



**CORONERS COURT  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

<b>Inquest:</b>	Into the death of Chan Chen										
<b>File number:</b>	19/375055										
<b>Hearing dates:</b>	11 March 2021										
<b>Date of findings:</b>	11 March 2021										
<b>Place of findings:</b>	Coroners Court, Lidcombe										
<b>Findings of:</b>	Deputy State Coroner E.Truscott										
<b>Catchwords:</b>	Coronial Law-Cause and manner of death-homicide in the home-domestic violence- arrest in China										
<b>Representation:</b>	Coronial Advocate: Mr D Welsh										
<b>Findings:</b>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"><b>Identity</b></td> <td><b>Chan Chen</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Date of Death</b></td> <td><b>24-25 November 2019</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Place of Death</b></td> <td><b>22/4-8 Bobbin Head Ryde, Pymble</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Cause of death</b></td> <td><b>Stab Wounds to the Chest</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Manner of death</b></td> <td><b>Homicide by known person in a domestic relationship</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Chan Chen</b>	<b>Date of Death</b>	<b>24-25 November 2019</b>	<b>Place of Death</b>	<b>22/4-8 Bobbin Head Ryde, Pymble</b>	<b>Cause of death</b>	<b>Stab Wounds to the Chest</b>	<b>Manner of death</b>	<b>Homicide by known person in a domestic relationship</b>
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<b>Non Publication and Access Orders</b>	Pursuant to s74(1)(b) Coroners Act 2009 that there be no publication of Exhibit 1 and that pursuant to s65(4) of the Act that no access be granted to Ex. 1 in these										

	<b>proceedings unless by specific order of the coroner after providing NSWPF an opportunity to object.</b>

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
LIDCOMBE  
NSW

Section 81 Coroners Act 2009

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

**Introduction**

1. Chan (Vivien) Chen was born on the 20 December 1983 in Sichuan Province, China. She was married to Haoling (Andrew) Luo and they had two sons, (Bryan) Luo and Qichen (Neil) Luo. The family immigrated to Australia on 14 August 2016 just a day after Neil 's first birthday.
2. The family lived in an apartment in Pymble, a suburb in northern Sydney. At the time of Ms Chen's death Bryan was aged 6 and Neil aged 4 years. Ms Chen was employed as an Early Childhood Educator at Handprints Early Learning Centre in St Ives. She worked within the "Nursery Room", caring for the youngest children at the centre. She was also involved in programming and planning roles, and in building relationships with the centre's families. Her ability to speak both Mandarin and English made her a particularly valued member of the team. Colleagues described her as reliable happy, loving, and caring.
3. From April 2019 Mr Luo worked full time on a commission basis as a residential properties sales agent. From July to September 2019 he also worked full time as a warehouse assistant in a lighting shop.
4. On 27 November 2019 police received information that Ms Chen had been killed in her home. The police attended the premises which were vacant and they found Ms Chen deceased inside a chest freezer.

5. Forensic examination of the apartment and freezer identified blood from both Chan Chen and Andrew Luo. Chan Chen was formally identified through dental records examined by Dr Pamela Gower, a Forensic Odonatologist.
6. Forensic pathologist Dr Melissa Thompson performed a post mortem examination and identified two stab wounds to Ms Chen's upper chest and a third stab wound to the upper abdomen. Dr Thompson determined the direct cause of death to be "stab wounds to the chest".
7. The available evidence suggests that the manner of death was homicide. Investigators believe that Andrew Luo inflicted the stab wounds killing Chan Chen.
8. This inquest is required under section 27(1) (a) of the Coroner's Act NSW 2009 (the Act).
9. Evidence is contained in a six-volume brief of evidence prepared by the Officer in Charge Detective Richard Howe. A large portion of the brief of evidence is devoted to the relationship between Chan Chen and her husband Andrew Luo. Throughout 2019, Andrew Luo displayed increasingly erratic behaviour which caused a marked deterioration in his relationship with Chan Chen.
10. On 18 March 2019, Nicole Kirby, who resides in an adjacent unit block at 2 Bobbin Head Road, saw Luo on his balcony holding a mobile phone and stating that it had been "tapped". At about 9 or 10 pm that night Ms Chen had called Bohan Qu, a friend of both herself and her husband. Ms Chen was crying and telling Mr Qu that there was something severely wrong with Luo. Mr Qu reports that up until about this time he had not observed Mr Luo display any unusual behaviour.
11. Mr Qu drove to the family's address in Pymble and met Mr Luo downstairs, while Ms Chen remained upstairs with the children. Mr Luo told Mr Qu that he thought people around him were trying to hurt him and kill him and that he believed Ms Chen was having affairs with other men. Mr Qu said he did not hear Mr Luo say that he wanted to hurt himself or anyone else, but he thought that Mr Luo was delusional.

