



STATE CORONER'S COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Inquest: Inquest into the disappearance of Robert Hamish DUNCAN

Hearing Dates: 8 November 2023

Date of Findings: 26 February 2024

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

Findings of: Magistrate Joan Baptie, Deputy State Coroner

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

File Number: 2021/00352024

Representation: Mr D Welsh, Coronial Advocate assisting the Coroner

Findings

The identity of the deceased

Mr Robert Hamish Duncan, who was reported as a missing person to New South Wales Police Force on 26 April 2021, is now deceased.

Date of death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the date of Mr Duncan's death

Place of death

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

Cause of death

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

Manner of death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as the manner of Mr Duncan's death.

Introduction

1. This inquest concerns the disappearance of Mr Robert Hamish Duncan.
2. Mr Duncan was born on 16 July 1942, in Nairobi, Kenya.
3. Mr Duncan had resided at the Alison Private Hotel in Randwick since around 2005. The hotel was owned by Ms Mirjana Simkovits.
4. On 26 April 2021, Ms Simkovits reported Mr Duncan as a missing person to Constable Rebecca Frank at Randwick Police Station.
5. The New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) commenced a number of enquiries as to the location and wellbeing of Mr Duncan. Unfortunately, all enquiries have been unable to establish the current whereabouts of Mr Duncan.
6. After all existing lines of enquiry to locate Mr Duncan had been exhausted, the NSWPF submitted a report to the Coroner on 7 December 2021, indicating that it was suspected that Mr Duncan was deceased.
7. Mr Duncan's family have been present during these proceedings and have provided extensive assistance to the investigating police. His family referred to him as Hamish. I acknowledge the unimaginable difficulties his family are experiencing with the lack of conclusive evidence relating to Mr Duncan's whereabouts and fate. I would also like to acknowledge and thank his family members for their contribution and participation in this inquest. I hope that Mr Duncan's memory has been honoured by the careful examination of the circumstances surrounding his disappearance.

The role of the coroner and the scope of the inquest

8. When a case of a missing person, who is suspected to have died, is reported to the Coroner, the Coroner must determine from the available evidence whether that person has in fact died.
9. 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 statutory questions about the identity of the person who died, when and where they died, and the cause and manner of their death. If the Coroner is unable to answer any of these questions, then an inquest must be held.

10. In Mr Duncan's case, the missing person investigation conducted by the NSWPF has been unable to locate Mr Duncan or any physical evidence as to his location since 12 April 2021. As such, it is not possible to answer all of the questions that a Coroner is required to answer and an inquest has been convened.
11. During these proceedings, evidence has been received in the form of statements and other documentation, which was tendered in court and admitted into evidence. In addition, oral evidence was received from the Officer in Charge of the investigation, Detective Senior Constable Ashley.
12. All the material placed before the Court has been thoroughly reviewed and considered.

A Brief Overview of Mr Duncan's Earlier Life

13. Mr Duncan resided with his parents and older brother, David, in Kenya. His parents became estranged, resulting in his mother leaving the family and Duncan remaining with his father and brother. His father remarried and a half-brother, Andrew, was born.
14. In 1953, Mr Duncan's family moved to the United Kingdom where he attended boarding school with his brother David.
15. In 1960, Mr Duncan returned to Kenya where he served six months completing his National Service in the Kenyan Regiment in Nairobi. After completing his national service, Mr Duncan and his brother David migrated to Australia in 1961.
16. Mr Duncan met Ms Carol Harris at work. They married on 3 November 1962. On 20 March 1963, their son Stephen was born. Not long after the birth of Stephen, Mr Duncan left and travelled to Victoria, where he remained. Ms Harris and Mr Duncan were subsequently divorced.
17. In the mid-1960s, Mr Duncan was admitted to Gladesville Psychiatric Hospital, where he remained as an inpatient for approximately one month. At this time, his brother David was advised that Mr Duncan had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Mr Duncan was discharged from hospital and prescribed medication which resulted in him becoming very passive and flattened his "affect".
18. In 1978, Mr Duncan left Sydney and travelled to Mullumbimby in northern New South Wales. Mr Duncan met Ms Belinda Redwood and they commenced a de facto relationship. Ms Redwood gave birth to a son, Samuel.
19. During his time in Mullumbimby, Mr Duncan became known for his proficiency in leatherworking. Ms Redwood and Mr Duncan would regularly sell the leather goods and jewellery at local markets in the area.

