



Coroner's Court of Western Australia

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

Ref: 09 /19

*I, Sarah Helen Linton, Coroner, having investigated the death of **Anita Jade BOARD** with an inquest held at the **Perth Coroner's Court, Court 51, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth** on **18 to 20 February 2019** find that the identity of the deceased person was **Anita Jade BOARD** and that death occurred on **12 November 2017** at **Princess Margaret Hospital, Subiaco**, as a result of **complications of multiple injuries** in the following circumstances:*

Counsel Appearing:

Ms F Allen assisting the Coroner.

Ms R Hartley (State Solicitor's Office) appearing on behalf of Venues West.

Mr G Bourhill (Barry Nilsson Lawyers) appearing on behalf of the Australian National Drag Racing Association (ANDRA).

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INTRODUCTION

1. Anita Board turned eight years old on 9 November 2017. She was very excited about this particular birthday as it meant she was old enough to apply for her junior drag racing competition licence. Her family were very involved in junior drag racing and Anita had been looking forward to being old enough to compete, just like her older sister Zara.
2. In preparation for her licence attempt, Anita's parents had purchased and refurbished a junior dragster vehicle for her, together with the necessary safety equipment. She had also ridden go-karts and done other forms of preparation, including familiarisation with her vehicle. Her parents believed she was ready to make the attempt to get her licence.
3. On 11 November 2017, two days after her birthday, Anita attended the Perth Motorplex in Kwinana Beach to do her licence pass. The Perth Motorplex is currently run by VenuesWest on behalf of the State Government.¹
4. Anita passed a blindfold test, after an initial nervous start, and then prepared to do her licence pass on the track. After an aborted first attempt due to a problem with her dragster, Anita was called up to the line. She started moving forward, then stopped and seemed to hesitate for a few seconds before she accelerated down the track. It was planned that she would travel at speed briefly then idle down the track about 200 metres to the finish line. Anita would then turn to exit the track through a gate that was open about 50 metres past the finish line. However, things did not go to plan.
5. After crossing the finish line Anita did not slow down as expected and it was apparent to the spectators that she was going too fast to safely negotiate the exit gate. One option was for Anita to keep going straight down the track until she slowed down or ran out of fuel. It seemed at first she might do this, but then Anita turned left in an apparent attempt to make it through the exit gate. She was going too fast to execute the turn and her dragster crashed into the corner of the concrete safety barrier at the side of the gate. Compared to the types of crashes seen at an adult drag racing event, the crash did not look that severe to spectators, but sadly, it proved to be fatal.
6. Anita was unconscious and not breathing immediately after the crash but had a weak pulse. Her pulse disappeared when she was extricated from the car. She was rushed by ambulance to hospital and spontaneous circulation was eventually returned after aggressive resuscitation attempts. Testing showed Anita had suffered a catastrophic and irrecoverable brain injury and brain death was confirmed on 12 November 2017.
7. Following Anita's death the Minister for Sport and Recreation in Western Australia announced on 13 November 2017 that the State Government was imposing a temporary ban on all junior competition drag racing in this State,

¹ T 6 - , a WA government statutory authority, with the Board reporting to the Minister for Sport and Recreation.
Inquest into the death of Anita Jade BOARD (1532/2017)

pending a full coronial investigation.² This was easily able to be implemented, given the State Government owns and operates the Perth Motorplex. I understand the ban is still in place and WA children wanting to continue to compete have apparently been travelling interstate or overseas since Anita's death, including her older sister. There is a strong desire on the part of the local drag racing community to have the ban lifted, but also an acceptance that there will need to be changes made to try to ensure that another death in similar circumstances is prevented.

8. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court from 18 to 20 February 2019. In preparation for the inquest, I also visited the Perth Motorplex and viewed a junior dragster vehicle on 14 February 2019 in the company of counsel.
9. The inquest covered the events surrounding Anita's death and also canvassed how drag racing is managed for junior racers in other states and overseas, including training requirements and safety measures.
10. At the conclusion of the inquest, I indicated I was prepared to receive written submissions from the parties. I received a number of submissions, the last on 7 August 2019, which canvassed additional issues I raised.³ I have taken those submissions into account in reaching my findings.
11. I was also provided, at my request, with data from the National Coronial Information System on motor-sporting deaths of children in Australia from 2001 to 2019 to assist me in considering the relevant risk that junior drag racing presents.⁴
12. As will be seen in my conclusion, I have ultimately found that Anita's death was a rare and unexpected event that occurred due to her inexperience. In order for junior drag racing to move forward in Western Australia, the lessons that can be learnt from Anita's death include the need for improvements to the infrastructure at the Perth Motorplex, a comprehensive training and induction programme for junior racers and a greater emphasis on building a safety culture amongst the children, parents and organisers of the sport. With that in mind, I have made a number of recommendations that I sincerely hope will be implemented.

BACKGROUND

13. Anita lived with her parents and older sister Zara in Aubin Grove. She attended Aubin Grove Primary School and was in Year 2 at the time of her death. She was an active little girl who was generally healthy, bright and bubbly. Anita was also described by her parents as independent, strong willed and persistent.⁵

² <https://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/news-and-events/news/news-articles/2017/11/13/junior-drag-racing-suspended-until-outcome-of-police-investigation>.

³ Submission to the Coroner on behalf of Mr Simon Cope dated 17 March 2019, Submissions on behalf of the ANDRA dated 18 April 2019, Outline of Responsive Submissions on behalf of VenuesWest dated May 2019 and Outline of Submissions on behalf of the WA Police Force dated 13 May 2019.

⁴ NCIS, *Coronial Report CR19-03.1 Motor-sporting deaths of children in Australia, 2001 - 2019*, February 2019.

⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [9] and Tab 21 [17].

14. Anita liked many of the things popular with girls her age, such as gymnastics, riding her bike, My Little Pony and the film Frozen. However, according to her parents, what Anita loved most of all was drag racing and being down at the track.⁶
15. Anita's father, Ian Board, had been involved with motorsport as a spectator for a long time and had helped as pit crew for friends involved in the speedway and nitro fuel bikes. Mr Board's friend's son had a junior dragster and Mr Board and his family became exposed to junior drag racing through him. Anita's sister Zara, who was four years older, had used the friend's son's dragster to get her junior drag racing licence when she was 10 years of age. Her parents had then purchased a dragster for Zara's use as Zara had started drag racing the previous season.⁷
16. Mr Board gave evidence that he and his wife had looked at the history of the sport before allowing Zara to participate, and also looked at other options such as junior speedway and junior karting. They had concluded that junior dragster was the safest of the three options based on its record of injury and incidents, which was a lot lower than the other motor sports.⁸ They also noted there was less likelihood of collision between participants and the emphasis was on consistency rather than speed and who had the fastest car.⁹ After completing her first full season, Zara had done well and was enjoying herself, so the Boards' were happy with their decision.¹⁰
17. After Zara started racing, Anita would often go down to the track with Zara. She would sometimes sit in Zara's car and be pushed around in it. Having watched her older sister race, Anita was keen to do the same. Under the Australian National Drag Racing Association (ANDRA) rules that applied to the Perth Motorplex where Anita would be racing, Anita was not permitted to try for her junior drag racing licence until she turned eight.¹¹
18. In preparation for Anita's eighth birthday, her parents bought her a junior dragster. The dragster had been sitting unused in a backyard for some time. After they bought it Mr Board stripped it apart and said he made sure everything was correct and running properly. Anita was allowed to choose the colours and design of her car. She named it 'Pony Power' and had it coloured purple with pink flames and pictures of Rainbow Dash from My Little Pony on it. The dragster was fitted with a five point safety harness, which was bolted to the E frame. It also had arm restraints to keep her arms inside the vehicle in the event of a crash. They had the car for a long period before Anita could attempt her licensing, so she had time to get familiar with it.¹²
19. In addition to the safety features on the dragster, Anita was required to wear protective safety equipment when racing. Her parents purchased a new helmet online based on her head measurements. The helmet arrived on

⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 21 [23] – [25], Tab 22 [7].

⁷ T 283.

⁸ T 283.

⁹ T 283.

¹⁰ T 284.

¹¹ T 284; Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹² T 284.

