



STATE CORONER'S COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Inquest:	Inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Mrs Nadire SENSOY
Hearing dates:	13-15 March 2023
Date of findings:	28 April 2023
Place of findings:	NSW State Coroner's Court, Lidcombe
Findings of:	Deputy State Coroner Carmel Forbes
File number:	2019/70789
Catchwords	CORONIAL – missing woman – suspicious circumstances – charges laid by police
Representation:	Mr M Johnston SC with Mr A Brown, Counsel Assisting, instructed by Ms E Leung, NSW Crown Solicitors Office Mr R McCaw, Counsel pro bono for MN
Findings	Mrs Nadire Sensoy died sometime on or about 6 December 2018. The available evidence does not enable me to make findings as to the place, manner or cause of her death.

Introduction

1. This is an inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of Mrs Nadire Sensoy.
2. Section 27(1)(c) of the *Coroners Act 2009* NSW requires an inquest to be held if it has not been sufficiently disclosed whether a person has died. At inquest a coroner's first task in the case of a missing person, is to consider whether or not he or she is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, the missing person is deceased.
3. If the coroner is so satisfied, he or she will then examine the available evidence and, if appropriate, proceed to make findings in accordance with s 81(1) *Coroners Act 2009*. That section requires the coroner at the conclusion of the inquest, should sufficient evidence be available, to make findings that a person has died, the identity of that person, the date and place of the death and the cause and manner or circumstances of their death.

Mrs Nadire Sensoy

4. Mrs Sensoy was last seen alive on or about 6 December 2018.
5. She was 72 years old at the time¹ and had been widowed since October 2016, when her husband Mr Yalchin Sensoy passed following a period in palliative care.²
6. Mrs Sensoy and Yalchin were married for 32 years, having married in Turkey in 1964 and later emigrated to Australia together in 1971.³
7. They had five children over the course of their marriage: Turkan, Sukran, Yilmaz, Yavuz and Selim. The children were overall separated in age by about 10 years.⁴

¹ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [4].

² Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 and Vol 8 Tab 385.

³ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [4].

⁴ Ex 1 Vol 8 Tab 385.

8. In 1983, the family moved to premises at 10 Upwey Street, Prospect⁵ and as at 6 December 2018, Mrs Sensoy was still living in the Upwey Street home, along with her youngest son Selim.⁶
9. She has not been seen since her “disappearance” on or about 6 December 2018.
10. NSW Police were alerted to Mrs Sensoy’s disappearance on 11 December 2018, some 5 days after she was last seen.⁷
11. Since that time, NSW Police have conducted the following enquiries.

Bank accounts

12. Her Westpac bank account has not shown any direct activity. Regular fortnightly payments from Centrelink have been going in but there have been no withdrawals (other than payments by authority) and no indication that her accounts have been accessed. This pattern of operation, or non-operation, is entirely inconsistent with how Mrs Sensoy had operated her account in the period prior to her disappearance. Other than a period when other evidence indicates she was overseas in Turkey in mid-2018, Mrs Sensoy would regularly withdraw to cash all, or a substantial portion of her Centrelink payments within days of receipt (and indeed often on the day of receipt).
13. The last recorded withdrawal from her account was on 30 November 2018,⁸ which followed on from a Centrelink (pension) payment made the day prior. CCTV obtained from the ATM at which the withdrawal was made showed that Mrs Sensoy was in the company of her son, Selim, at the time the withdrawal was made.⁹
14. A further Centrelink (pension) payment of \$839.30 was made on 13 December 2018 but was never withdrawn.

⁵ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [5].

⁶ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [13].

⁷ Ex 1 Vol2 Tabs 78 and 80.

⁸ Ex 1 Vol3 Tab 156.

⁹ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [47].

