

IN THE CORONERS' COURT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Rel No: D0228/2024

Police No: 24 89504

**CORONERS' FINDINGS
ROAD DEATH 49 of 2024.**

Section 34 of the Coroners Act 1993

I, Elisabeth Armitage, Coroner, having investigated the death of **18 year old female driver of Indian heritage** and without holding an inquest, find that she was born on **19 June 2006** and that her **death occurred on 8 September 2024, at Royal Darwin Hospital in the Northern Territory.**

Introduction:

These findings consider road death 49 of 2024.

The 18 year old female deceased driver was attempting to cross Coonawarra Road in her Camry. She entered the intersection against a Give Way sign and drove into the path a Landcruiser. It is likely that she failed to properly observe the Landcruiser and so, failed to give way. The Landcruiser was travelling at about 80km/h in a 60km/h zone. The crash investigation report found that if the Landcruiser had been travelling at the speed limit of 60km/h the crash could have been avoided. I also find that if the crash had occurred at lower speeds, the severity and lethality of the collision would have been reduced.

In all the circumstances, I considered that the speed of the Landcruiser was also a contributing factor to the collision and the death.

Cause of death:

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1(a) | Disease or condition leading directly to death: | Blunt force head, neck and chest injuries |
| 1(b) | Morbid conditions giving rise to the above cause: | Reported motor vehicle crash (driver) |

Respecting the *wishes* of her family, a post-mortem autopsy was not conducted.

On 9 September 2024, Forensic Pathologist, Dr Salona Roopan commented:

- The opinion as to the cause of death is based on the available police and medical information, and a post-mortem examination including ancillary investigations.

- The decedent was an 18-year-old female youth who was reportedly involved in a motor vehicle collision on the 08/09/2024 and she was admitted to Royal Darwin Hospital. She was declared deceased at approximately 23:36hrs on the 08/09/2024.
- Toxicological analysis of blood obtained from hospital admission showed the presence of ketamine at below therapeutic levels and detection of rocuronium which is in keeping with administration of therapeutic medication.

Background:

The deceased driver was born at Bavla Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. She was a student and a pharmacy assistant. She had a bright future and her family are naturally devastated by her death.

Circumstances:

On the afternoon of Sunday 8 September 2024 at 5.39pm the deceased driver was stopped on Bombing Road in her Camry. For reasons unknown she turned left into Bombing Road from Coonawarra Road and she entered a journey to Casuarina Square in Apple Maps.

At this time the driver of the Landcruiser was driving his Toyota Landcruiser into Winnellie from Knuckey Lagoon. He turned right onto Coonawarra Road from Hook Road and accelerated to 80 km/h in a 60km/h zone and remained at or near that speed, travelling west.

As the driver of the Landcruiser approached the intersection of Bombing Road, the deceased driver was driving northbound, towards the intersection. The deceased driver failed to give way, as she was required to do, and, without braking, entered the intersection at 38km/h in front of the Landcruiser. The driver of the Landcruiser applied heavy braking and steered to the right in an attempt to avoid the crash.

The Landcruiser struck the driver's side of the deceased driver's Camry through the front quarter panel and driver's door. The forces in the crash drove the Camry sideways in a northwest direction. The Camry struck the northwestern curb of the intersection and entered the grass nature strip. The impact with the curb caused the Camry to rotate. The rotation caused the Camry to narrowly avoid a bus stop structure positioned in the nature strip. The Camry freewheeled off the nature strip, into a carpark, coming to rest facing in a westerly direction.

After impact, the Landcruiser rotated right due to pre impact steering input. The Landcruiser entered a clockwise yaw before tripping and rolling once, coming to rest on its wheels, in the nature strip, facing in a northeasterly direction. The crash was captured on the dash camera installed in the Landcruiser.

A witness, S, was at 29 Bombing Road, north of the intersection on the front veranda speaking on the phone. He had a partial view of the intersection with parts of it blocked from view by a truck and bus parked at a neighbouring premises.

S saw the Landcruiser drive past in his peripheral vision and as it went out of view he heard the crash, stating "*I heard an almighty bang*". S ended the call and ran to the intersection.

H, A and N were at Sahara Motors on Bombing Road. H heard *a massive smash* which made him turn around, and he saw the Landcruiser flip and land back on its wheels. H, A and N ran to the intersection and arrived shortly after S.

The crash was reported to 000 at 5.41pm.

As S got to the intersection, he saw the driver of the Landcruiser sitting on the grass. His initial observation was that the driver of the Landcruiser seemed to be alright. He then checked the Camry and found a young lady (the deceased driver) in the vehicle unresponsive and slumped over the centre console. He observed a small scratch behind her right ear. He checked her pulse and reported it to be racing. S remained inside the Camry monitoring the deceased driver.

