



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

Inquest:	Inquest into the death of Mr Nathan MARKL
Hearing dates:	3 – 4 June 2025
Date of findings:	10 July 2025
Place of Inquest Place of findings:	State Coroner's Court sitting at Narrabri Local Court NSW State Coroner's Court, Lidcombe
Findings of:	Deputy State Coroner Carmel Forbes
File number:	2021/00212722
Catchwords	CORONIAL – First Nations death - missing person later located in Narrabri Creek – misadventure
Representation:	Mr Ben Fogarty, Counsel Assisting, instructed by Ms Kathleen McKinlay, Department of Communities and Justice Legal Mr Thomas Buterin instructed by Ms Stephanie Koch, NSW Crown Solicitor's Office for Commissioner of NSW Police Force
Non-publication orders:	Non-publication orders were made on 3 June 2025. A copy of those orders can be obtained on application from the Coroner's Court Registry.

<p>Findings:</p>	<p><i>Identity</i></p> <p>The person who died was Mr Nathan Charles Markl.</p> <p><i>Date</i></p> <p>Mr Markl died on the evening of Wednesday 7 July 2021.</p> <p><i>Place of death</i></p> <p>Mr Markl died in Narrabri Creek, having entered it on its eastern bank near to the northern side of the railway bridge that runs over the creek from Maitland Street to Selina Street Narrabri.</p> <p><i>Cause of death</i></p> <p>Mr Markl died by drowning.</p> <p><i>Manner of death</i></p> <p>The manner of Mr Markl's death was misadventure.</p>
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FINDINGS

Introduction

1. This is an inquest into the sad death of Nathan Charles Markl. Mr Markl was reported missing to Narrabri Police on Friday 9 July 2021. Extensive searches were conducted by his family, his friends, and the authorities. His body was eventually found by NSW Police divers in the Narrabri Creek on Friday 23 July 2021.
2. At the time of his death, Mr Markl was only 31 years of age.
3. Section 81 of the *Coroners Act 2009 NSW* requires a Coroner to make findings as to:
 - a. The identity of the deceased person.
 - b. The date and place of the person's death; and
 - c. The manner and cause of the person's death.
4. He was last known to be alive on CCTV footage driving his vehicle on the evening of 7 July 2021 at 8:27pm east over the Narrabri Creek Bridge and south onto Tibbereena Street. The primary issues for this inquest are when, where, and in what circumstances Mr Markl died.

Mr Nathan Markl

5. Mr Markl was born in Tamworth Hospital on 15 September 1989 and grew up in Narrabri.
6. He is survived by his loving family, including his mother and his stepfather, his grandmother, his aunty, his two brothers and his five sons.
7. He had a medical history of asthma, mental illness and intellectual impairment. He received the Disability Support Pension.

8. Mr Markl's mother informed this inquest how much she loved him as her youngest boy, how vulnerable he was, and how she always strived to keep him safe and well. She also talked about Mr Markl's cognitive impairment and her fears, as a mother, about her son using drugs and hanging around the wrong crowd.
9. In February 2019, Dalby Community Mental Health Service described Mr Markl as being a long-term illicit substance user with the risk of misadventure.
10. Between 2019 and 2021 Mr Markl was living sometimes in Queensland with his mother and stepfather and at other times in Northern NSW.
11. In 2020, Mr Markl formed a relationship and had a son. He was living with his partner and his son. In February 2020 Police took Mr Markl from their home to Wee Waa Hospital Emergency Department with withdrawal symptoms from methylamphetamine.
12. In April 2020 Mr Markl returned to live in Queensland with his mother and stepfather. They did their best to keep him safe and well.
13. In October 2020 Mr Markl moved back to NSW, residing in Armidale. His mother organised rental accommodation and, for a period, she lived with him to support him. She arranged a car for him.
14. Some of Mr Markl's children lived in and near Narrabri and he wanted to be in the region. He loved spending time with his children. In 2020 he and the mother of his eldest son successfully engaged in a family law mediation. As a result, Mr Markl was permitted to see his eldest son and, in the period up to his passing, Mr Markl visited and spent time with him on five occasions, the last being on 26 June 2021.
15. Mr Markl was in contact with local Narrabri medical centres and received prescription anti-psychotic medication, including olanzapine, quetiapine and diazepam. He was also prescribed an inhaler for his asthma and additional medication when his asthma became acute.