Medical records

15. As part of their investigation, police checked with local hospitals whether Mrs Sensoy, or any unknown females around 70 years of age, had been admitted between 1 and 20 December 2018. There were no such admissions.¹⁰
16. Police also accessed Mrs Sensoy's medical records, being records from her General Practitioner, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (or PBS) and from Medicare.¹¹
17. Those records collectively indicated a number of things:
 - a. First, that Mrs Sensoy was last recorded as having seen a doctor on 18/10/2018. No apparent concerns were flagged in that appointment. Mrs Sensoy was given a vitamin B12 injection and her blood pressure and pulse were recorded.¹²
 - b. Secondly, that she was generally diligent with attending medical appointments. She had attended 22 visits in the calendar year to October 2018, which was consistent with a history of frequent appointments dating back to at least 2004;¹³ and
 - c. Thirdly, that she had been prescribed daily medication for high blood pressure and high blood sugar, including two forms of insulin.
18. Mrs Sensoy had a history of diabetes dating back to 2004 and had been diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus in 2017.¹⁴ PBS records indicated that Mrs Sensoy had last purchased insulin and insulin on 2 October 2018¹⁵ - that being medication to assist in the control of her diabetes.
19. When Mrs Sensoy's daughter cleaned out the fridge at the 10 Upwey Street address following her disappearance, she found that supplies of insulin had been left there.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tab 127.

¹¹ Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 366.

¹² Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 364 at [21].

¹³ Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 364 at [16].

¹⁴ Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 364 at [17](l) and Tab 367.

¹⁵ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [154] and Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 365.

¹⁶ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 6 at [7].

20. As indicated by her prescribed medications, Mrs Sensoy had also had issues with hypertension and high blood cholesterol for some years leading up to the time of her disappearance.¹⁷
21. Investigators sought an opinion from Dr Lydia Kovach, a Forensic Medical Officer with the NSW Police, regarding the medical consequences of Mrs Sensoy failing to take her prescribed medication. Dr Kovach prepared a report dated 4 September 2019¹⁸ (in which she expressed the opinions that:
- a. Mrs Sensoy would have become symptomatic and uncomfortable within a period of weeks if she had ceased using her prescribed medication and would certainly have been symptomatic within months;
 - b. Mrs Sensoy’s past medical history, which Dr Kovach reviewed, indicated that she was someone who sought medical services regularly even if travelling within Australia to, for example, Moree;
 - c. Mrs Sensoy sought medical assistance not just when symptomatic but also for health maintenance more generally – (and I have already made some mention of that regarding her last appointment on 18 October 2018, which was a routine one).
22. Ultimately and on the assumption that Mrs Sensoy was still in Australia, Dr Kovach surmised that she had suffered a catastrophic health event and was either highly disabled and unable to seek help, or else deceased.
23. In expressing that opinion Dr Kovach noted that she had “no reason to surmise that Mrs Sensoy had assumed a different identity” which is a caveat that does need to be considered when it comes to medical and other records. Although it might also be observed that accessing medical services in this country might prove difficult in the absence of a well-constructed alternate identity – or money. A police check with Births, Deaths and Marriages indicated that no name change had been recorded to April 2019.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 364 at [17](l).

¹⁸ Ex 1 Vol 6 Tab 364.

¹⁹ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tab 151.

24. Given the time that has now elapsed since the preparation of Dr Kovach's report, it can reasonably be taken that those opinions would only have solidified.
25. Mrs Sensoy had been scheduled to attend an appointment with Dr Roger Chen, an endocrinologist, for treatment of her diabetes at 11:30am on 7 December 2018:²⁰ She did not attend that appointment. It appears to have been cancelled on 6 December 2018. Mrs Sensoy's phone records show a call from her phone to the landline of Dr Chen's practice at 12:38pm on 6 December 2018.²¹ This was the last connected call made from her phone.²²