S asked H to check on the driver of the Landcruiser. H asked the driver of the Landcruiser if he was okay and if he wanted water. The driver of the Landcruiser didn't respond and H thought he was in shock. H asked N to go back to Sahara Motors to get some water.

Northern Territory Fire Service and multiple St John Paramedics crews arrived at 5.55pm and provided medical assistance to the deceased driver. Police attended and declared a crime scene.

The deceased driver was extracted from the Camry, stabilised at the scene and at 6.20pm she was conveyed to Royal Darwin Hospital by St John Ambulance, arriving at 6.33pm under resuscitation.

Following a family meeting with general surgeons and the ICU consultant, no surgical intervention was offered due to her non-survivable head injuries.

At 11.36pm, the deceased driver passed away with her family at her bedside.

The driver of the Landcruiser also attended RDH for medical assessment and provided a blood sample. Neither alcohol nor illicit drugs were detected in his blood.

Road Features and Conditions:

Coonawarra Road is a sealed, dual lane road within the Winnellie industrial area. The road is orientated in an east/ west direction. The road rises to the west through the intersection of Bombing Road. Traffic on Coonawarra Road have right of way.

The posted speed limit is 60km/h.

Bombing Road is a sealed, dual lane road which is mostly orientated in a northeast/ southeast direction. Bombing Road bisects Coonawarra Road and Winnellie Road.

The intersection of Bombing Road and Coonawarra Road is controlled by a Give Way sign on Bombing Road.

Weather and Lighting Conditions:

At the time of the crash the weather was fine at it was daytime.

Tests and/or Calculations Conducted:

The Event Data Recorder (EDR) was imaged from both the Landcruiser and the Camry.

The EDR for the Landcruiser was verified. The EDR recorded a maximum speed of 80 km/h within the 4.85 seconds prior to the crash. The Landcruiser was fitted with slightly larger tyres than specified. An engine speed calculation was conducted and found that the highest speed the Landcruiser was travelling before the crash was 79-82km/h.

The Landcruiser was fitted with a Verizon Connect Dash Camera. The dash camera displayed a GPS speed of 84km/h at the time of the impact. This speed is calculated from the GPS, and no data is supplied to the dash camera system from the Landcruiser.

The dash camera was still displaying 84km/h after the collision had taken place and the Landcruiser had entered the induced yaw. This meant there was a delay in the dash camera displaying updated speeds, as the forces of the collision would have slowed the Landcruiser

immediately. This delay made the dash camera speed inaccurate and the evidence of the EDR was preferred.

Vehicles:

V1 - 2009 Toyota Camry Altise sedan bearing NT registration.

V2 - 2018 Toyota Landcruiser GXL utility bearing NT registration.

The dash camera located in the Landcruiser recorded the entirety of the trip from Knuckey Lagoon. The footage showed that the Landcruiser's steering and braking systems were in good operating order. The mechanical condition of the Landcruiser is not considered causal to the crash.

The Camry had been re-registered on 2 September 2024. Due to the age of the Camry the registration required the vehicle to pass a mechanical inspection by an approved Motor Vehicle Registry mechanic. The mechanical condition of the Camry is not considered causal to the crash.

Opinion as to the Cause of Crash:

A Detective Senior Constable completed a Crash Analysis Report in which he considered the scene and all the available evidence. He concluded that the cause of the crash was the deceased driver failing to give way to the Landcruiser.

In his crash analysis report he advised that research shows that:

- No drivers would attempt to cross the path of the Landcruiser taking into account the distance available and the speed at which the Landcruiser was travelling (79-82 km/h) which provided a 0.7 second gap
- 4% of drivers would have attempted to cross the path of the Landcruiser if it was travelling at 60km/h which would have provided a 2.19 second gap.
- If the Landcruiser had been travelling at the speed limit of 60km/h the crash could have been avoided.

I add that if the Landcruiser had been travelling at the speed limit if there had been a crash, it would have been at a lower speed and the chances of the deceased driver surviving would have been greater.

In all the circumstances, I find that the deceased driver failed to keep a proper lookout and her attempt to cross in front of the Landcruiser against a Give Way sign was a contributing factor in the collision. However, the speed of the Landcruiser was also a contributing factor which increased the likelihood of the collision and death.

Police investigation:

The driver of the Landcruiser. was charged with exceed speed limit, 16-30km/h over the limit. He appeared at Darwin Local Court on 29 January 2026, the offence was proven and he was fined \$400.

Referral:

There is a significant difference between the satisfaction required by a Coroner to refer a matter to the DPP as compared to the DPP bringing charges. A Coroner may refer a matter if the Coroner believes and offence *may* have been committed. However, the DPP will only commence proceedings if there is a *reasonable prospect of conviction* applying the criminal standard of proof which is *beyond reasonable doubt*.

Given my findings as to contributory negligence, I am satisfied that an offence other than speeding *may* have been committed. Therefore, I refer the matter to the DPP for consideration.