20. In 1981, Ms Redwood and Mr Duncan separated. During their relationship, Mr Duncan appeared to be exhibiting symptoms consistent with schizophrenia. Ms Redwood described observing Mr Duncan to experience episodes where he would not sleep for extended periods up to two to three weeks. He would exhibit enormous bouts of energy where he would stay up all night making leather goods. At other times, he would disregard his family and become abusive to others. He would complete unusual tasks, usually at night, such as cleaning up the garden or mechanically pulling his car apart. He would call the police and express delusional thoughts, including that he had been sent from Melbourne to Mullumbimby to 'clean up' the police force.
21. Ms Redwood noted that Mr Duncan's unusual behaviour would dissipate, and he would exhibit normal behaviour until the next episode. He refused to take medication or accept any medical intervention.
22. Mr Duncan struggled to maintain friendships and relationships over the years. His brother, David, attempted to remain in contact by letter after he returned to the United Kingdom; however, his letters were never answered. In 1998, 2001 and 2005, whilst David and his wife Rita were in Australia, they visited Mr Duncan. His behaviour was described as being disinterested and he rarely engaged in conversation. David last spoke to Mr Duncan on the telephone in 2005, where the call lasted for about 30 seconds prior to Mr Duncan terminating the call.
23. Mr Duncan would show up unannounced at friends' homes, usually after a significant period of estrangement. In 1991, Mr Duncan arrived at his brother David's home in the United Kingdom. He left shortly after arriving.
24. In 1983, Mr Duncan arrived at Ms Harris' home unannounced and asked to speak with their son, Stephen. Contact with Stephen was arranged, and contact continued for around two years until Mr Duncan exhibited unusual behaviour at his home and he was asked to leave.
25. In either 1997 or 1998, Mr Duncan arrived at his son Samuel's school after having no contact with his son for sixteen years. Samuel brought his father home, however, there was no further contact between them until 2020, when Samuel saw his father on Oxford Street, Darlinghurst. They would see each other from time to time over the following months on Oxford Street.
26. From 2000 until 2006, Mr Duncan resided at the Randwick City Lodge. During this time, he began begging for money on Oxford Street, Darlinghurst. He was described as being quiet and reclusive by the manager of the Lodge.
27. Between 2006 until 12 April 2021, Mr Duncan resided at the Alison Private Hotel. Mr Duncan resided in his own unit within the premises. The owner of the hotel, Ms Simkovits stated that Mr Duncan initially needed to be reminded to pay his rent on time. After some time, Mr Duncan became more reliable and often paid large amounts of rent in advance.

28. Investigating police confirmed that Mr Duncan resided in a large number of other locations, mainly in NSW and Queensland.