16. In March 2021 Mr Markl formed a new relationship and lived in Armidale.

May/June 2021

17. In May 2021 his mother and stepfather visited Mr Markl from Queensland. This would be the last time they saw Mr Markl alive.
18. The last time Mr Markl's new partner saw him alive was in Armidale on 15 June 2021. In her statement she described him as looking a mess, and that he just wanted to use ice and that he was using ice and buprenorphine on a daily basis.
19. In the second half of June, Mr Markl was living with the mother of his eldest son in Gunnedah. On 26 June 2021 an ADVO was put in place that prohibited Mr Markl going within 50m of that house.
20. Mr Markl started living between his car and the Aalbany Motel, Narrabri.
21. Mr Markl checked into the motel on 28 June 2021. The motel's manager told Police that Mr Markl had no money and that he gave him food. The manager also said that he observed Mr Markl coming and going, driving his car, sometimes in the company of a Mr Davern.
22. Mr Davern told police he met Mr Markl at the Balund-a Rehabilitation Centre and that a week before Mr Markl went missing, he ran into him, and they were using drugs and playing the pokies together. He also said Mr Markl was staying in his car and at the motel and that he stayed with Mr Markl in the motel because he too had nowhere else to go.
23. Mr Davern described Mr Markl at the time as agitated and paranoid about his relationship with the mother of his oldest child and that he was always calling and quizzing her. Mr Davern felt that Mr Markl was not coping living in Narrabri. He said that about 3 or 4 days before Mr Markl went missing, they went down to the river once or twice to inject 'ice.'

Saturday, 3 July 2021

24. On Saturday 3 July 2021, a member of the public saw Mr Markl's car parked with the engine running and no person in it on the footpath near the Narrabri Creek, roughly in line with the Narrabri Clock Tower on Tibbereena Street, behind number 2 oval. The member of the public called Police. Senior Constable Perrett attended and found Mr Markl asleep on the back seat of his car. The car was locked. The officer reported only seeing clothes used as a pillow in the car and no other items. He did not look in the boot. The car was on the footpath. The officer suggested to Mr Markl that he drive to the nearby Tourist Information Centre carpark and sleep in his car there. Mr Markl gave him his name and was compliant. In his statement to this inquest Senior Constable Perrett said he was worried Mr Markl would become bogged so guided him out. This is the last known interaction Mr Markl had with Police.
25. Mr Markl stayed in Room 3 at the Aalbany Motel the nights of 3 to 5 July 2021 and told the manager that he would pay him on Tuesday 6 July, when his pension came in.

Sunday, 4 July 2021

26. Mr Markl visited his cousin on Ningadhun Circuit on Sunday, 4 July 2021. He stayed for a couple of hours, having a shower and something to eat. His cousin told Police that this was the first time in years he had seen Mr Markl. Mr Markl told him that he had nowhere to live and had been living in Gunnedah with an ex-partner but had been kicked out and that there was now an AVO in place.

Monday, 5 July 2021

27. On Monday, 5 July 2021, Mr Markl went again to his cousins at Ningadhun Circuit. He spent the whole day there playing Xbox with his cousins and left in the afternoon.
28. Mr Markl went to Ms Boney and Mr Pitt's house in Hinds Street that night until about 2am the next morning.

Tuesday 6 July 2021

29. On Tuesday 6 July 2021 Ms Boney called Mr Markl to arrange a lift for her partner, Mr Pitt. Mr Markl arrived to pick up Mr Pitt, but Mr Pitt had already received a lift from someone else.
30. In the course of that day, Mr Markl gave Mr Pitt and Ms Boney a lift home from the Tattersall's Hotel. Ms Boney said that Mr Markl was upset about the AVO with his ex-partner and was somewhat depressed.
31. Mr Markl checked out of the motel. He gave the manager his NAB Visa card and said his money would be in at 10 o'clock. The manager described Mr Markl as appearing to be off his face on drugs.
32. Mr Markl's stepfather told Police that he spoke with Mr Markl on the morning of Tuesday 6 July 2021. Mr Markl had called him saying he had no money left and that he had hit the pokies and lost his money.
33. CCTV footage from the Tattersall's Hotel in Narrabri shows Mr Markl and Mr Davern playing poker machines on Tuesday 6 July 2021 during the early hours of the afternoon. Mr Markl's Bendigo Bank records show that at 2.28pm a withdrawal of \$20 was made from his account at the Tattersall's Hotel. This is the last activity recorded on Mr Markl's bank account. Mr Markl only had one bank account, with Bendigo Bank. This last activity coincides with a time where CCTV depicts Mr Markl frequenting the pokies room and frequently on his phone.
34. Narrabri Shire Council CCTV captures Mr Markl driving his car on the afternoon and early evening of Tuesday 6 July 2021 in the town centre on Maitland and Tibbereena Streets.