12. Before Mr Qu left, both Ms Chen and Mr Luo told him that they were each okay however Ms Chen told Mr Qu that Mr Luo had been worried that someone was trying to hurt them and that he had made the family sleep in a corner of the living room while he took a cooking knife to protect them.
13. On 19 March 2019, Ms Chen spoke with two work colleagues, Cassandra Shannon and Kandace Marcellino and told them that the previous night Mr Luo had been of the belief that she was going to kill him. She said that he had been on the balcony screaming, "Help me!" She also told them that he had accused her of having an affair and would inspect her mobile phone. Ms Chen said that Mr Luo had refused to seek professional help.
14. Mr Luo and Ms Chen and their children travelled to China on the 28 March 2019. According to Mr Qu, while they were in China, Mr Luo saw a medical professional, possibly a psychiatrist, who provided him with medication which apparently Ms Chen thought improved his behaviour. Mr Luo returned to Australia on 18 April 2019 and Ms Chen and the children returned on 29 April 2019.
15. Yue (Eva) Chenz, a friend of Ms Chen in Sydney, provided a statement in which she said that on 6 May 2019, via the communication application WeChat, Ms Chen told her that the previous day she had asked Mr Luo for a divorce.
16. On 23 September 2019, Mr Luo had taken leave from his work at the lighting shop but the following day he attended work telling the manager, Mr Shao, that Ms Chen wanted to leave him and that he was sad and wanted to kill himself. His behaviour at work deteriorated over the following days and on 27 September 2019 his employment was terminated after he had entered an upstairs room searching for a device or perhaps CCTV footage and began pushing past people. He then left in his car and had not returned.
17. Ms Chenz last saw Ms Chen on 30 September 2019 when she and her husband attended the Chen Luo family home for dinner. Ms Chenz noticed that Mr Luo seemed changed in that he was very serious and there appeared to be something mentally wrong with him. Ms Chenz states that about a year and a half before Ms Chen's death, Ms Chen had told her that a Chinese doctor had said that Luo had schizophrenia.

18. A week prior, on 23 September 2019, Mr Luo had had an incident at the Lighting shop where he worked
19. Wenjing Ma, another friend of Ms Chen, states that in early 2019 Mr Luo returned to China to get medical treatment. Ms Chen had told her that Mr Luo had mental health problems and that he would get very angry and hit the children for no reason. MS Chen said that Mr Luo had refused to get professional help. Ms Chen told Ms Ma that she had conferred with a lawyer in China about getting a divorce but was told that would not be possible in China due to Mr Luo's mental health problems.
20. Ms Ma said that Ms Chen told her that Mr Luo was getting better in China but that after they returned to Australia, he had stopped taking his medication and his mental health again deteriorated.
21. On 14 October Mr Luo attended his doctor Dr Sanjeevani Gunasekera, a general practitioner. Mr Luo informed Dr Gunasekera that while in China, a friend had prescribed him Risperdal and Oxazepam. Mr Luo did not provide Dr Gunasekera with evidence that he had been formally diagnosed with any such conditions. Dr Gunasekera advised Mr Luo to cease the Risperdal as this medication is primarily used to treat schizophrenia and other psychoses, acute mania in bipolar disorder, agitation or behavioural issues in patients with dementia. Dr Gunasekera also advised Mr Luo to cease the use of Oxazepam as the medication is primarily for short-term treatment of depression and anxiety and has the potential for addiction.
22. On 13 November 2019 both Ms Chen and Mr Luo attended Dr Gunasekera. Dr Gunasekera was of the opinion that Mr Luo was suffering depression, but he noted that Mr Luo was ambivalent about attending counselling. Dr Gunasekera recommended a one week trial of Valdoxan, a medication to treat major depression.
23. On 18 November 2019 Ms Chen contacted Dr Gunasekera expressing concerns about Luo being depressed. The following day Mr Luo attended Dr Gunasekera and reported that he had stopped taking the medication because after taking two tablets he had felt much better. This was the last time Dr Gunasekera saw Mr Luo.