Mr Duncan's daily routine since 2006

29. Since 2006, Mr Duncan would follow the same daily routine, which consisted of attending Oxford Street in the vicinity of the Stonewall Hotel. He would arrive at the hotel in the mid afternoon and remain until the early hours of the morning, often catching a bus driven by Mr Rached Rached. He would beg for money while he sat outside the hotel. He was described as being quiet and gentle and would remove himself if a fight broke out near him.
30. He was described as wearing oversized clothing, which was often full of holes and tattered. He wore a black leather jacket and had grown his hair long and unkempt since 2006.
31. Mr Duncan would catch the 373 or 377 bus outside the ANZ bank on Belmore Road, Randwick. Mr Duncan was never in possession, nor used, an Opal card. It appears that the bus drivers on the routes knew Mr Duncan and allowed him to travel for free. He would invariably catch the bus service to Oxford Street, although, at times he would alight the bus at Bondi Junction. At Oxford Street, he would remain near the Stonewall Hotel and would board the 373 or 377 bus service from outside the "Arq" nightclub on Flinders Street sometime between 2.30-3.30am daily. He was known to stay a little later if he had won money on the poker machines at the Courthouse Hotel, Darlinghurst.
32. Mr Duncan was known to frequent various shops in Randwick and Darlinghurst. He would attend the Kebab shop on Oxford Street where the owners provided him with free drinks, as well as Simons Pharmacy on Belmore Road, Randwick, where he would say "headache" and would be given free over the counter medications. He would also attend at the Ezymart on Flinders Street, Darlinghurst, for a piece of fruit. Mr Duncan smoked cigarettes and would purchase a packet of Parker and Simpson cigarettes twice a week from the CTC Tobacconist on Oxford Street, Darlinghurst.
33. Ms Simkovits described his appearance as appearing very frail and weak, being very thin, "just skin and bone".

Last known movements of Mr Duncan

34. Police obtained CCTV footage from the Alison Private Hotel, the Stonewall Hotel and the City of Sydney Council footage from 12 April 2021.
35. At 5.48am on 12 April 2021, Mr Duncan arrived home at the Alison Hotel.
36. At 2.42pm, Mr Duncan left his home. As he was exiting the hotel, he stopped at the manager's window and appeared to look for Ms Simkovits; however, she wasn't in her office. He was wearing a large dark coloured leather jacket, a dark coloured top, dark blue/black denim jeans, a black baseball cap and white/grey sneakers.

37. Although not contained on any CCTV footage, investigating police believe that Mr Duncan then boarded a bus to Bondi Junction at the intersection of Alison Road and The Avenue, Randwick. He did not activate an Opal card at this time.
38. At 3.53pm, Mr Duncan arrived at Oxford Street and assumed his usual position in front of the Stonewall Hotel and commenced begging for money. He moved location on several occasions, although remained near the hotel until 9.36pm.
39. Mr Duncan then appears to walk towards Flinders Street, Darlinghurst.
40. Between 9.40- 9.41pm, Mr Duncan can be seen on the City of Sydney Council footage at the bus stop outside the Arq nightclub. An unidentified female appears to be sitting at the same bus stop. The camera then pans away from the bus stop as the 377 bus service arrives. When the camera pans back to the bus stop, both Mr Duncan and the unidentified female are no longer at the bus stop.
41. Police perused the CCTV footage along Oxford Street and confirmed that Mr Duncan did not walk back down Oxford Street. The police also reviewed the available CCTV footage along Flinders Street, however the camera view is too far away and of poor quality to confirm if Mr Duncan walked along Flinders Street towards Randwick.
42. Police interviewed the driver of the 377 bus service that night. The driver could not recall seeing Mr Duncan on that occasion.
43. Mr Duncan was not captured on the Alison Private Hotel's CCTV footage returning to the hotel that night. In addition, he was not captured on the Ezymart's CCTV footage on Belmore Road, Randwick, which covers the area of the bus stop closest to the hotel.
44. Mr Duncan did not appear on the CCTV footage at the Maroubra Bay Garage, which is located in the vicinity of the last stop on the 377 bus route. It is noted that Mr Duncan was reported as missing on 26 April 2021, two weeks after his last sighting. As such police indicated that no further CCTV footage could be identified by investigating police when they reviewed the bus route on 6 May 2021.
45. A CCTV presentation was prepared by the NSW Police Forensic Imaging Unit which highlighted the relevant areas that Mr Duncan may have travelled on the evening of 12 April 2021. The presentation was utilised by the Police Media Unit for media releases seeking the assistance of the public in locating Mr Duncan.
46. Police obtained weather records from the Bureau of Meteorology for 12 April 2021. At 9.30pm, the highest temperature recorded in Sydney was 14 degrees and the overnight lowest temperature was recorded as 10.3 degrees. No rain was recorded during this period.