8 June 2017. They also purchased a neck brace, which was the smallest manufactured. The neck brace was designed to be worn around the neck and secured in front with a Velcro closure. There is reference to a neck guard later in this finding, which is a different item to the neck brace. The neck brace is intended to protect the collar bone when a helmet is thrust forward in a crash. It is constructed from flame retardant materials and also protects the neck from fire and other materials from getting under the helmet.¹³

20. In addition, Anita had fire retardant racing gloves, boots, black overalls and socks. All of her safety equipment was brand new except for her boots, which were second hand but never previously worn.¹⁴
21. In the months leading up to her eighth birthday Anita started practising for her licence test. Under instruction from her father she did push practice, which included doing figure eights to understand the turning circle, learning how to use the accelerator and how to stop, and getting a general feel for the dragster and how it moved. Anita would also sit in the dragster at the track when it was being pushed around.¹⁵
22. Mr Board taught Anita hand signals, start-up procedures and how to get in and out of the dragster by herself blindfolded, which was part of the blindfold test she would have to pass as part of the licensing process. He would test her understanding by asking her questions about what she would do if various things happened.¹⁶ Anita also rode in buggies and go-karts to get practical experience driving, although I note that generally go-karting requires children driving on their own to be ten years of age so the opportunities for go-karting independently were probably limited.¹⁷ In any event, it was suggested in evidence that the handling and dynamics of the go-kart, and the type of track, is so different that it is not very representative of what a junior drag racer will be doing.¹⁸
23. Anita underwent a medical examination at her normal GP practice on 3 October 2017 for the purpose of her drag racing licence testing. All her examination findings were normal.¹⁹ She was noted at that time to be 127 cm tall and weighed 26.5 kg, which placed her at about the 50th percentile for her age.²⁰ The examination was a physical one, and it was not part of that GP assessment to do a psychological test as to Anita's ability to participate in the sport.

INSPECTION OF THE DRAGSTER VEHICLE

24. Anita's mother, Mrs Board, was recorded as the owner of Anita's dragster in the vehicle log book and she had full ANDRA membership. As noted above,

¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 8.

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 and Tab 21.

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 and Tab 21.

¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 and Tab 21.

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 and Tab 21.

¹⁸ T 212.

¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 19.

²⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/data/set2clinical/cj41c072.pdf>

Mr and Mrs Board had purchased the dragster specifically for use by Anita. It had not been in use for some time prior to the sale and Mr Board had to fully refurbish it. Mr Board gave evidence that he went through it as thoroughly as he could with the assistance of a friend involved in drag racing.²¹

25. The vehicle was inspected and passed by an ANDRA Technical Inspector, Ian Jenkins, on 28 September 2017.²² Mr Jenkins is a volunteer and does not have any formal training or qualifications to perform this role. He relies upon his knowledge and experience from being involved in the sport, including building his own race cars, to do the inspection. He has been performing the role of technical inspector for more than 20 years.²³
26. Mr Jenkins task was to check the safety and construction of the drag car, although it is ultimately the owner's responsibility to ensure the vehicle is raceworthy. During the inspection Mr Jenkins checked the wheels, brakes, frame, harnesses, guards and the engine to make sure they were all mechanically sound and the harness was compliant. Mr Jenkins did not inspect the arm restraints, driving suit or safety helmet, so they were noted as needing to be checked before the vehicle could be driven onto the track.²⁴
27. After this inspection, Anita's dragster was driven by an experienced 13 year old junior drag racer on 14 October 2017 at an event at the Perth Motorplex. Mr Board explained it was an opportunity to test drive the vehicle and to make sure "it would not be too fast."²⁵ The vehicle was scrutineered before the race and Mr Board had to fix the chain guard.²⁶ There was also a problem with the fuel pump on the first pass that had to be fixed. The second and third passes were completed at a time of 10.3 seconds at 100 km/hr, which was too fast for Anita's class, so after the race Mr Board restricted the throttle, by putting in a throttle stop. This meant the engine was only running at a quarter to a third of its potential. It was intended this would prevent the dragster from being able to reach that excess speed above Anita's class limit.²⁷
28. The week of her race Mr Board got Anita to sit in her dragster and ensured the pedals were adjusted correctly.²⁸ He had purchased a second hand junior dragster cell, which is a seat to add into the dragster, to ensure that Anita fitted properly in the car, given the last driver was a much bigger person than Anita.²⁹ By that stage, Anita had spent a lot of time sitting in the dragster to get the feel of it.³⁰
29. In addition to the ANDRA vehicle inspection conducted by Mr Jenkins, there was the potential for a further vehicle inspection on the day Anita was to

²¹ T 284.

²² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

²³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 8; Exhibit 2, Tab 2.

²⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 8.

²⁵ T 285.

²⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [68].

²⁷ T 285; Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [70]

²⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [71].

²⁹ T 287.

³⁰ T 285.

race. The ANDRA Extended Scrutineering Programme (ESP) was introduced in 2003 after trials at major events. The system is intended to place more emphasis on the competitor to present a vehicle that complies with all relevant safety and class regulations and to make the pre-race scrutineering process more efficient. It dictates that at smaller meetings, all vehicle entries are checked, whereas at larger events, only a sample of the entries must undergo inspection by the scrutineers.

30. The scrutineering technical inspection involves depressing the brakes, checking seatbelts, restraints, switches, lights and general roadworthiness. The inspector also checks the log books and the junior racer's full kit of safety gear.³¹
31. The event on 11 November 2017 was a large event, and so not all vehicles were inspected. Apparently only about 10% of vehicles are selected each time for inspection on such an occasion.³² Anita's dragster was not selected to be scrutineered under the ESP process. Instead, Anita signed an ESP competitor declaration on 11 November 2017.³³ Unlike the consent form, it was not co-signed by a guardian or parent, which seems a little unusual given she was only eight years of age and the application for the vehicle logbook had been made in her mother's name.³⁴ It is hard to see what weight, if any, can be given to an eight year old child's signature on such a declaration.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO ANITA'S 8TH BIRTHDAY

32. Mr Board made some attempts prior to Anita's birthday to try to get permission for her to race before her 8th birthday. Mr Board had put a message on the Western Australia Drag Racing Association (WADRA) public Facebook account on 1 November 2017 asking if something could be done as he had "a 7.9 year old who is keen to drive, everything is ready, but her birthday is Thursday."³⁵
33. Mr Board also contacted Mr Ray Treasure, the Drag Racing and Burnout Manager for the Perth Motorplex, a number of times asking if Anita could do her licence testing at the 'Test n Tune' event on 8 November 2017, a day before Anita's birthday. Mr Treasure is extremely experienced in drag racing, and has worked not only for Perth Motorplex, but also with ANDRA directly and in other states in Australia and other countries. Mr Treasure has been involved with Australian junior drag racing since it began at Ravenswood Raceway in approximately 1975.³⁶
34. Mr Treasure indicated he felt Mr Board was "pleading"³⁷ for him to grant permission, but he was aware the ANDRA rules state that junior competitors must be eight years of age. Mr Treasure confirmed with ANDRA that there

³¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 11.

³² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 11.

³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5; Exhibit 2, Tab 16C.

³⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 17.

³⁵ T 12.

³⁶ T 62 – 63.

³⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 26 [6].

was no way he could permit a child under eight to do the test and he then declined the request, as per the rules.³⁸

35. Mrs Board then contacted Mr Treasure to ask if he would allow Anita to commence her licensing process at the next drag racing event scheduled at the Perth Motorplex, being the Prestige Lock Services Golden States event on 11 November 2017. The request was put on the basis that Mr Board worked away from home in a FIFO capacity, which limited the opportunity for Anita to do it other times. Due to the circumstances and Mr Board's limited availability, Mr Treasure agreed to the request after confirming with ANDRA that it did not breach ANDRA rules as it was a regional championship event, not a national event.³⁹ Mr Treasure indicated what the arrangements would be made on the public Facebook message board in response to Mr Board's message.⁴⁰
36. Mr Treasure indicated that he was able to offer Anita an opportunity to run at the back of the Junior Dragster qualifying on Saturday, 11 November 2017, to get licensed but he stressed she would not be able to be seeded in the field and take part in the racing.⁴¹ Mr Board replied that this was fantastic news and Anita would be,⁴²

absolutely ecstatic. Just to get in the car and do her licensing. Nothing more.

37. As it was a public message board, other people had also added comments, including another junior dragster parent, Michael Naylor. Mr Naylor had watched a number of his children progress through the sport and he had some words of wisdom to share. Sadly, they proved to be more prescient than he intended. Mr Naylor's post read as follows,⁴³

Sometimes getting a licence isn't simple and it is actually a series of tests. Achieving a licence in one day is achievable, but sometimes doesn't happen, maybe for mechanical issues or other. I know Zara has hers, and I don't know if it was achieved in one day, or a couple. It's a lot of pressure for anyone, let alone a brand new eight year old. Not trying to be negative, just saying Anita has plenty of time, and may be rushing a little. Good luck with whatever happens anyway.