Wednesday 7 July 2021

35. At about 6.45am on Wednesday 7 July 2021, a dog walker saw Mr Markl in his car near the railway bridge between Maitland and Selina Streets, on the Eastern bank of the Narrabri Creek. The car was facing the RSL.
36. Mr Markl's cousin says that Mr Markl came to his house on Ningadhun Circuit at about 11am on Wednesday 7 July 2021. Mr Markl told him that he had spent all his money on the pokies the night before and that he thought he had dropped some of his money on the ground (\$650) and believed Mr Davern had picked it up.
37. Mr Markl played his cousin a voicemail message from the Aalbany Hotel of a male saying Mr Markl owed about \$400 in unpaid room rent.
38. His cousin described Mr Markl as a "lot on edge" that day and that he was a bit wary of him. Mr Markl stayed at the house for most of the day. Mr Markl was using a Samsung Galaxy charger while at the house. Mr Markl was texting a lot that day, particularly to his ex-partner whom Mr Markl believed had another man.
39. In the middle of the day, Mr Markl called his mother and stepfather and sounded upset, saying he had nowhere to live and was living out of his car and that the car had a steering problem. They suggested to Mr Markl that he should ask his uncle to check the car and then he should leave Narrabri and go to Armidale. At that time his uncle was not in Narrabri, but in Queensland visiting family.
40. This was the last telephone call he had with his parents.
41. At about 3 or 4pm Mr Markl had a few beers with his cousin, which seemed to cheer Mr Markl up.
42. At about 5pm Mr Markl was asked to leave as other family arrived at the house and the cousins did not want Mr Markl around their children as he was 'off his head'. Mr

Markl gave him a hug and said, 'No worries, cuz'. He asked if he could borrow the Samsung Galaxy charger and Mr Markl took it with him when he left.

43. Mr Markl was then seen parked, alone, in his car in the driveway of Ms Boney's and Mr Pitt's Hinds St property. Mr Davern, who was at a neighbouring property, went over to him and told him that Mr Pitt and Ms Boney were not home and he saw Mr Markl drive off.
44. At about 8.30pm Mr Markl's cousin called Mr Markl asking him to return the charger as his brother had returned home and needed it. Mr Markl said he would drop it off in about 10 minutes, but he never came.
45. Mr Spencer and his partner, Ms Sharpley, said that they were given a lift by Mr Markl, along with Mr Duff, to a Mr Davis's house in West Narrabri on the evening of Wednesday 7 July 2021. Mr Duff said that he gave Mr Markl something to eat, and that then Mr Markl said his phone was flat and he needed to get a charger and indicated to Mr Duff he was heading off to his cousins' house on Ningadhun Circuit for that purpose. Mr Duff estimated to that this was between 9.30pm and 10pm on Wednesday 7 July 2021.
46. This is the last known sighting of Mr Markl alive.

Mr Markl reported missing and NSWPF search

47. On Thursday 8 July 2021 Mr Markl's mother received a call from her sister that Mr Markl's car had been found by his cousins abandoned at a public reserve on the Eastern bank of Narrabri Creek.
48. At 9pm that evening, Ms Markl called Narrabri Police Station. She told Police that she had last spoken with Mr Markl at midday the day before (7 July 2021), that he may be getting around with the wrong people in town who may be taking advantage of him, and she wanted to know if he was okay. She also asked Police to go and check the car's

condition and said she had been trying to call Mr Markl, but it was going to message bank. Lastly, she said she would come down to Narrabri the next day.