The police investigation after the Missing Person report was lodged

47. Ms Simkovits attended at Randwick Police station at 1pm on 26 April 2021 to report Mr Duncan as a missing person. Ms Simkovits told Constable Frank that she had last seen Mr Duncan on 14 April 2021.
48. Constable Rebecca Frank created an event on the Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) and Constable Frank allocated the missing person enquiry on the Computer Aided Despatch System (CAD) for police to attend Mr Duncan's home.
49. At 6pm, Constables Yu and Lane attended the Alison Private Hotel and knocked on Mr Duncan's door, without response. The officers then spoke with the manager and gained access to Mr Duncan's room with the manager's key. Mr Duncan was not there and his room was in a state of disarray.
50. On 27 April 2021, Sergeant Buckman was performing supervisory duties and submitted three IASK enquiries to Centrelink, Medicare and a request to provide information relating to Mr Duncan's banking establishment. On 29 April 2021, Sergeant Buckman received responses indicating that Mr Duncan banked with the Commonwealth Bank, had no contact with Medicare since 27 April 2018 and had not been in contact with his Centrelink office at Bondi Junction since 18 November 2019.
51. On 27 April 2021, police attended at Mr Duncan's residence at the Alison Private Hotel. Again, they received no response from Mr Duncan. They then made enquiries with the Prince of Wales Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, without success.
52. On 28 April 2021, police attended and patrolled the Oxford Street area, as well as the Mission Australia premises in Surry Hills and the Matthew Talbot Hostel. Staff and residents were unable to provide any assistance in identifying Mr Duncan. In addition, police attended at the Wesley Edgar Lodge, however, it was closed. Police again attended at Mr Duncan's home and found the contact card that they had previously left in the door untouched.
53. On 29 April 2021, Sergeant Buckman reviewed the Commonwealth Bank's response to his earlier enquiry. The bank confirmed that the last activity on Mr Duncan's account occurred on 14 April and 28 April 2021, when his benefit was deposited electronically into his account. Sergeant Buckman then submitted a request to Australian Border Force to confirm if Mr Duncan had departed Australia.
54. On 29 April 2021, Detective Senior Constable Jennings made enquiries to determine if Mr Duncan had an Opal card. Detective Jennings confirmed that Mr Duncan has never had an Opal card registered in his name. Detective Jennings then attended Mr Duncan's home and obtained the assistance of the hotel manager to gain access to Mr Duncan's room. Detective Jennings located \$7615.80 in loose coins and some rental payment receipts. He spoke with other

occupants of the hotel, however they were unable to accurately indicate when they had last seen Mr Duncan.

