

IN THE CORONERS COURT
AT HASTINGS
(In Chambers)

CSU-2013-WGN-000193

UNDER THE CORONERS ACT 2006

AND

IN THE MATTER of an Inquiry into the death of
Deane Geoffrey Trevor WILSON

Date of Findings: **31 October 2013**

FINDINGS OF CORONER CJ DEVONPORT

INTRODUCTION

[1] On 6 May 2013 Deane Geoffrey Trevor Wilson, aged 23, was driving a Ford Laser motor vehicle south on Takapu Road, Grenada North. It was raining, and as he rounded a moderate left hand bend Mr Wilson lost control of his Ford Laser motor vehicle, sliding sideways with the driver's side impacting with the rear of a parked Subaru motor vehicle. Mr Wilson died instantly.

ISSUES

[2] Having given due consideration as to whether an inquest is necessary or desirable in this case, and having complied with the requirements of section 77 of the Coroners Act 2006, I have decided to conclude this inquiry by holding a hearing on the papers and make chambers findings pursuant to that section.

[3] The issues are the cause and circumstances of death

CAUSE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH

[4] Kerry Richard Beard, Branch Manager, had left his place of work in Jamaica Drive, Grenada North, at approximately 3pm and after turning into Takapu Road he stopped to answer a telephone call. Mr Beard states that he pulled to the left of the road and parked his Subaru Forrester vehicle with the left wheels on the footpath and the driver's side wheels on the road. He estimated at least three quarters of his vehicle was on the footpath and at most one quarter on the road. While stationary and talking on the telephone Mr Baird heard a car sliding. He looked in his rear view mirror and saw a car coming around the corner sideways, with its rear swinging out. *"I could see that the car was speeding, he was hoofing it. I think he would have hit me at 100 kilometres an hour. I went "whoop" waiting for the impact of the goldy coloured car hitting me."* Mr Baird estimated his vehicle was shunted between three and five metres forward in a straight line by the impact that followed. He was uninjured and when he left his vehicle to assist the occupants of the other vehicle he realised they were two of his staff.

[5] Jeremy Terris was the front seat passenger in the Ford Laser vehicle driven by his workmate Deane Wilson. Mr Terris had not been at work that day, but when Mr Wilson finished work for the day he called in to visit Mr Terris at his Takapu Road address. There they shared a small cannabis joint and after 30-40 minutes Mr Wilson asked Mr Terris if he wanted to go for a drive with him to get some petrol and cigarettes. Mr Terris states *"I was like "oh yeah as long as you don't kill me, cause I've been on previous drives with him, and its quite scary. I put my seat belt on half way down the drive cause I just knew its better to be safe than not." "We were going over a bit of a rise as we came down my street and Dean started speeding up. I asked him to slow down." "Dean sped up to 130 or 150 kilometres an hour. He didn't say why he was going fast. I think he was just showing off what his car could*

do with a new motor in it.” “I saw how fast we were going from the speedo.” “It wasn’t a safe speed to be driving in those conditions. Dean went out wide to take the corner just past Jamaica Drive and the whole arse end of the car just slid out.”

[6] Sergeant Peter Sowter of the Wellington Serious Crash Unit confirmed that the Ford Laser slid sideways for over 40 metres and as a result of the Ford Laser’s rotation and sideways movement the driver’s side became the leading edge, which impacted with the rear of the Subaru crushing the driver’s door and surrounding bodywork 500-600mm inwards towards the passenger compartment. Sergeant Sowter calculated that the speed at which a vehicle rounding the bend will begin to slide out in wet conditions is between 125 and 134 kilometres per hour, and this calculation was close to the speed of 130-150 kilometres per hour observed by passenger Mr Terris. Calculations show that the likely impact speed of the Ford Laser into the Subaru was approximately 92.5 kilometres per hour. No faults were found by a vehicle testing officer with either vehicle which may have caused or contributed to the crash. Sergeant Sowter comments that while the engine to the Ford Laser had apparently been replaced, it was the same displacement and configuration as standard.

[7] Sergeant Sowter reports that there is no record of Mr Wilson holding a driver’s licence, and he was listed as having been “*forbidden to drive*” in April 2008. Mr Terris stated that Mr Wilson was into Go-karting and that he had seen him race once but “*he wasn’t as good at driving a real car as he was at Go-carts. He liked to show off and drive fast.*”

[8] A post mortem examination by forensic pathologist Dr John Rutherford was satisfied that Mr Wilson’s death was as a result of blunt force injury to the chest and abdomen. Mr Wilson had suffered multiple injuries including internal injuries of fracturing of the rear aspects of the rib cage and penetration of the lungs, and lacerations of the liver, spleen and both kidneys resulting in haemorrhage into the abdominal cavity. Dr Rutherford notes that Mr Wilson had a past medical history of Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome treated in August 2012 by radiofrequency ablation of an aberrant left anterolateral conducting bundle. He regarded this as a condition that was present but not regarded (or provable) as contributing to Mr Wilson’s death.

[9] Toxicology revealed the presence of cannabis in Mr Wilson’s blood. The ESR Forensic Toxicologist comments “*Cannabis cannot easily be classified as a sedative or stimulant since it can have different effects in different people and its effects generally vary over time. Its main psychological and behavioural effects are euphoria and relaxation, an impairment of perception and cognition, and loss of motor coordination. The dangers of driving after using cannabis are due to taking longer to respond to events, reduced ability to think clearly, and reduced ability to pay attention. The effects of cannabis may include distorted perception, difficulty in thinking and problem solving and loss of coordination.*”

[10] The cause of Mr Wilson's death is multiple injuries sustained in the motor vehicle crash. It is not possible to say whether he was affected by cannabis at the time such that it affected his actions or reactions. Excessive speed for the wet conditions has resulted in Mr Wilson losing control of his vehicle, failing to keep within his designated lane, and impacting sideways into the rear of the parked Subaru vehicle.

FORMAL FINDING

[11] I find that Deane Geffrey Trevor Wilson died at Takapu Road, Grenada North, Wellington on 6 May 2013.

[12] The cause of death was:

Direct cause:	Blunt force chest and abdominal injuries
Antecedent cause:	Motor vehicle crash
Underlying condition:	N/a
Other conditions:	Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome

[13] The circumstances of the death are that on 6 May 2013 Deane Geffrey Trevor Wilson late of Paraparaumu Beach, storeman died on Takapu Road, Grenada North, Wellington of injuries sustained then and there when he lost control of the Ford Laser motor vehicle he was driving south on Takapu Road, slid sideways and collided with a parked Subaru motor vehicle.

Coroner CJ Devonport