49. At 1:10am on Friday, 9 July 2021 Police attended Narrabri Creek and located the vehicle about 50m from turning off Maitland Street. The officers did not observe Mr Markl in or near the vehicle. They did not observe anything suspicious, and the vehicle's windows were up, and the doors were locked. The officers then attended Ningadhun Circuit and spoke with Mr Markl's cousin who confirmed that he and his brother had located the car near the river the morning before.
50. At about 5:15pm on Friday, 9 July 2021, Mr Markl was formally reported missing at Narrabri Police Station by his mother who had driven down from Queensland. Police formally entered a Missing Person Event in their Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) system and continued their investigation.
51. From 9 July 2021 to 23 July 2021, Police made enquiries including speaking with numerous of Mr Markl's associates, particularly those who he was last known to have spent time with. Police also obtained CCTV footage from various locations around Narrabri, which assisted with identifying Mr Markl's last known movements.
52. On Friday, 16 July 2021, Detective Senior Constables Goodwin, Maloney and Wallace (from Tamworth Police) arrived in Narrabri to initiate Strike Force Haig into the disappearance of Mr Markl. They were briefed by DSC Dickinson about what inquiries and investigations had been made up to that point by Narrabri Police.
53. On 20 July 2021, Police diving teams arrived in Narrabri and commenced a side scan surface survey and sonar survey at around 9am. Between 11.50am – 1.30pm, they conducted a scuba search 300m downstream from the bridge, as well as a sonar and underwater hand search. At 4.30pm that day, the water search was concluded. It was noted that recent rainfall had increased the amount of water flowing in the Narrabri Creek, and the search was hampered by the large volume of water flowing downstream.

54. Mr Markl's car was forensically examined on 21 July 2021 at Narrabri Police Station. No blood was detected, and Mr Markl's medications (Sandomigran, amoxicillin and quetiapine) were located in the car.
55. Between 16 July – 23 July 2021, Police conducted Remotely Piloted Aircraft System flight and various video searches. The NSWPF Western Region Police Rescue Squad coordinated the land search from 21 – 23 July 2021.
56. On Friday, 23 July 2021, at about 2.45pm, Police and State Emergency Services (SES) workers discovered Mr Markl's body, caught on a debris pile in the Narrabri Creek, 10.87km downstream from the railway bridge between Maitland and Selina Streets (on the Eastern bank of the Narrabri Creek) where Mr Markl's car had been found 14 days prior.
57. A further RPAS flight was conducted by Police at the sight where Mr Markl's body was located.
58. A Verification of Death form was completed that same day at Narrabri Hospital and an autopsy was conducted by Dr Leah Clifton (now Murray), Supervising Pathologist, in Newcastle on 28 July 2021. In the Autopsy Report for the Coroner she determined the cause of death was 'unascertained.'

Issues

Date and place of death

59. Mr Markl was last seen alive by Mr Duff on the evening of Wednesday 7 July 2021 at about 8.30pm/9pm, when Mr Markl dropped Mr Duff home.
60. Mr Markl last spoke by mobile phone to his cousin at 8.29pm on Wednesday 7 July 2021. This is corroborated by Mr Markl's mobile phone records.
61. The last message from Mr Markl's mobile phone was to his ex-partner, sent at 8.35pm.

62. Mr Markl's last active use of his mobile phone was at 8.36pm on Wednesday 7 July 2021, when he called his ex-partner a second time (having tried her a minute before), but she did not answer. This activity is also recorded in Mr Markl's mobile phone records.
63. The available and uncontested evidence is that Mr Markl was a very active and frequent user of his mobile phone, particularly with messaging. Mr Markl's mobile phone records show that at 9.17pm on Wednesday 7 July 2021 his mobile phone service disconnected from the Telstra Mobile Network and that the last probable location of his phone number was the eastern section of Narrabri, which included the place where his vehicle was found.
64. Mr Markl's mobile phone has never been recovered.
65. All those who saw him and gave evidence in this inquest, and the Narrabri Council CCTV footage, confirms Mr Markl as being in or near his car. His car was drivable, and I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that it is unlikely that he would have abandoned it.
66. At about 6.45am on Thursday 8 July 2021 a dog walker saw the car unattended at the Eastern side of the Narrabri Creek off Maitland Street, next to the Railway Bridge. He had seen the same car at about the same spot at the same time the morning before (being Wednesday 7 July 2021) – on that occasion seeing the silhouette of a person in it.
67. Mr Davis saw the car a third time that afternoon, at about 4pm on Thursday 8 July 2021, when he came back to the reserve to walk his dog. He said it was in the same place and facing the same way, as though it had not moved. The windows were still all up. He did not see anyone around the car.
68. Mr Davis saw the car a fourth and last time at about 6.30am on Friday 9 July 2021. It was still in the same position and looked like it had not moved at all. Thinking it had been abandoned and being 'a little concerned about' it, he walked up to it and looked

through the windows. He saw no one in it, the doors all closed, the boot closed and the seats all upright.