55. Detective Jennings was provided with the names of three possible associates of Mr Duncan. One of those possible associates was deceased, one could not be located and the third denied any knowledge of Mr Duncan.
56. On 30 April 2021, the investigation into Mr Duncan's disappearance was assigned to Detective Senior Constable Ashley Warren. Detective Warren created a 'NEMESIS' email which disseminated Mr Duncan's details as a missing person, together with an RMS photograph from 2006 to all NSW police commands. A secondary medial release request was then forwarded to the Police Media Unit.
57. Detective Warren reviewed a number of enquiries commenced by other police officers involved in the initial investigation. Detective Warren also contacted the NSW Department of Housing and confirmed that Mr Duncan was not known to that department.
58. On 3 May 2021, Detective Warren attended at the Alison Private Hotel and seized a number of exhibits to assist with DNA analysis. She also noticed that there was an internal CCTV camera which had not been accessed previously by police. This footage confirmed that Mr Duncan was last seen at the hotel on 12 April 2021 rather than 14 April 2021, as previously reported. The Police Media Unit also republished information on social media. A further canvass of businesses in the vicinity of the hotel occurred, without any further footage being obtained due to either the lapse of time or the angle of the security cameras. In addition, Detective Warren spoke with the operators of a number of local businesses who largely confirmed that they had not seen Mr Duncan for about two weeks.
59. Detective Warren spoke with Mr Rached Rached. Mr Rached owns and operates the restaurant "Lebanon and Beyond", which shares a common hallway with the Alison Private Hotel, as well as being employed by State Transit Buses. Mr Rached confirmed that he had known Mr Duncan for several years since he moved into the Alison Private Hotel.
60. Mr Rached confirmed that he had not seen Mr Duncan for 1-2 weeks and that he would usually see him every day. He confirmed that Mr Duncan did not own an Opal card and would usually be permitted to travel for free by his bus driving colleagues. He noted that Mr Duncan would use the 373 or 377 bus service every day, boarding the bus outside the ANZ Bank on Belmore Road, Randwick, in the mid to late afternoon. He stated that Mr Duncan would board the bus for the return journey on Flinders Street outside of the Arq nightclub at around 2.30am unless he had won on the pokies. Mr Rached confirmed that his usual shift was from 7pm until 5am.
61. Mr Rached confirmed that Mr Duncan would usually wear blue jeans and a black leather jacket. He stated that the last time he saw Mr Duncan he was wearing this attire, together with a black jumper.

62. Mr Rached noticed that over the last 2-3 months Mr Duncan appeared to be forgetful. Mr Rached indicated that he had had to remind Mr Duncan when they had arrived at his bus stop. He noted that there were occasions during this period when he had forgotten that Mr Duncan was on board, and they reached the end of the journey only for him to discover that Mr Duncan was still on the bus. He would they transport Mr Duncan back to Randwick. Mr Rached indicated that he was concerned that Mr Duncan may have the early symptoms of dementia.
63. On 4 May 2021, Detective Warren attended and spoke again with the owners of various businesses on Oxford Street and the surrounding parks and locations frequented by persons living on the streets. A request was actioned with Home Affairs to locate a next of kin in England. Enquiries were made with Qantas and Virgin airlines relating to domestic travel. The owners of the Arq nightclub were contacted to ascertain if access could be gained to their CCTV, however, the club was closed due to COVID 19 and their cameras were not operational.
64. On 5 May 2021, Detective Warren spoke with a representative for STA Buses, Mr Tracey. He confirmed that there had only been one Opal card activation on the 377 route bus on the evening of 12 April 2021 at the Flinders Street stop. He was able to confirm that the GPS tracking on the bus indicated that the bus had adopted the normal route and did not stop at the Belmore Road, Randwick, stop.
65. On 6 May and 7 May 2021, Detective Warren spoke with a number of persons who had been identified as knowing Mr Duncan over the years. No further information of assistance was gleaned from these persons.
66. On 8 May 2021, Detective Warren received information of a possible sighting of Mr Duncan in the Revesby area and attended the location and spoke with a number of homeless persons who were unable to assist.
67. On 9 May 2021, Detective Warren accessed CCTV footage of the Revesby area which did not identify Mr Duncan. She also received confirmation from Qantas and Virgin airlines that Mr Duncan had not flown domestically since his disappearance.
68. Police also received 42 'Crime Stopper' reports in response to media releases on social media, online news articles and news broadcasts on Channels 7, 9 and 10. The following day, a number of police were tasked to review these reports. Although a number of the persons depicted had a long white beard, none of them were identified as Mr Duncan.
69. On 11 May 2021, police spoke with Ms Harris and Stephen, Mr Duncan's son, as they had responded to the Crime Stopper broadcast. They were able to provide police with the valuable information referred to earlier in these findings. Stephen agreed to provide a sample for DNA comparison. Ongoing and daily enquiries continued with the National Missing Persons Victim System and the NSW morgue.