Phone records

26. Three further calls were made from the number that Mrs Sensoy had been using (being 0419 009 305), however none of them connected (that is, the call charge records that police have obtained show that they were all of 0 seconds duration). Those calls were made at:
- a. 4:57pm on 7/12;
 - b. 7:27pm on 7/12; and
 - c. 8:30pm on 8/12.
27. Each of those attempted calls was made to the number of Ismihan Kocak, a long-term friend of Mrs Sensoy's since the 1980's.²³
28. Ms Kocak provided a statement to police on 28 December 2018 in which she indicated, amongst other things, that she had tried to call Mrs Sensoy "about 2 weeks ago" as she had some problems with her television. Selim answered the phone. She asked to speak to Mrs Sensoy. Selim told her, "Mum is very sick. She can't get up. Her eyes don't see. Her sugar is high." Ms Kocak told Selim that her television wasn't working and he came to her house later that night to fix it (although it had already been fixed by that time).²⁴

²⁰ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [68].

²¹ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [79].

²² Call duration 73 seconds. Three further calls were made from the service (0419 009 305): at 4:57pm on 7/12 to Ismihan Kocak (0 second duration); 7:27pm on 7/12 to Ismihan Kocak (0 second duration); and 8:30pm on 8/12 to Ismihan Kocak (0 second duration), see Ex 1 Vol 8 Tabs 380 and 381.

²³ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 33 at [3] to [6].

²⁴ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 33 at [14] to [15].

29. Call charge records indicate that the only connected call between Mrs Sensoy's phone and that of Ms Kocak over the period 6-13 December 2018 was at 4:58pm on 7 December 2018. That call lasted 58 seconds. There is some evidence from Ismihan's son, Sezai, that the conversation regarding the broken television took place on 7 December 2018.²⁵
30. The mobile phone handset that Mrs Sensoy had been using, which is identifiable as an IMEI number from the call charge records to which I have made reference, has not been located during the course of the investigation.

Overseas

31. The police investigation has also explored the possibility that Mrs Sensoy left Australia but found no indication that she had done so. Checks done with the Department of Immigration provided no evidence that Mrs Sensoy left for Turkey, or any other overseas location.²⁶
32. Police placed a movement alert on Mrs Sensoy (being an alert that they be notified if Mrs Sensoy moved in or out of the country).²⁷ That alert has not returned any indication that Mrs Sensoy has moved into or out of the country since it was placed.
33. Mrs Sensoy's current Australian passport was found at the Upwey Street premises, inside a suitcase containing documents of Mrs Sensoy's and Yalcin's.²⁸ The last travel recorded in Mrs Sensoy's passport was to Turkey on 13 May 2018, which is consistent with records obtained from the Department of Immigration.
34. A number of expired Turkish passports in Mrs Sensoy's name were also found during a search of 10 Upwey Street.²⁹ Investigators made inquiries of the Turkish embassy and were advised that Mrs Sensoy does not now have a Turkish passport.³⁰

²⁵ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab32.

²⁶ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tabs 141 and 142.

²⁷ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [41].

²⁸ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 147 and Vol 7 369.

²⁹ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tab 91.

³⁰ Ex 1 Vol 8 Tabs 382 to 384.

35. Police reached out to a relative of Mrs Sensoy's in Turkey to whom she was close, Ms Hulya Coskun.³¹ She advised police that:³²
- a. In her opinion, if Mrs Sensoy had come to Turkey she would have contacted Hulya, "100%";
 - b. Every time Mrs Sensoy visited Turkey she would stay with her and they would "go everywhere together";
 - c. That she and Mrs Sensoy used to talk frequently by phone; and
 - d. That she had neither seen, nor heard from Mrs Sensoy since 5 December 2018.³³

Evidence in relation to Mrs Sensoy's disappearance

36. Prior to 6 December 2018 there was clear evidence that Mrs Sensoy was alive, communicating with family and friends and engaged in everyday activities. She had not been living "off the radar", so to speak.
37. She was engaged with local medical professionals and had been engaging with them for many years in connection with her health issues, which included insulin-dependent diabetes as at the date of her disappearance.
38. She was receiving and regularly accessing Centrelink payments, often on the day on which they were received but, if not, generally within days.
39. When she travelled, she did so using her Australian passport as Department of Immigration records indicate.
40. While there is evidence in the compiled brief that Mrs Sensoy had reportedly become less socially outgoing in the months leading up to her disappearance, there is equally evidence that she maintained regular contact with close friends and family including Hulya Coskun in Turkey, Ipek Dinclik and Ismihan Kocak.

³² Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 38.

³³ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 38.

41. That all changed on or about 6 December 2018 and it was noticed by friends, family and neighbours. Her disappearance was noticed and she was missed.
42. The possibilities that arise are that either Mrs Sensoy made the choice to willingly disengage from friends and family and had the means and wherewithal to, in effect, disappear without a trace – for a period of years now – or, something else happened to her and, as a result, she is deceased.
43. As to the possibility that Mrs Sensoy may left of her own accord, the question arises: where may she have gone?
44. There has been no confirmation and little evidence to suggest that Mrs Sensoy voluntarily left her home and travelled to any particular location. In the period immediately following her disappearance, there was some suggestion that she may have gone to Moree.
45. There is some evidence that she had discussed with Ismihan Kocak the possibility of going to Moree a few weeks prior to her disappearance.³⁴
46. Extensive inquiries were made by police with motels, hotels, inns, lodges and women's refuges in the Moree area and there was no indication that Mrs Sensoy had stayed there in December 2018 in the period following her disappearance.³⁵ The steps taken by police included local general duties officers attending all natural springs motels listed in the Moree Tourism Brochure, speaking to staff and showing pictures of Mrs Sensoy, but receiving no indication that she was, or had been staying at any of the locations.³⁶ Checks with a broader list of accommodation providers were conducted by phone, again with no indication that either Mrs Sensoy, or any women of Turkish appearance and approximately 70 years of age were, or had been, staying at any of them.³⁷

³⁴ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 32 – Sezai Kocak in a file note states: "About 2-3 weeks ago the missing person told Ismihan that she may go to the hot springs in Moree and that she knows how to get there by herself and she will find friends."

³⁵ See Ex 1 Vol 3 at Tabs 131 – 135.

³⁶ Ex 1 Vol 3 at Tab 133.

³⁷ Ex 1 Vol 3 at Tab 131.

47. CountryLink and Transport NSW checks were conducted on 13 December 2018, as well as checks with taxi companies, but no bookings in the name of Mrs Sensoy were recorded.³⁸
48. CCTV was obtained from Moree train station which, when reviewed, did not show Mrs Sensoy arriving in Moree by train.³⁹
49. While Mrs Sensoy had a driver's licence and a vehicle registered in her name (being a black Jeep Cherokee), this vehicle was known to be driven by her son⁴⁰ and there is evidence he was in possession of it, and using it, after 6 December 2018.
50. The investigation revealed no evidence confirming that Mrs Sensoy had travelled to Moree, nor any evidence that she had stayed in Moree over the relevant period of December 2018.

Turkey

51. Another place that Mrs Sensoy had mentioned, around the time of her disappearance, that she intended to travel to was Turkey.
52. There is evidence that she told her friend Ipek Dinclik on 4 December 2018 that, once she got the chance, she was going to go back to Turkey and not come back.⁴¹
53. There is also evidence that she told Hulya Coskun on or about 5 December 2018 that she was intending to travel to Turkey, although it is not apparent when she intended to travel there.⁴²
54. There is also evidence from a number of witnesses who had been told that Mrs Sensoy either was in Turkey, or may have gone to Turkey.⁴³

³⁸ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [48]-[49] and Vol 3 Tabs 129 to 130.

³⁹ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [146].

⁴⁰ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [18].

⁴¹ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 29 at [7] to [8].

⁴² Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 38.

⁴³ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [188] and [300]. See also Ex 1 Vol 5 Tabs 277, 297 and 300.