38. Mr Board responded to Mr Naylor's post, confirming Zara got her licence in a day but acknowledged Zara was older. Mr Board very sensibly noted that they "were looking to get her driving"⁴⁴ but were not stressed if Anita made it to the field that day. In the end, the arrangement made with Mr Treasure was just to attempt her licence pass, in any event. Mr Board gave evidence at the inquest that their aim was never for Anita to pass her licence that day,

³⁸ T 63; Exhibit 1, Tab 26 [7].

³⁹ T 63; Exhibit 1, Tab 26 [8] – [9].

⁴⁰ T 12.

⁴¹ T 12, 65; Exhibit 1, Tab 26.

⁴² T 13.

⁴³ T 13.

⁴⁴ T 13.

but just for her to be able to have her first experience and taking her first steps towards licensing.⁴⁵

39. On the day of Anita's eighth birthday, being 9 November 2017, she went go-karting with her family to celebrate. Mr Board said this allowed him an opportunity to check that Anita was ready to progress up to her dragster.⁴⁶ Mr Board told police that if he had not been happy with her performance in the go-kart, he would not have allowed her to attempt her licence pass.⁴⁷
40. Anita crashed her go-kart that day, colliding with a safety tyre barrier. Mr and Mrs Board described the incident as occurring because Anita got a little too confident and competitive on the go-kart and wasn't concentrating on where she was going.⁴⁸ Anita stopped riding for a while and sat down with Mrs Board but eventually she returned to the track and was said to have "puttered around for a little bit until she got her confidence back."⁴⁹ The next day Anita complained of a stiff neck and shoulder so Mrs Board took her to a chiropractor to be adjusted. By the day of her licence pass attempt she appeared to be back to her usual self.⁵⁰
41. Despite her crash while go-karting on her birthday, Mr and Mrs Board say that they were happy at that time that Anita had an understanding of the dragster and how it moved and operated and they believed she was ready to attempt to get her junior drag racing licence.⁵¹
42. Mr Board did give evidence that he would have liked to do more to prepare Anita for her first attempt, such as allowing her to walk the track and push or tow her around the track to familiarise her with the staging area and other parts of the track, but this was not permitted.⁵² Mr Board felt this might have assisted Anita with recognising landmarks, noting the limited vision available in the dragster.⁵³ Mr Board noted at the inquest that, after Anita's death, he has spoken to parents in other States who were very surprised to hear that they had not been allowed to go on the track to familiarise Anita prior to that day, given practices in other States.⁵⁴

PROCESS FOR THE LICENCE PASS ATTEMPT

43. The Junior Competition Licence is issued to successful applicants between the ages of 8 and 16 years' inclusive for participation in the Junior Dragster Eliminator Competition. The applicant must have the consent of a parent or legal guardian, who must be a full member of ANDRA. A completed medical

⁴⁵ T 294.

⁴⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [73].

⁴⁷ Exhibit 2, Tab 1, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [74] and Tab 21 [55] – [56].

⁴⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 21 [59].

⁵⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 21.

⁵¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 and Tab 21.

⁵² T 286.

⁵³ T 286.

⁵⁴ T 293.

examination of the junior applicant is required at the time of making the licence application.⁵⁵

44. On 5 October 2017 Anita's mother and Anita had signed an application for junior dragster licence for Anita, which included her completed medical examination and application for a vehicle logbook, with the car registered in her mother's name.⁵⁶
45. The 11 November 2017 was the day of the Golden States Event at the Perth Motorplex. Mr Treasure was the Meeting Director. Mr Neville Stokes was the Chief WA Steward for ANDRA and Mr Brett Stevens, the General Manager of ANDRA, was also present at the Perth Motorplex for the event.
46. I understood from the evidence that the Perth Motorplex staff, in particular Mr Treasure, were in charge of running the event and ensuring that drivers kept to a schedule. The ANDRA officials, on the other hand, had a general safety role and oversight at the event, ensuring that the track was safe, the cars meet appropriate standards and the drivers are driving appropriately.⁵⁷
47. Mr Stokes is a retired police officer, having served more than three decades with the police force, and is also a qualified automotive mechanic and qualified vehicle examiner. Mr Stokes performs his role with ANDRA as a volunteer, having been involved in drag racing since 1967 (when he first obtained his driver's licence) both as a competitor and an official.⁵⁸
48. Mr Stokes conducted a track inspection and everything appeared race ready. The weather was fine, all driving surfaces were dry and the visibility was good.⁵⁹ Mr Treasure described the conditions as "near perfect"⁶⁰ for drag racing.
49. On the morning of 11 November 2017 Mr Board had towed Anita and Zara's dragsters to the Perth Motorplex, arriving at about 8.00 am. He unloaded the vehicles and checked them to make sure they were ready to be raced. Zara's vehicle underwent a random technical inspection under the ESP process but Anita's was not selected.⁶¹
50. Anita drove to the Perth Motorplex separately with her mother and sister, as her mother had borrowed a friend's convertible as a surprise for Anita's birthday.⁶² After they arrived at the Perth Motorplex they all assisted in setting up and getting ready for the day. Anita went with her mother to register herself and her vehicle for the licence pass. Anita's vehicle log book was signed by an ANDRA Volunteer Steward, Malissa Lagh.⁶³ Ms Lagh

⁵⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Exhibit 2, Tab 17.

⁵⁷ T 69.

⁵⁸ T 120 - 122.

⁵⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 11; Exhibit 2, Tab 7.

⁶⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 26 [12].

⁶¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁶² Exhibit 1, Tab 21 [64] - [72].

⁶³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 12.

recalled Anita seemed her normal, happy, bubbly self on the day and appeared to be excited about her licensing attempt.⁶⁴

51. As part of the process, Anita and her mother, as her guardian, signed a disclaimer and consent statement for persons under the age of 19 years, agreeing to be bound by the ANDRA rules. The form also acknowledged “that motor racing is dangerous and that accidents causing death, bodily injury, disability and property damage can and do happen.”⁶⁵
52. A junior dragster is a very different looking vehicle to an ordinary car. It is very narrow and the space for the driver is quite confined. There is a five point harness, consisting of two shoulder straps, two leg straps and a lap strap, that are all locked together with a claw clip. Arm restraints are connected to the seatbelt clasp.⁶⁶ It is not an easy vehicle to get in and out of, especially once the harness is done up. Therefore, part of the licensing process is to test whether the driver can exit the vehicle quickly in an emergency, possibly with their vision impaired by smoke or fire. This is known as the blindfold test.⁶⁷
53. For Anita to pass the blindfold test, she was required to be seated and fully fastened into the dragster wearing all of her safety equipment. She then had to identify various controls before shutting down the engine and exiting the vehicle unassisted with her vision obscured, as if the vehicle was on fire. There is no minimum exit time but the driver does need to demonstrate an appropriate level of urgency and confidence while exiting the vehicle.⁶⁸
54. All the evidence suggests Anita was excited and eager to attempt her licence pass. She had been talking to her teachers and classmates and they were all aware that she had been counting down the days for the big event.⁶⁹ There was evidence Anita had been practising for the blindfold test for a number of months, but on the morning of the test she was a bit distracted playing with a birthday present and perhaps not as focussed as usual. Once Anita appeared focussed and confident and ready Mr Board approached an ANDRA official to conduct the test.⁷⁰
55. ANDRA official Christopher Hay conducted the blindfold test with Anita. He described the test as ensuring “the driver is aware of all the shut-off points”⁷¹ and has an ability to get out of the vehicle in the event of an incident. Mr Hay had not met Anita before that morning. He observed that Anita appeared nervous, quiet and shy whilst he spoke to her. After explaining the process to Anita, she indicated she understood what was required to pass. Anita completed the first test successfully, but Mr Hay asked her to do it again due to her nervousness. Anita did it again and completed it to Mr Hay’s satisfaction, demonstrating to Mr Hay she was aware of the location of all the vehicle controls and was capable of exiting the

⁶⁴ T 153 - 154.

⁶⁵ Exhibit 2, Tab 16A.

⁶⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, pp. 11 - 12.

⁶⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁷¹ T163.

vehicle safely in the event of an emergency. He believed she was ready for the driving side of her licensing test.⁷² Having completed the blindfold test successfully, Anita was then permitted to attempt her first licence pass.