70. On 31 May 2021, Strike Force WITHERINGTON was established and the investigation was maintained on e@gle.i. On 4 June 2021, the terms of reference and investigation plans were uploaded.
71. On 10 June 2021, a number of ‘flyers’ were distributed in the Oxford Street area, Kings Cross, Waverley, Bondi, Randwick, Surry Hills and Maroubra police stations.
72. On 12 June 2021, Mr Duncan’s son Samuel contacted Maroubra Detectives. Samuel was able to provide information which has been referred to earlier in these findings.
73. On 16 June 2021, Ms Redwood contacted police and indicated that she had seen Mr Duncan at the Westfield Eastgardens Shopping Centre at around noon on 15 June 2021 on a bench under the escalator on the ground floor near the food court. Police attended the location to collect the CCTV footage and spoke with the person Ms Redwood had identified and were able to confirm that he was not Mr Duncan.
74. On 23 June 2021, Detective Warren submitted a “Signs of Life” check to all states and territories in relation to Mr Duncan. The responses indicated that there was no current record in any of the jurisdictions.
75. On 30 June 2021, Detective Warren received a confirmation from Interpol that they had located and spoken with Mr David Duncan. Mr David Duncan was able to confirm a number of details referred to earlier in these findings.
76. On 31 July 2021, a number of items including a hairbrush, a toothbrush, a bandana and a beanie were submitted for forensic analysis to obtain a DNA profile for matching purposes.
77. On 7 August 2021, Queensland police confirmed that Mr Duncan appeared on their database and they had his ink fingerprints on file. They confirmed that he is now appearing on their system as a missing person.
78. On 26 September 2021, Detective Warren received a statement from Mr David Duncan through a telephone call that confirmed additional information as to Mr Duncan’s earlier history.
79. On 26 September 2021, Detective Warren made further enquiries relating to obtaining DNA samples, fresh “Signs of Life” requests to other Australian jurisdictions, request for the most recent banking details and uploaded information to the Strike Force Witherington site.

Media Releases and sightings of Mr Duncan

80. On 30 April 2021, the Police Media Unit released a broadcast on the website and social media reporting Mr Duncan as a missing person. The initial release indicated that he had disappeared on 14 April 2021, rather than 12 April 2021,

after Ms Simkovits' report to police. On 7 May 2021, Superintendent Fordy delivered a 'stand up' media release outside Maroubra police station. The release was broadcast on the major TV networks, social media and YouTube. The release included CCTV footage of Mr Duncan on 12 April 2021.

81. On 1 July 2021, the Police Media Unit released an appeal for assistance to identify the unidentified female at the Flinders Street bus stop. The broadcast was conveyed across the major news networks and print media. A number of responses were received in relation to this broadcast, suggesting that the female was an employee at St Vincent's Hospital. Detective Warren spoke with the head of security at St Vincent's Hospital, who agreed to display the image in the hospital. No response was received.
82. An informant contacted police indicating that he knew Mr Duncan and knew the identity of the unidentified female. He referred to the female as 'Gale' and stated that she was in her forties but was unable to provide any further detail. When it was suggested that the female in the footage appeared to be younger than 40 years of age, the informant became abusive towards police and terminated the call.
83. In December 2021, Mr Duncan featured in the Australian Federal Police Missing Person Christmas Appeal.
84. On 3 August 2021, Mr Duncan featured in the "Missing Persons' Week" which was broadcast by the Police Media Unit and featured in the Sydney Morning Herald.
85. Between 12 April 2021 and 4 October 2023, police received 49 reports of possible sightings and information relating to Mr Duncan. None of the reports resulted in police being able to locate Mr Duncan and a number of the reports were confirmed to be as a result of mistaken identity.
86. On 19 January 2022, an anonymous Crime Stoppers report was received through the online Crime Stoppers portal. The report stated "Robert Duncan is deceased in Centennial Park."
87. On 7 February 2022, a POLSAR search was conducted at Centennial Park with the assistance of a cadaver dog. The head of security at Centennial Park confirmed that the waterways had flooded a number of times since Mr Duncan's disappearance and the Police Divers declined to assist as there was insufficient detail to confirm that Mr Duncan was in any waterway in the park. During the search an unidentified bone was located and seized. It was forwarded to the Lidcombe Coroners Court and was identified as being non-human in origin.