55. As I have already noted, checks with the Department of Immigration conducted on 13 December 2018 indicated that Ms Sensoy was still “onshore”, and a movement alert was placed on her that did not produce any indication that she moved into or out of the country.⁴⁴
56. Mrs Sensoy’s Australian passport was found during a search of her home and inquiries indicated that she did not have a current Turkish passport. Medication was found in her home, including insulin supplies. Her dentures were also found during a search of the Upwey Street premises. There is evidence from Turkan Alagoz that Mrs Sensoy had used these since she was 40.
57. There is no evidence that she has made any contact with friends or family in Australia or Turkey. I do not accept that she has willingly chosen to sever all contact with friends and family.

Mrs Sensoy reported missing

58. Mrs Sensoy was reported missing to police on 11 December 2018 by her daughter, Turkan Alagoz. She had received a call from one of Mrs Sensoy’s neighbours, Zulila Ozdemir, expressing concern for Mrs Sensoy. Ahmet Aktas had called Zulila’s husband, Serif Ozdemir, expressing his concerns for Mrs Sensoy’s welfare and she in turn had called Turkan.
59. Turkan contacted her sister-in-law Leisa Ashburn who then called the Police Assistance Line on 11 December 2018 at 6:14pm.
60. The CAD report states: “On FRIDAY 7/12/18. POI 2 NOT SEEN OR HEARD FROM SINCE 7 DECEMBER 2018. CURTAINS OF THE HOUSE HAVE BEEN CLOSED SINCE THAT DATE.”⁴⁵
61. At about 7.00pm, Sergeant Grima and Constables Guttridge and Laferla attended 10 Upwey Street. Nobody was home. Constable Guttridge phoned Leisa Ashburn who reiterated her concerns for Mrs Sensoy. Two further officers arrived, and a canvass of the neighbours was conducted. All neighbours said that they had not seen Mrs Sensoy for at least two days.

⁴⁴ Ex 1 Vol 1 Tab 1 at [41].

⁴⁵ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tab 122; see also Vol 2 Tab 77.

62. Police then forced entry to the home via the back door. They found no signs of Mrs Sensoy inside and no obvious signs of disturbance.
63. When Senior Constable Mitchell attended the following day (12 December 2018) he noted that the last date shown on the calendar on the fridge was 6 December 2018.
64. Police conducted a number of searches of the premises over the following days and took a number of investigative steps in an attempt to locate Mrs Sensoy. The neighbourhood was canvassed for information and possible CCTV of relevance. A cadaver dog search of the Upwey Street home was conducted on 27 December 2018.⁴⁶ A line search was conducted at Lalor Street Dog Park after Selim's phone was found there by a good Samaritan. Nothing of interest was found.
65. Mrs Sensoy has not been located over the course of the investigation to date.
66. There is no credible evidence she is in Moree or Turkey.
67. Checks conducted with the records held by New South Wales Missing Persons Unit confirm that no match has been made with any identified deceased person or remains.
68. Since 6 December 2018 all relevant activity that you would expect from Mrs Sensoy ceased.
69. I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that she is deceased. I am also satisfied that she died in suspicious circumstances.
70. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the evidence surrounding the suspicious circumstances of Mrs Sensoy's death. On 21 March 2023 a known person was charged with an indictable offence that raises the issue of whether the known person caused the death.
71. In those circumstances I now suspend this inquest. The available evidence only allows me to make findings in relation to Mrs Sensoy's identity and date of death. At this point, I am unable to make findings in relation to the place, cause or manner of her death.

⁴⁶ Ex 1 Vol 3 Tab 96.

Findings pursuant to s 81 (1) Coroners Act 2009

Identity

The person who died was Nadire Sensoy

Date of death

Mrs Sensoy died sometime on or about 6 December 2018

Place of death

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

Cause of death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the cause of Mrs Sensoy's death

Manner of Death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the manner of Mrs Sensoy's death

Magistrate Carmel Forbes

Deputy State Coroner

28 April 2023

NSW State Coroner's Court Lidcombe