56. Anita's older sister did her first pass that morning at 10.17 am and Anita was lined up behind her to go for her licence pass. However, after taking Zara off to the starting line and watching her do her pass, Mr Board came back to find Anita out of her dragster and in tears as she had a flat tyre. She was unable to complete her testing at that time. Mr and Mrs Board took Anita and her dragster back to the pit area, where they were joined by Zara. Anita's father changed the tube on the tyre and checked her vehicle and Zara's vehicle again. They had time to wait before the next race so they waited for a while before returning towards the line-up area.⁷³
57. Mr Board spent some more time with Anita, running through the hand signals again and making sure Anita understood how to use the brakes, accelerator and controls. Once he felt satisfied that she understood what she was about to do and knew what was required, he instructed Anita to shut off the engine and repeat it a couple of times. He noticed something wasn't right and requested Anita shut off the engine again. Mr Board then noticed the clutch belt wasn't on. The clutch belt had been taken off the vehicle when it was towed, to ensure there was no chance of an accidental start-up. Mr Board put the clutch belt back on and had Anita start the vehicle again. He then got her to run through the hand signals one more time.⁷⁴
58. They sent Zara off to the staging area so that they had a gap between both girls going down the track. Zara went off and completed her qualifying round and Mr Board then went and spoke to ANDRA officials standing on the starting line to work out how to proceed with Anita. Mr Board was told to take Anita to the burnout and staging area as long as she was comfortable and to let her know to go at her own pace.
59. When he returned, Mrs Board told her husband Anita was a bit upset at that stage at having to attempt her licence pass again after the failure with the vehicle earlier. Mr Board had noticed Anita seemed more hesitant than earlier in the morning, because she kept putting her foot on the brake and didn't want to be too close to the cars in the line. Mr Board spoke to Anita, who said she felt it wasn't fair that her car had broken. He 'let her have her moment' and then asked her if she wanted to go down the track, to which she indicated she did. Anita didn't want to put her helmet on as it was too hot, so Mr Board let her keep it off until she was at the rope. Mr Board then helped her to put her helmet on and fastened the straps but left the neck brace off as Anita didn't want it on.⁷⁵
60. Mr Board helped Anita to put her neck brace on then pushed Anita under the bridge prior to the start line. He said to Anita, "Are you good? Are you happy?" and she smiled and gave him a thumbs up in response. Anita then

⁷² T 164 - 166; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 11 and Tab 20; Exhibit 2, Tab 10.

⁷³ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁷⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁷⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 13 and Tab 20 and Tab 21.

did a fist pump and said, “Pony power. Pony power Daddy.”⁷⁶ This indicated to him that she was ready and willing to proceed with her licence pass.⁷⁷ He told her to go safely down the track, to take her time and not to rush and to only go as fast as she felt comfortable. Mr Board then pulled down her helmet visor and Anita was waved forward.⁷⁸

61. Anita waited behind two other junior dragster vehicles, including Zara, who were there to complete the next qualifying round at 11.28 am. Once they had finished their qualifying round the signal was given and Anita was called to the start. All Perth Motorplex staff were alerted over the public announcement system that a new, inexperienced driver was about to come down the track.⁷⁹
62. Unlike in a race, Anita’s licence pass was a solo event and her vehicle was the only one on the track. It was intended that Anita’s pass would be a launch, which means she would stage the vehicle at the start line and wait for the green light, then accelerate briefly from the start line before taking her foot off the accelerator and idling down the track until she could exit out the side gate, which was clearly marked with traffic cones.⁸⁰ Mr Board said he had discussed with Anita that she was only to accelerate for about 60 feet and had tried to show her where this would be on the walls, although it was hard to pinpoint. He believed she understood.⁸¹
63. Anita moved forward and stopped on the burnout pad. She did a burnout in the water and then moved forward to the start. Some witnesses recalled Anita seemed to have trouble moving from the burnout area to staging, and had to be guided by Mr Board.⁸² Anita waited for the lights to change to green. She left the start a little early and was red lighted. A red light means the vehicle left the ‘stage’ beam before the green light was lit. Anita stopped and seemed to hesitate for a few seconds at this stage.⁸³
64. Mr Board explained at the inquest that Anita had been taught to leave on the third amber light, just before the green light came on, as this is the optimum time to accelerate. However, it appears she went a fraction too early and got the red light, which Mr Board thought she wouldn’t have anticipated and this perhaps caused her to stop.⁸⁴
65. Mr Treasure, who could see the events from his position in the race control area, said he saw Anita idling and Mr Board giving her signals to come forward. He noted she took a little while to respond to the instructions and come forward. Mr Treasure said he felt a little concerned and uncomfortable at the time from what he could see as it was unusual for a junior rider not to follow the signal straightaway. Shortly after, Anita came forward and drove slowly straight past Mr Board instead of stopping, as Mr Treasure would

⁷⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [171].

⁷⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 14 and Tab 26 [17].

⁸⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 14.

⁸¹ T 287.

⁸² Exhibit 1, Tab 26 [19] – [20]; Exhibit 2, Tab 5 [10].

⁸³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 14 and Tab 20 [178] – [180].

⁸⁴ T 388.

normally expect. Mr Treasure saw Mr Board turn and walk towards Anita's car. He then saw Anita continue to drive through the beams and down the track but he did not see the lights on the tree activate and count down, which would mean the pass would not count as her licence pass. Mr Treasure assumed Anita would idle the rest of the way down the track and then turn, as usual, so he began to get ready for the next racers. Mr Treasure could not see all the way down the track so he did not see Anita accelerate and did not see the crash. When he was alerted to what had happened by his track safety marshal, Mr Treasure looked over and could see Anita's car nosed into the wall.⁸⁵

66. Mr Board's evidence was he didn't think Anita was going to proceed down the track so he approached her from behind to turn off the engine. There are no mirrors on the dragster so Anita was most likely unaware that Mr Board was walking up behind her. Just as Mr Board got to the rear of Anita's vehicle he heard her accelerate and she took off down the track without stopping at the start line. She ran over Mr Board's foot in the process, which does strongly suggest Anita didn't realise he was approaching.⁸⁶
67. Watching from behind it appeared to Mr Board that Anita had a good straight run down the track. She did not slow at the 60ft and was still going fast as she approached the finish line. Mr Board said he was not sure why Anita went as fast as she did for as long as she did, as this is not what they had discussed. He suggested the reason could have been as simple as the fact that she was "[h]aving fun."⁸⁷ Certainly, Mr Board believed that Anita must have chosen to go at the speed she did.
68. The finish line for the junior dragster is at the 1/8 mile mark (200 m/660 ft.) and is marked by white flags on each side of the track, although there was evidence that they can flutter in the wind and be hard to see. Once Anita crossed the finish line, it was expected that she would definitely decelerate and brake. Mr Board thought he heard her decelerate as he believed he heard the engine revolution's decrease but even so, Mr Board agreed "the car was travelling quicker than [he] would like" at that stage.⁸⁸ Mrs Board also believes she heard the engine change and believed Anita had taken her foot off the accelerator, as did Zara who was close by.⁸⁹ Other witnesses suggested they did not hear an engine change, as would ordinarily occur, so they felt she may have continued to accelerate.⁹⁰
69. What most of the witnesses seemed to agree upon, was that it did not appear that Anita braked. Mr Board did suggest Anita may have tried to brake but perhaps didn't put enough pressure on the brake pedal to wash off as much speed as she need to in order to turn.⁹¹ However, from where Zara stood, much closer to Anita, it didn't appear that Anita touched the brakes at all.⁹² Other witnesses gave similar evidence.

⁸⁵ T 70 – 74, 76.

⁸⁶ T 288; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 14 and Tab 20 [181] – [183].

⁸⁷ T 287.

⁸⁸ T 288.

⁸⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 21 [136] and Tab 22 [26].

⁹⁰ T 191, 220.

⁹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [193].

⁹² Exhibit 1, Tab 22 [27].