69. Mr Davis attended Narrabri Police on Saturday 17 July 2021, having seen a message on Facebook about a missing person, and completed a police statement recording his observations and marking on a satellite imagery map the location where he had seen the car.
70. Mr Markl's cousins had spotted the car the morning of Thursday 8 July 2021 at about 8am or 9am they drove from Ninghadun Circuit along Maitland Street past the Railway Bridge near the Creek, on their way across town to the smoke shop. They drove over to the car and noted the following:
 - a. No one was in the car.
 - b. The driver and front passenger windows were halfway down.
 - c. They stayed in the area for at least half an hour calling out for Mr Markl and looking for him but could not find him. They also called Mr Markl's phone, but there was no answer.
 - d. The phone charger (lent to Mr Markl the day prior) was plugged into the cigarette lighter port. They retrieved it, wound up the windows and locked the car and left.
71. Constable Sweeney and Sergeant Straney saw the car about 50m from when they turned off Maitland Street in the parkland near Narrabri Creek and the Railway Bridge at about 1.10am on Friday, 9 July 2021 and noted the following:
 - a. The ground was very wet, and it was raining.
 - b. The car was all closed up.
 - c. Mr Markl was not in the car.

- d. As they drove the police vehicle away it was a 'slight struggle due to the wet ground.'
 - e. The car was 5-10 metres from the creek.
72. Mr Markl's mother and stepfather saw and retrieved the car the afternoon of Friday, 9 July 2021 some time prior to 5pm, driving it away with a spare set of keys they had brought down from Queensland. They said it was very muddy and difficult to remove from where it was parked, and that it was too close to the creek and that if it slipped it was going into the water.
73. I find that Mr Markl's car was parked in a muddy and slippery area very close to the high waters of the flooding Narrabri Creek and I am satisfied that after Mr Markl exited his car he entered the creek's waters next to where his car was located at or about the time his phone disconnected on the evening of 7 July 2021.

Manner and cause of death

74. Dr Leah Clifton (now Murray), Forensic Pathologist determined that there was no identifiable natural disease that would explain Mr Markl's death. Mr Markl had alcohol, amphetamine, methylamphetamine and quetiapine in his system at the time of his death according to toxicology reports. There was no laceration that caused Mr Markl's death. Mr Markl had no broken bones or skull fractures. The decomposition and evidence of immersion in water was consistent with him being in the waters for 14 days.
75. On the available evidence I am satisfied, that Mr Markl was intoxicated and affected by methylamphetamine on 7 July 2021 and that the area around his car was dark and slippery. The Creek's waters were turbulent and flowing fast, as is evident from the debris seen in photos of the Creek from Polair on 14 July 2021 (Exhibit 2) and in the video of the Creek taken by Sergeant Straney that same day (Exhibit 1, Vol 3, Tab 72). Witness accounts are that the ground around his car and down the bank to the waters of the Creek was muddy and slippery, there having been heavy rain on and off the

week prior. On the balance of probabilities, I am satisfied that Mr Markl slipped or fell into the fast-flowing Narrabri Creek and drowned.

Final remarks

76. Mr Markl's mother and stepfather supported Mr Markl throughout his adult life, and they did all they could to keep him safe and now have done all they can do to find out what happened to him, and to honour and keep his spirit alive. I express my deepest sympathy to them on their loss.
77. I acknowledge and thank the Officers in Charge of the NSWPF investigation, Detective Senior Constable Adam Ridley and Detective Senior Constable Jason Dickinson, who conducted a thorough investigation and prepared a lengthy coronial brief of evidence and acknowledge the helpful assistance of Detective Senior Constable Dickinson throughout the inquest.
78. I also note my appreciation of Ms Nicolle Lowe, Aboriginal Coronial Support Officer, in providing her cultural expertise and kind assistance during this coronial investigation and inquest.
79. I would like to thank my counsel assisting team, including Mr Ben Fogarty of Counsel and Kathleen McKinlay, Solicitor Advocate, Department of Communities and Justice, whose exceptional work warrants acknowledgment.

Findings pursuant to s81(1) of the *Coroner's Act 2009 (NSW)*:

Identity

The person who died was Mr Nathan Charles Markl.

Date

Mr Markl died on the evening of Wednesday 7 July 2021.

Place of death

Mr Markl died in Narrabri Creek, having entered it on its eastern bank near to the northern side of the railway bridge that runs over the creek from Maitland Street to Selina Street Narrabri.

Cause of death

Mr Markl died by drowning.

Manner of death

The manner of Mr Markl's death was misadventure.

I close this inquest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Forbes', with a stylized cursive script.

Magistrate Carmel Forbes

Deputy State Coroner

NSW State Coroner's Court Lidcombe

10 July 2025