Conclusions

Is Mr Duncan deceased?

88. The first finding that a Coroner is required to determine following an inquest into the suspected death of a missing person is whether that person is deceased. This question is required to be determined on the balance of probabilities, and there must be clear, cogent and exact evidence that a missing person had died before such a conclusion can be made.
89. Mr Duncan did not own a mobile phone, was not licenced to drive a motor vehicle and his British passport had expired.
90. Mr Duncan had a familiar routine for over twenty years which revolved around Randwick, Bondi Junction and Oxford Street.
91. He appeared to be well liked by a number of locals, including Mr Rached Rached and others, who would assist him on a daily basis. His supports and acquaintances in the community referred to him as being gentle and kind, albeit aloof.
92. Mr Duncan's schizophrenia had caused estrangements from his family and friends over many years.
93. Police enquires have established that Mr Duncan has not travelled either domestically or internationally since his disappearance.
94. Mr Duncan's bank account has not been activated since his disappearance and he has not made any contact with Centrelink.
95. Despite extensive media releases, Mr Duncan's whereabouts have not been established.
96. Police have regularly enquired with Missing Persons Units across Australia and the local morgue, in an attempt to locate Mr Duncan if he is deceased.
97. Detective Warren has hypothesised that Mr Duncan is either deceased or is alive and living at an alternative unknown location. Detective Warren has given consideration to whether Mr Duncan met with "foul play, given that he was frequently in possession of large amounts of money, exacerbated with his frail state given his age and the apparent malnourishment and possible Dementia/Alzheimer's, however there is no evidence to support this."
98. The police investigation was initially hampered by inaccurate information being provided as to the last known movements of Mr Duncan. Since then, the police, particularly Detective Warren and her colleagues have conducted an extensive and thorough police investigation into Mr Duncan's disappearance and likely whereabouts.

99. Detective Warren's conclusions are based on an ongoing analysis and review of available information and leads associated with a reclusive and private person.
100. The Court is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Mr Duncan is now deceased, however, it is impossible to determine the cause and manner of his death on the available evidence. Similarly, it is not possible to determine the date or location of his death.

Findings pursuant to section 81 (1) of the Act

101. Before turning to the findings that I am required to make, I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Mr Durand Welsh, Coronial Advocate, for his assistance.
102. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Detective Ashley Warren for her extensive investigative efforts in this matter and the collation of the brief of evidence.
103. I make the following findings pursuant to section 81(1) of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW):

Identity

The person who died was Robert Hamish Duncan

Date of Death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the date of Mr Duncan's death

Place of Death

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

Cause of Death

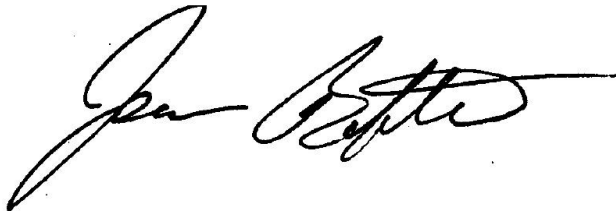
The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the cause of Mr Duncan's death

Manner of Death

The available evidence does not allow for any finding to be made as to the manner of Mr Duncan's death.

I make no recommendations pursuant to section 82 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW)

On behalf of the Coroners Court of New South Wales, I offer my sincere and respectful condolences to Mr Duncan's family members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Baptie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Magistrate Joan Baptie
Deputy State Coroner
26 February 2024
Coroners Court of New South Wales