70. As to why Anita didn't brake, various witnesses theorised she may not have realised where she was on the track, but Mr Board indicated he really couldn't be sure. Mr Board agreed that it was possible Anita could have panicked, particularly as the car went faster than he and Anita expected it would, given how he had adjusted the throttle.⁹³
71. Even if Anita did take her foot off the accelerator and even attempt to brake a little, it was clear to those watching that Anita had not washed off enough speed to make it safely out the side exit gate. Anita's parents had taught both Zara and Anita that if they were going too fast and couldn't slow down their vehicle they should just keep going straight. Mr Board gave evidence he had tested Anita on this scenario and Anita had confidently been able to tell him she needed to keep going straight if she was going too fast to turn.⁹⁴
72. The junior dragster vehicles carry limited fuel in their engine so they are likely to run out of fuel before reaching the end of the full drag track. There are also sand traps and nets at the end of the full length track for the safety of adult vehicles, which could help a junior dragster slow down if it got that far. Therefore, it is a safer option for them to continue straight if they are going too fast to turn.
73. Mr Board's evidence was that as he watched Anita still heading at speed along the track he thought, "Go straight, go straight" and believes he may have even shouted it out loud.⁹⁵ He was hoping she would go straight like he had taught her, but knew it was out of his hands and he began to feel panic. There was room for Anita's vehicle to go straight ahead safely through the traffic cones if she chose to do so.
74. At about this time, noting this is all happening in a matter of seconds, Mr Board realised there was a track official out on the track in front of Anita's vehicle. Mr Board believed the track official began signalling with one hand to tell Anita to slow down and with the other hand waved her towards the exit gate, guiding her off the track. This was obviously contrary to the instruction to keep going straight, and Mr Board had also taught his daughters to follow the directions of track officials.⁹⁶
75. It appeared to the spectators at first that Anita might continue on straight, but then she was seen to turn the wheel towards the exit gate.⁹⁷ It was thought initially that Anita's vehicle might roll, which would probably have been preferable in this case, but it remained upright.

THE CRASH AND IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

76. The exit gate was an opening in the concrete safety barrier on the left hand side of the track. With the gate in the open position, there was approximately

⁹³ T 294.

⁹⁴ T 285.

⁹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 14.

⁹⁶ T 286 – 287, 289; Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [205].

a 9 metre gap between the gate and the concrete wall. Anita's dragster was travelling too fast to make it through the gap, given the timing of when she began to turn. She failed to negotiate the opening and her car and the dragster crashed into the corner of the concrete barrier next to the open exit gate.

77. The picture below shows the blue hinge of the open gate and then the beginning of the concrete wall, which has a blue metal cover over the corner. There are pink paint marks visible towards the bottom of the blue cover and wall, which were left by Anita's vehicle when she hit the wall.



Exhibit 5

- 78.** The evidence indicates that although Anita's body was strapped into the vehicle with a five point harness, her head was able to move forward and it struck the right side of the butterfly steering wheel. The steering wheel was made of lightweight alloy and it is believed it was pushed backward by the initial impact, then pushed forward by the impact with Anita, until it stopped at almost right angles to the steering column. The impact with the steering wheel caused Anita's helmet to crack between the mouth and side vents.⁹⁸
- 79.** There were a number of people in the vicinity of the exit gate at the time of Anita's crash, including paramedics and fire and emergency staff, as well as Anita's sister Zara and other competitors and their families.
- 80.** Mr Michael Naylor was at the track with his family. Mr Naylor is very involved in the WA drag racing community. He is a long-term competitor and his five children have also all been involved in motor sports, particularly drag racing. As a family they have raced at all of the ANDRA tracks across Australia and confirm they are largely the same.⁹⁹ Mr Naylor's son was a competitor in the junior dragster bracket. Mr Naylor knew the Board family and was aware Anita was preparing for her licence test. He was the person who had responded with some cautionary advice on the Facebook page and it seems he was also a previous owner of Anita's dragster.
- 81.** Mr Naylor's son was completing a race in front of Anita. Mr Naylor proceeded towards the track exit gate so he could collect his son and tow him back after he finished his race. As Anita prepared for her pass, Mr Naylor was stopped in his golf buggy, level with the readout boards and a short distance from the track exit gate. The readout boards show the speed and time of vehicles as they race on the track.
- 82.** It was difficult for Mr Naylor to see Anita at the start line but he got a sense that something had gone wrong when she left the line. He saw Mr Board approach Anita from behind before she drove off. Mr Naylor observed her as she travelled up the track and realised she was not going to slow down to an idle after the first 60 ft. He observed that Anita must be making a full pass, which he thought was unusual given he was aware it was her first ever pass down the track. As Anita approached the 1/8 mile finish line, Mr Naylor thought she was going too fast and would breach the 11.90 second class limits and be disqualified. He quickly turned and looked at the readout boards, which showed Anita had registered a time of 17.55 seconds. Mr Naylor knew this must be incorrect based upon what he had seen. It is true that this time did not reflect the real time it had taken Anita to travel that distance, as she had started the timer and then stopped. It was later identified that she travelled the first 60 feet in 7.801 seconds, and the remaining 600 feet in 9.75 seconds.¹⁰⁰
- 83.** The speed on the board showed 85.78 km/hr.¹⁰¹ Mr Naylor switched his attention back to Anita and his evidence was that he could tell immediately

⁹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, pp. 7, 15.

⁹⁹ T 217.

¹⁰⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 17; Exhibit 2, Tab 9.

¹⁰¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 17.

that she had not slowed down after passing the 1/8 mile finish line and was either maintaining her speed or even accelerating.¹⁰² In Mr Naylor's opinion, Anita was probably travelling at about 95 km/hr at the quarter mile, which is about 20 metres before she crashed, as he believed she was still accelerating after passing the 1/8 mile mark.¹⁰³

- 84.** As noted earlier, Mr Naylor had previously owned Anita's junior dragster, so he knew the vehicle quite well. Mr Naylor explained at the inquest that the car had 'blindners' on the side of it, which meant the car had a very limited and narrow line of vision directly in front of it. Knowing that, and knowing that Anita was a new eight year old who was nervous and excited, he believed she was not aware of where she was on the track and did not see the flags. In his opinion, having thought about it considerably, Mr Naylor believed Anita only realised where she was when she saw the witches' hats or the track official. He also believed her lack of experience driving at speed would have made it difficult for her to estimate her speed and to know that she could not safely negotiate the corner at the speed she was travelling.¹⁰⁴ In support of his theory, Mr Naylor described instances he has witnessed where adult drivers in a 'street type' car have driven into the sand trap as they didn't realise that they had passed the finish line 600 metres earlier.¹⁰⁵
- 85.** Mr Naylor said he jumped off the buggy and ran towards the emergency gate. At that time he noticed a track official standing on the track and Mr Naylor said he started to shout and wave his hands at the official to tell him to direct Anita to continue on straight down the track. This was the same official seen by Mr Board.¹⁰⁶ Like Mr Board, Mr Naylor recalls seeing the track official signalling Anita towards the exit gate with his right hand. Mr Naylor was adamant when he gave evidence at the inquest that he had a clear memory of seeing the track official point to the exit, despite Mr Naylor urging him to tell her to go straight.¹⁰⁷ Mr Naylor said he shouted out a couple of times to the track official but it was too late. It appeared to Mr Naylor that Anita followed the track official's direction and turned the steering wheel sharply at the last minute.
- 86.** Mr Naylor was sympathetic to the situation the track official faced, as he noted that the official was presented with a car only a metre tall coming at him at potentially 90 miles/hr and he then had to make a judgment as to whether the driver was in control and was able to slow their speed. Nevertheless, he noted that if the official makes the wrong judgment, as Mr Naylor believes he did in this case, it can lead to a horrible accident.¹⁰⁸
- 87.** Mr Simon Cope also witnessed the crash. Mr Cope has been involved in motor sport for many years and had actually worked with Mr Treasure in the control tower at the Perth Motorplex for some years. Since 2010 Mr Cope's daughter has been competing in junior dragster racing and his daughter is still a competitor. Mr Cope's daughter was paired up to race against

¹⁰² Exhibit 2, Tab 9.

¹⁰³ Exhibit 2, Tab 9.

¹⁰⁴ T 222.

¹⁰⁵ T 222.

¹⁰⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ T 223.

¹⁰⁸ T 223.

