the Bankstown Sports Club. It was here she met Joshua Booth and the couple commenced an intimate relationship. The couple appeared to be happy together, they broke up on several occasions on Joshua's initiation, however these breaks only ever lasted a month or so before they rekindled their relationship.
9. Around mid-2016 Joshua's family noticed a change in his behaviour. He had become argumentative, combative towards his mother and distant to his long-term friends. He disclosed being the victim of an assault to his parents, who sought assistance from their local doctor. Joshua was referred to a psychiatrist and prescribed anti-depressant medication. He appeared to be compliant with this medication, his behaviour did not appear to improve.
10. By October and November 2016, Joshua's behaviour had become increasingly unpleasant. In December 2016, Joshua's parents approached him about his cannabis use, he became incredibly upset and his parents were unable to calm him. He was taken to St George Hospital by his father, however he was not admitted. He commenced seeing a Psychologist, however stopped when he felt his mental health had improved. During this time Joshua would allude to suicidal ideations to his mother, however she never observed him make any attempts to take his life.
11. In 2018 Joshua became a bass guitarist in a band, he became close to each of the members of the band. The band became Joshua's main friends' group and he distanced himself further from his other friends. Josh believed his membership to this band was his whole world and prioritised this in his life.
12. On two occasions during 2019, Josh disclosed to an old friend that he didn't value his life, and appeared to be suffering a mental breakdown, he complained of suffering depression and felt lost in his life.

13. In September 2019, while Josh and Liselle were separated he commenced a relationship with another young lady. While travelling with the band he had an accident with the band vehicle, and borrowed money from his girlfriend and his parents to pay for the repair works. Shortly afterwards he ended this relationship and lost his job at the Bankstown Sports Club. He and Liselle reformed their relationship, and his family moved to a house in Bangor. Joshua lived in a detached granny flat at the rear of the property, and Liselle regularly stayed with him until March 2020.
14. Between February and mid-May 2020, Josh and his previous girlfriend started dating again, unbeknownst to Liselle. Josh disclosed to his girlfriend that he had used the bands merchandise money to purchase a pair of Nike shoes. Following Josh ending this relationship, she told the bandmates about this alleged purchase, which caused hostility within the group towards Josh. It was later revealed that Liselle had in fact purchased the shoes for Josh, and he had lied to his girlfriend about their origin.
15. At about this time, Josh confided to a friend that things were falling apart for him and he felt like his life was at a boiling point. His bandmates were becoming increasingly frustrated with issues they had with him, including the purchase of the shoes and his unstable behaviour. The group decided to have a band meeting and ventilate the issues with Josh causing him significant stress.
16. Between July 2019 and his death Joshua had been trialled on several different anti-depressant medications. He admitted to not being fully compliant with his medication, and although made appointments to regular consults with his treating doctors, would cancel or fail to attend. COVID also implicated these appointments as they were no longer in person.
17. On the 26 May 2020, Josh visited his doctor who advised he stop taking his medication due to side effects and following a short 'washout' would commence a new medication. A washout period is a period when a person is taken off a drug in order to eliminate its effective treatment. This washout was planned to be a relatively short period of three days. He appeared pleasant, co-operative and agreeable to the plan. He did not demonstrate any suicidal ideations or risks to

others. He was diagnosed as a very depressed young man who was suffering from co-morbid post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and panic episodes. His doctor formed the opinion that based on his history, Joshua's depression manifested primarily as anger at his loved ones. Sadly, Joshua's treatment had been challenged by his tendency to avoid follow-up.

18. On the evening of the 27 May 2020, Joshua was at home with his parents, and shared a conversation with them regarding the direction of his life. He appeared calm and uncharacteristically welcoming of his parent's advice. He was rational and level-headed. Following their conversation, he shaved his face, removed his facial piercings and cleaned his bedroom.
19. Around 1pm on the 28 May 2020, Josh told his mother he was going for a walk and wouldn't be home for dinner, he left shortly afterwards in the families Nissan Tiida. His mother went into the backyard and located a belt and guitar strap of Josh's in the family pool and two other belts on the outdoor furniture.
20. Shortly around this time Josh met up with Liselle. He drove while she created a Facebook messenger chat between herself and each member of Josh's band. She confronted the band members about their behaviour towards Josh regarding the shoes. When the band members were un-accommodating of Liselle contacting them, she threatened to visit their homes to confront them personally.
21. Shortly after, at 4:20pm, Josh was driving in a southerly direction along Alford's Point Road, Menai. Traffic in this direction was heavy with a constant line of traffic travelling at 80 km per hour. Alford's Point Road is a sealed bitumen roadway with two lanes in a north/south direction, separated by double unbroken lines. These road lines are wider than normal width and fitted with cats-eye reflectors as well as being grooved. The grooved lines are a design feature to alert drivers when the vehicle tyres contact the lines, a design to prevent drivers from crossing the lines into oncoming traffic.

22. At approximately 500 metres north of the Illawarra Road intersection, Joshua caused the vehicle to slightly swerve onto lane 2 of the oncoming northbound traffic. When approximately 20 metres from a Toyota Hilux driven in lane 2 of the northbound traffic, Joshua caused his vehicle to completely enter lane 2 of the northbound traffic directly into the direction of a Toyota Hilux. The driver of the Hilux was unable to avoid any collision, and the two vehicles collided head on. The entire incident is captured on dashcam that was setup in the Hilux. Liselle and Joshua died instantly. The driver of the Hilux suffered significant and lifelong injuries.
23. Forensic Pathologist Dr Elsie Burger performed a post-mortem on Liselle on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020. She determined that the cause of her death was multiple injuries.
24. The available evidence leads to the conclusion that Joshua was suffering significant mental health issues. While driving with Liselle it is apparent he became aware of her messaging with his band members adding to his distress.
25. I am satisfied that Josh was in a distressed and desperate state, and deliberately caused the vehicle he was driving to collide head on with the Toyota Hilux travelling in the opposite direction, resulting in the instant death of himself and Liselle.
26. There is no evidence to suggest that Liselle was aware of Josh's intentions. She had a clear list of things to achieve during 2020 including movies to watch, books to read, craft projects and activities to complete, locations to visit and a wish list of purchases. There was no medical history of suicidal ideations nor had she ever voiced feelings of self-harm to her family or friends. It is apparent that Liselle was not a willing participant in Joshua's actions.
27. The circumstances of Liselle's death are truly tragic. Her death has been an unbearable loss to her family. 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 Liselle Houbert

**Date of death:**

She died on 28 May 2020

**Place of death:**

Alfords Point Road, Menai, Sydney, NSW

**Cause of death:**

She died as a result of multiple injuries she received in a deliberate motor vehicle collision

**Manner of death:**

Homicide by a known person

I close this inquest.

**C A Forbes**

Deputy State Coroner

Lidcombe Coroners Court

**Date 22 October 2021**