24. On 24 November 2019, at about 12:13 pm, Ms Chen and Ms Ma spoke via WeChat. Ms Chen told Ms Ma that she had told Mr Luo that she was going to leave him and he had become angry and told her that she couldn't leave him as this would make him die.
25. About 8:30 pm that night Mr Qu called Mr Luo to ask him for assistance with a personal matter. They met and Mr Luo told Mr Qu that Ms Chen wanted to move out of their shared residence and live by herself. He was upset about this and told Mr Qu that he wanted to fly to China to speak with his father.
26. About 11:45 pm residents at an apartment complex at 2 Bobbin Head Road, Pymble, adjacent to and facing the apartment complex at 4-8 Bobbin Head Road, heard raised voices and children screaming. Police received 000 calls at 11:52 pm and 11:54 pm. Constable Clarkson and Constable Vagg attended at 11:55 pm.
27. Constable Clarkson states that he recalls being confused about the situation at the location, as one of the jobs was about a female and children screaming but there was also information indicating a female had been assaulted by a male.
28. When Constables Clarkson and Vagg arrived, they were met by two men one of whom was a man named Troy and a woman Katria Gale standing outside the garage complex at number 2 Bobbin Head Road. Ms Gale told Constable Clarkson that between 11:00 pm to 11:30 pm a male had approached her and attempted to grab her hand. Constables Clarkson and Vagg searched the unit block at 2 Bobbin Head Road but did not locate anyone. After this Troy, reported that he had heard screams from 4-8 Bobbin Head Road.
29. Constable Clarkson states that during the five to ten minutes that he was speaking with Ms Gale, he did not hear any screaming. By this stage Sergeant Burvill had arrived. The three police officers walked over to 4-8 Bobbin Head Road. They were unable to gain access via the front gate, so Constable Clarkson climbed through an opening on top and opened the gate for Constable Vagg and Sergeant Burvill. They spent ten minutes patrolling the unit block but did not have access to any area except the ground floor. They did not see or hear anything untoward. They then returned to the front of the unit complex and spent a further five minutes listening but could not hear anything. They then left the location.

30. About 6:35 am on 25 November 2019, Alex Crosby, the centre director of Handprints Early Centre St Ives, received a text message from Ms Chen's mobile phone which said that Chan Chen needed to take a few weeks off work. Ms Crosby immediately called Ms Chen's number and Mr Luo answered the phone. He told Ms Crosby that Ms Chen was on the toilet and unavailable and that she and he were leaving for China that day.
31. About 10:20 a.m Mr Luo made a telephone order for the 324 litre chest freezer and drove to Mt Druitt where he collected it at about 11:30 am. At about 3:48 pm Mr Luo telephone Mr Qu asking "Can you give me a ride to the airport?" He told Mr Qu he and the children were flying from Sydney to Chengdu, China. Mr Qu arrived at Mr Luo's residence at about 5:30 pm and picked up Mr Luo and the children.
32. Mr Qu dropped Luo and the children at Sydney International airport about 6:50 pm. However, the flight was cancelled due to bad weather and Mr Luo and the children returned to the apartment at about 1:00 am on 26 November 2019.
33. About 8:40 am 26 November 2019, they returned to Sydney International Airport by taxi where they departed for Chengdu, China.
34. About 8:21 am 27 November 2019, George (Zhi) Zhao, the Chief Operations Manager for Luo's employer, Capital Land Group, received a voice message from Luo. The message included the statement: "I was a little mentally abnormal a few days ago and accidentally killed my wife during a fight with her."
35. Zhao contacted 000 and police attended Unit 22, 4-8 Bobbin Head Road, Pymble. It was then that police located Ms Chen's body. The police subjected the apartment to crime scene analysis which amongst other things identified Ms Chen's blood was located in a number of places.
36. A typed letter dated 25 November 2019 apparently bearing Ms Chen's signature was found within the unit. The document records that on 11 November 2019 Mr Luo and Ms Chen agreed to separate but they would continue to reside together and share the children's care and expenses.

37. Mr Luo does not have a DNA profile on any DNA database in Australia, but a DNA profile has been developed and attributed to Mr Luo obtained from personal items belonging to him left in the apartment. Mr Luo's DNA profile was located under Ms Chen's fingernails and on a bandaid within the chest freezer and in blood samples taken from multiple sites within the unit.
38. Mr Luo is presently in custody in China having been arrested after attending the home of Ms Chen's parents and telling her father that he had killed Chan Chen. It is expected that he will stand trial in China for offences relating to Chan Chen's death.
39. It is unknown whether Chan Chen was deceased at the time the police attended the unit complex shortly before midnight on 24 November 2019 or whether she died in the early hours the following day.
40. The evidence tendered in the inquest enables findings as required under the Act as follows:
41. Chan Chen died 24-25 November 2019 in her home at 22/4-8 Bobbin Head Road, Pymble. She died from stab wounds to the chest inflicted by a known person in a domestic relationship.

Magistrate E Truscott  
Deputy State Coroner Truscott  
11 March 2021