Mr Naylor's son, so he had also been waiting near the exit gate to collect his daughter.¹⁰⁹

88. From his position on the return road Mr Cope also thought Anita had completed quite a fast pass for a C/JD and he thought Anita's vehicle appeared "to continue on full power for quite some distance past the finish line."¹¹⁰ Like Mr Naylor and Mr Board, Mr Cope was calling out "Don't turn," to Anita in the heat of the moment as it was obvious to him that she would struggle to drive safely through the exit gate given her speed. Mr Cope thought he heard the engine cut off just before she impacted the barrier.¹¹¹
89. Like Mr Naylor, Anita's sister, who was waiting by the exit gate for Anita, having just completed her race, was adamant that the track official waved Anita in towards the gate with one hand, while gesturing to her to slow down with the other.¹¹²
90. The track official seen standing on the track was Shaun Rosling, a young man who had been a volunteer helping out at the Perth Motorplex for approximately 2 and a half years and had also been involved in motor sports from a young age. He had not completed any specific training course to become a track official but had been learning through 'on the job' training and mentoring.¹¹³ Mr Rosling was helping out that day and had been assigned the role of a tractor driver, which involved rubbing down the track with a tractor sled and laying rubber for grip. He had been standing behind the exit gate just prior to the time Anita was about to do her licence pass.¹¹⁴
91. Mr Rosling's evidence was that before Anita commenced her pass he walked onto the middle of the track and stood about 10 metres behind the traffic cones, which were positioned on the track to guide the junior vehicles and indicate where they should turn to head out the exit gate. Mr Rosling said he thought that if he stood there he could help to indicate to Anita where she should turn off and if anything should go wrong he was in a position to help her and push her off the track. Mr Rosling understood that it was common practice at that time to assist juniors doing their licence pass and he thought he had done something similar once earlier that day.¹¹⁵ Mr Rosling was wearing a bright yellow shirt, so he would have been highly visible as Anita approached.¹¹⁶ One other track official was also present, standing on the other side of the exit gate (so not on the track). Mr Rosling did not recall any conversation between himself and the other track official before, or after, he went onto the track.¹¹⁷
92. Mr Rosling gave evidence he had often stood out in the middle of the track during junior racing, believing he did it at almost every major meeting for the more novice drivers. He noted that sometimes the cones they use to mark

¹⁰⁹ T 198 - 199; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 17; Exhibit 2, Tab 33.

¹¹⁰ Exhibit 2, Tab 33 [7].

¹¹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 17; Exhibit 2, Tab 33.

¹¹² Exhibit 1, Tab 22 [28] - [29].

¹¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 15 and Tab 30.

¹¹⁴ T 170; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16.

¹¹⁵ T 171.

¹¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16 and Tab 30.

¹¹⁷ T 172.

the exit are green, and can be hard to see, so having a person in a yellow shirt standing a bit higher up can be useful as the junior drivers can see them better. He gave evidence that he had never had a conversation with anyone about this practice prior to Anita's death.¹¹⁸

93. Contrary to Mr Rosling's understanding, Mr Treasure's evidence was that officials are instructed *not* to be on the track during a junior dragster pass, either for licensing or points racing.¹¹⁹ I will return to this issue below, but I note there was evidence from other witnesses that this practice varied, and it appeared that track officials often used their own discretion.¹²⁰ For example, Mr Naylor gave evidence that he did not recall seeing any other track official enter the track on this day, consistent with his Go Pro footage, but at the previous meeting he recalled there were two officials standing on the track for each and every pass.¹²¹
94. While standing on the track Mr Rosling could not see Anita very well at the start line but he heard her do a burnout and saw the 'Christmas Tree' staging lights turn green. He could then see her vehicle as she proceeded down the track. Like Mr Board, it appeared to Mr Rosling that Anita was performing a good straight pass. Anita was travelling in the right hand lane up the track, so on Mr Rosling's left as he faced her. As she continued past the finishing flags at the 1/8 mile it appeared to Mr Rosling that Anita did not 'come off' the accelerator. He gave evidence that he thought he heard her "back off a little bit" just after the finish line but it didn't sound to him like she slowed her speed a lot and the car still had power. He then realised she was going too fast to make the turn.¹²²
95. Mr Rosling said he had been instructed that if vehicles are travelling too fast he should tell them to slow down. He gave evidence he began to wave his arms to indicate to Anita that she needed to slow down. His evidence was that he used both hands in an up and down motion, with both palms pointed down towards the ground, to indicate to her to slow down.¹²³ Mr Rosling demonstrated this action in court and denied the suggestion of other witnesses that he used one hand to point her in the direction of the exit gate.¹²⁴ Mr Rosling's evidence was that he did not think she was going slow enough to actually make the turn and in such cases they would prefer the driver to go straight or come to a complete stop, then they can assist them to move the car out of the gate. This is why he says he is sure he didn't point her to go through the gate, but instead motioned for her to slow down.¹²⁵
96. Mr Rosling said he was expecting Anita at that stage to "either slow down or stop or just go through the cones."¹²⁶ He said he was not expecting her to

¹¹⁸ T 185.

¹¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16.

¹²⁰ For example, T 209 – 210.

¹²¹ Exhibit 2, Tab 9 [111] – [112].

¹²² T 174; Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

¹²³ T 175 – 176; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16 and Tab 30 [34] – [35].

¹²⁴ T 175.

¹²⁵ T 175 - 176.

¹²⁶ T 176.

turn.¹²⁷ Mr Rosling's evidence was that there was sufficient distance between him and the wall for Anita to go past him and continue down the track without putting him in any danger.¹²⁸

97. Mr Rosling recalled that Anita did suddenly decelerate about 10 to 15 metres away from him and he thought her vehicle gradually turned left towards the exit gate, rather than a sharp turn. He noted if it had been a sharp turn the vehicle would have rolled over, but in this case it veered off left. He felt she misjudged where to turn and it was too late to make it by that stage. In his evidence at the inquest, Mr Rosling said he thought he heard the dragster engine go back to idle as she turned, so he wondered if her foot had slipped off the accelerator.¹²⁹
98. Mr Rosling saw Anita's vehicle hit the concrete barrier and the vehicle stopped suddenly before the rear end bounced up into the air and back down again. Mr Rosling immediately ran over towards Anita's vehicle and found Anita still strapped into the vehicle and slumped forward to her right side. Her helmet was cracked and the steering wheel was bent forwards on the right hand side. Anita's hands were off the steering wheel.¹³⁰ Mr Rosling noted Anita was not breathing and said he signalled to the ambulance officers to come over.¹³¹
99. Mr Naylor had stopped running by this stage and he returned to his buggy as he was not permitted on the track at that time, but he asked his older son to go and check on Anita and see if she was okay. Mr Naylor's son ran over to where Mr Rosling was standing and told Mr Rosling to turn off the engine. Mr Rosling didn't know how, so Mr Naylor's son flicked the switches off. Mr Naylor recalled his son then turned and beckoned to the paramedics, who were parked close by, to hurry over as he could tell Anita was unconscious. Her helmet had been knocked off on impact and she was slumped forwards and unresponsive. Mr Cope had also run over and he noticed the butterfly steering wheel in the car was bent from impact.¹³²

EMERGENCY TREATMENT

100. Mr Treasure explained that the standard procedure is for the fire and emergency crew employed at the Perth Motorplex to go in first after a crash to make sure it is safe and there's no chance of fire, then the paramedics go in second once the danger is cleared. Generally venue staff would try to keep family and crew away from an accident scene for safety reasons.¹³³
101. In this case Mr Board had seen Anita crash into the concrete barrier from the starting line and he started running up the main track towards the scene, Mr Board was collected by a track official in a buggy along the way.

¹²⁷ T 176.

¹²⁸ T 177 - 178.

¹²⁹ T 177.

¹³⁰ T 180; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16 and Tab 30.

¹³¹ T 178.

¹³² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 17.

¹³³ T 77.

By the time he reached Anita the paramedics had already come over to tend to her. He could see Anita was still in the vehicle. Her helmet and neck brace had been removed by the paramedics but she was still strapped in the vehicle by her harness.¹³⁴ He believed she was still breathing at this stage.¹³⁵

- 102.** The two St John Ambulance paramedics, Melanie Strike and Nathan Fleming, had been sitting in an ambulance about 50 metres from the crash location and witnessed the crash. Ms Strike had a clear view of the track and did not think Anita applied the brakes before crashing at high speed into the barrier. She also noted Anita appeared to veer sideways without making a concerted effort, which made her wonder if Anita had a syncopal event (fainted) beforehand. Ms Strike noted it was very hot on the track at the time, which could cause a person to faint.¹³⁶
- 103.** The paramedics were flagged by Mr Rosling and possibly Mr Naylor's son to come and assist, so Ms Strike came out of the ambulance and ran over to the crash scene, at which time Anita was still strapped in and wearing all her safety gear. Ms Strike checked Anita for vital signs and found she was unresponsive, not breathing, her lips and nose were cyanosed and she had a weak carotid pulse. Ms Strike could see a deep laceration to the right side of Anita's neck, which was the only visible injury.¹³⁷
- 104.** Ms Strike cut Anita's helmet strap and removed the helmet and neck brace while maintaining her airway. Extricating Anita from the vehicle was difficult due to the confined design of the vehicle. Ms Strike called out urgently that she needed help to get Anita out of the car but no one came forward. She then called out to her partner to get all of the equipment ready so that they could get her straight into the ambulance as it appeared that she was quite 'time critical'.¹³⁸ Mr Board then came running up. Ms Strike told him that they needed to get her out immediately and he instinctively stepped forward and ripped the windscreen off the vehicle and pulled the steering wheel out of the way. He then undid the harness to free Anita. Mr Board placed his hand under Anita's neck to support it and cradled her head in his arm and tried to keep her head and neck as straight as possible as he lifted her out of the vehicle and placed her onto the nearby stretcher.¹³⁹
- 105.** It is not clear where the fire and emergency services crew were during this period of time, as they were said by witnesses to be present by the exit gate prior to the crash, and it was their role to help extricate a driver from a crashed car, but no one was able to identify any particular person performing that role at the time. The paramedic, Ms Strike, gave evidence that it was her understanding that the fire and rescue vehicle attendants would help her extricate Anita from the vehicle, but when she called for assistance they did not provide it.¹⁴⁰ Further, no witness gave evidence of a fire and emergency services officer assisting at the time. Mr Cope described

¹³⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹³⁵ T 290.

¹³⁶ T 238; Exhibit 1, Tab 24 [31] – [32].

¹³⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 19 and Tab 10.

¹³⁸ T 237.

¹³⁹ T 237; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 19 and Tab 10.

¹⁴⁰ T 237.

“a bit of confusion”¹⁴¹ around this time and “a bit of paralysis”¹⁴² on the part of people at the scene, which suggests people weren’t sure how to react.

- 106.** Similar to Mr Treasure’s evidence, the General Manager of Perth Motorplex, Mr Mark Zundans, gave evidence that it is the primary role of the fire and safety staff to ensure that there are no flames or other obvious dangers before allowing the paramedics access, and they would then take direction from the paramedics. If it is a case of getting the driver out, Mr Zundans indicated this can be done extremely quickly by the crews. However, Mr Zundans understanding in this case the fire and safety crew members were waiting to see what the paramedics required, without perhaps fully appreciating how serious the incident was given how the crash was perceived. There was evidence that a fire and safety officer offered to set up the Jaws of Life when Ms Strike indicated Anita needed to be extricated from the vehicle, but Ms Strike rejected this as she stated there was not time to wait. Mr Board acted the fastest from there, which is understandable given his clear interest in ensuring his daughter received the fastest possible treatment.¹⁴³
- 107.** Ms Strike asked for help to get Anita’s overalls off and again Mr Board stepped into action and ripped the overalls open so that the paramedics could treat Anita. Mr Board noticed at this time the laceration on Anita’s neck and another one on her right leg and became very upset. He was escorted out of the way by Perth Motorplex staff so that the paramedics could continue to do their job.¹⁴⁴
- 108.** It was apparent to Ms Strike that Anita had possible cervical spine fractures as her neck was extremely mobile. The removal of the overalls also revealed a groin laceration on her left leg and a possible fracture to her right femur. It was later confirmed she had a pelvic fracture but not a fractured femur. Anita had become increasingly cyanotic during the extraction from the vehicle and she had no palpable pulse by the time she was on the stretcher. She did, however, have electrical activity on the cardiac monitor. An airway was inserted. There was no obvious pneumothorax at that time, but it appeared one was developing. The paramedics commenced basic life support interventions and decided to urgently transfer Anita to Rockingham General Hospital (RGH). She was taken to the hospital under priority one conditions. During the journey Anita’s heart still showed some electrical activity, but she was asystole (no electrical activity) on arrival at the hospital at 11.54 am.¹⁴⁵
- 109.** Anita was taken into the Emergency Department and found to have bradycardic electrical activity on the cardiac monitor. Two complete rounds of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, including adrenaline administration, were performed and after seven minutes a palpable pulse was noted, consistent with a return of spontaneous circulation. It was likely this improvement was due to decompression of a right tension pneumothorax. Discussions were undertaken with staff in the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) Intensive

¹⁴¹ T 200.

¹⁴² T 200.

¹⁴³ T 258 - 260.

¹⁴⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 20 and Tab 10.

¹⁴⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, pp. 20 - 21.

Care Unit (ICU) and it was agreed that a scan would be undertaken of Anita's head and she would then be urgently transferred to PMH.¹⁴⁶

- 110.** A CT scan was performed, which revealed a subarachnoid haemorrhage, which extended into the ventricles and down the spine, as well as soft tissue swelling to the upper cervical spine indicating a likely spinal cord injury.¹⁴⁷ Anita's parents were told she would be placed in an induced coma but they were initially reassured from speaking to the doctors that she would recover. Sadly, this proved not to be the case.
- 111.** Anita was taken by ambulance under priority conditions to PMH, arriving at about 2.45 pm. She was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit and immediately reviewed by a number of specialists. Following the examination, Anita's family were advised Anita had suffered a catastrophic and irrecoverable brain injury, most likely related to a cardiac arrest secondary to a tension pneumothorax (collapsed lung) sustained as a result of the crash. The medical opinion was that no interventions could alter the outcome.¹⁴⁸ Further review of a whole body CT scan by a radiologist confirmed that there was a cranio-cervical junction injury, which was effectively a near-transection of Anita's brainstem.¹⁴⁹

CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH

- 112.** On 12 November 2017 testing confirmed brain death. Family and friends came to say goodbye to Anita and they united together in a final prayer for her before Anita's death was certified by a doctor in ICU at PMH at 12.15 pm on 12 November 2017. Anita's family agreed to organ donation, as they wanted something good to come out of their devastating loss and to save another family from losing a child. Anita was able to give the gift of several of her organs to help others after her death.¹⁵⁰
- 113.** An external post mortem examination was performed by Forensic Pathologist Dr Daniel Moss on 15 November 2017. Dr Moss was provided with information relating to the circumstances of Anita's death and he reviewed her medical records. Dr Moss noted that Anita had been diagnosed in hospital with traumatic subarachnoid haemorrhage as well as complete cervical occipital dissociation with cervical spinal cord compression. There was also evidence of hypoxic ischaemic brain injury and other injuries to the body. Based on this information, Dr Moss was able to give a cause of death without conducting a full internal examination.¹⁵¹
- 114.** Dr Moss formed the opinion the cause of death was complications of multiple injuries. I accept and adopt the conclusion of Dr Moss as to the cause of death.

¹⁴⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

¹⁴⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 22.

¹⁴⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 23 and Tab 15.

¹⁴⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 15.

¹⁵⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 15 and Tab 16.

¹⁵¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 20 [319].

115. I find that the manner of death was by way of misadventure.

THE POLICE INVESTIGATION

Initial Attendance at the Perth Motorplex

116. There were some issues with police attendance at the incident. The police were first notified there had been a serious incident at the Perth Motorplex at 12.20 pm.¹⁵² A Tactical Traffic Sergeant was contacted and he advised it was not a traffic matter. Therefore, two officers from the local Kwinana Police Station were sent to the scene. Senior Constable Bailey and First Class Constable Cuthbert arrived at the scene at about 12.40 pm.¹⁵³

117. The Major Crash Investigation Section were contacted at 12.57 pm and a Detective Sergeant from the unit indicated his belief the crash was not within the Major Crash charter as the crash occurred on private property. He felt it was more properly a Coronial Investigation Section matter and advised no officer from Major Crash would be attending.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it was left to the local police at that stage.

118. Mr Stokes, ANDRA's Chief Steward on the day, spoke to the attending police officers. He advised of his role and that he had instructed other ANDRA officials to move Anita's vehicle from the side access road, where it had been pushed initially, to a scrutineering shed for further inspection. Mr Stokes had then instructed three ANDRA officials to complete a post-accident vehicle examination. This included removing the outer casing, the foam cushioning and the seat from Anita's dragster, as well as the safety harness for future examination. The vehicle examination found several body parts of the vehicle were damaged.¹⁵⁵

119. The attending police officers were initially concerned that ANDRA officials were deliberately tampering with evidence, but were reassured that this was part of the role and responsibility of ANDRA following a crash. It should be emphasised that at this stage the ANDRA officials had wrongly understood Anita's injuries would not be life-threatening as the damage to the car was not considered consistent with significant injuries.¹⁵⁶ It was clarified at the inquest by Mr Stokes that if the severity of her injuries had been understood, the ANDRA officials would not have touched the car.¹⁵⁷

120. It was also raised at the inquest that in the ANDRA Stewards Manual, under the heading of Critical Incident Procedures, it directs that, "[u]nder no circumstances should any vehicles be moved from the positions they finished in. Ensure that an accurate record is commenced and kept of the following: time of incident; response times; medical services provided; time of

¹⁵² Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

¹⁵³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 21.

¹⁵⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ Exhibit 2, Tab 8 [21].

¹⁵⁷ T 125 – 127; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 21.

transport to hospital; and time of public announcement.”¹⁵⁸ Further down, it directs that the area should be cleared in preparation for the continuation of racing. It was suggested that this information is somewhat contradictory, and does not provide clear direction for photographing the vehicle etc. *in situ*, which would have been an advantage in this case.¹⁵⁹

121. However, it was clarified by counsel appearing on behalf of ANDRA that photographs were taken by ANDRA officials of Anita’s dragster almost in the spot where it came to rest, although it had been moved around slightly to extricate her. Mr Rosling, who was first on the scene, confirmed that the picture showed the car in effectively the same position he first saw it immediately after the crash.¹⁶⁰ It was agreed by a police witness that this did fulfil some of the requirements for crash investigation.¹⁶¹ A detective who attended the scene confirmed she was sent those photographs at a later stage.¹⁶²
122. There was no direct CCTV footage of the crash either, as the security cameras at the venue were not directed towards that location.¹⁶³ It would have helped the crash investigators to do a reconstruction if the footage had been available.¹⁶⁴ I will return to this issue later.
123. The police officers were joined by ANDRA General Manager Mr Stevens and the Venue Manager, Matt Curran. Photographs were taken of Anita’s vehicle and security staff were then left to guard the vehicle while the attending police officers were taken to the crash scene. Competition was still continuing on the track at this time. One of the police officers requested that racing be stopped to allow photographs to be taken of the track. Racing continued for three more races before it was stopped and the police officers took some photographs. Racing was then permitted to continue and the initial attending police officers left the scene at 1.37 pm.¹⁶⁵

Re-attendance of Police at the Motorplex

124. Detectives from Mandurah Detectives Office were requested to attend the Perth Motorplex after it became apparent the incident involving Anita was serious and she was in a critical condition. Rockingham Detectives were unavailable, which is why officers from Mandurah were sent instead.¹⁶⁶ Two detectives, Detective Senior Constables Mead and Newman, arrived at 1.46 pm and were met by Mr Stevens, the General Manager of ANDRA Mr Mark Zundans, and the Perth Motorplex Operations Manager, Mr Matthew Curran. Racing had recommenced at this stage.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁸ T 7 – 8; Exhibit 2, Tab 15.

¹⁵⁹ T 8 – 9, 42.

¹⁶⁰ T 182 - 183.

¹⁶¹ T 50.

¹⁶² T 56.

¹⁶³ T 27.

¹⁶⁴ T 28.

¹⁶⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 21.

¹⁶⁶ T 9.

¹⁶⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 22 and Tab 3.

- 125.** Mr Zundans was not at the Motorplex at the time of Anita's crash, but had been notified of the incident just before midday and had immediately driven to the venue. He had arrived just before 1.00 pm and spoke to Mr Treasure, to find out more about the events and was present when the detectives arrived.
- 126.** Detective Mead noted that due to their lack of experience, the initial attending officers had failed to ascertain the seriousness of the incident and had taken the initial report and left. On her arrival, Detective Mead immediately requested that racing be stopped so a forensic examination of the track could be conducted. Racing ceased again at 1.56 pm.¹⁶⁸ Detective Mead requested that the initial attending officers return to the scene to assist the investigation by indicating what they had done when they first attended and then to assist further with the investigation and provide a scene guard of Anita's vehicle.¹⁶⁹
- 127.** Crime Scene Unit were requested to attend the scene, and they arrived at approximately 2.25 pm.¹⁷⁰ The crime scene officers conducted a walk-through of the scene and then took photographs of the relevant areas and items. They then attended the shed and examined and photographed Anita's dragster and safety equipment. It was noted that there was damage to the front of Anita's vehicle and also to the front of her helmet.¹⁷¹
- 128.** Mr Zundans spoke to Mr Board at about 2.45 pm, when it was still thought that Anita would be okay. Mr Board raised his concern about the track official waving Anita through the exit gate when it would have been safer for her to continue straight down the track. Mr Board was clear his intent was not to lay blame, but to ensure that no one else's safety was compromised. Mr Board gave evidence that it was at the prompting of his older daughter Zara, as she had seen Mr Rosling waving Anita out the gate and was angry and upset about it and wanted to ensure it didn't happen again.¹⁷² Mr Zundans says he suggested that it was something that could be discussed later, noting that he was not particularly familiar with drag racing but recognised it was an issue he would need to follow up.¹⁷³
- 129.** Racing for the adult events finally resumed at 4.30 pm that day after clearance was granted by the police.¹⁷⁴ Around this time information came through that Anita's health had taken a turn for the worse and word was passed through later that night that she would not survive. The events for the following day at the Motorplex were cancelled.¹⁷⁵
- 130.** An experienced police coronial investigator, Senior Constable John Turner, took charge of the investigation a few days after Anita's death. Senior Constable Turner has also worked at the Major Crash Investigation Squad and he felt it was probably a matter in which that squad's expertise could be

¹⁶⁸ T 54; - 55; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 22 and Tab 3.

¹⁶⁹ T 54; Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

¹⁷⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 23.

¹⁷¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 24.

¹⁷² T 291; Exhibit 1, Tab 27 [34] – [35].

¹⁷³ T 243.

¹⁷⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 27 [43].

¹⁷⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 27.

utilised.¹⁷⁶ Although Major Crash officers had been requested to attend on the day of the crash, and the following day, there appears to have been ongoing resistance on their part to getting involved. However, when Senior Constable Turner became involved, he was able to use his own contacts to ‘fast-track’ the request.¹⁷⁷

- 131.** On 17 November 2017 officers from the WA Police Surveying Unit attended the Perth Motorplex and used a 3D scanner to scan the scene of the crash.¹⁷⁸ At Senior Constable Turner’s request, on the same day a Crash Reconstruction Officer from the Major Crash Investigation Section attended the Perth Motorplex. However, there was limited evidence that could be used from the scene given the track was heavily used by drag racing vehicles and there was little information to be gained from surface marks. Further, it was believed at that time that there were no photographs taken of Anita’s vehicle in situ in its post-crash position.¹⁷⁹
- 132.** The evidence that could be seen from the paint marks and tyre scuffs on the concrete barrier suggested the front left tyre of the dragster hit the steel gate and the vehicle itself collided head on with the corner of the concrete barrier wall, next to the open gate. The steering wheel damage also suggested a significant impact occurred to push it so far from its original position.¹⁸⁰
- 133.** At that late stage, and with no CCTV footage or other direct objective evidence available, no conclusion could be reached as to the radius of the turn or the speed at which the dragster was travelling at the time of the crash.¹⁸¹ It was believed the vehicle data logger did not display the last actual recorded speed of the vehicle.¹⁸² However, information was later provided by ANDRA that a download of information from the data logger showed the impact speed was 37.21 miles/hr, which equates to just under 60 km/hr.¹⁸³ This was a decelerated speed from the maximum speed recorded, about 6 seconds prior to impact, of 56.71 miles/hr (approximately 91 km/hr), which it was said would have been close to the 200 metre finish line.¹⁸⁴
- 134.** However, Mr Cope, who has extensive experience in interpreting the data logger results, cast doubt on the accuracy of these speed records. Mr Cope explained that to get accurate speeds from the apparatus, it has to be configured correctly, and there is no way of verifying that this has been done.¹⁸⁵ Mr Cope did, however, suggest that the speed of 60 km/hr could be used as a base rate, although in his view Anita’s speed on impact was “quite likely higher.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁶176 T 7.

¹⁷⁷ T 57.

¹⁷⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 24.

¹⁷⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 26; Exhibit 2, Tab 24.

¹⁸⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 26; Exhibit 2, Tab 24.

¹⁸¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 26; Exhibit 2, Tab 24.

¹⁸² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 26; Exhibit 2, Tab 24.

¹⁸³ T 159.

¹⁸⁴ T 160.

¹⁸⁵ T 201 - 202.

¹⁸⁶ T 209.

- 135.** Mr Cope was able to say that the data showed Anita was partially off the accelerator at some stage, as noted above with the decelerated speed, but it could not be determined whether she had completely taken her foot off the accelerator. Further, from the data shown, it also appeared that at about 12.2 seconds Anita put her foot back on the accelerator and accelerated again shortly before impact.¹⁸⁷ It's not clear why she did that.
- 136.** From his personal experience working at Major Crash, Senior Constable Turner suggested that if Major Crash had attended at an earlier stage they could have scanned the whole scene with scanners and got a 3D picture of what happened and obtained more evidence and information that could have assisted this inquiry. Unfortunately, for the reasons set out above, that did not occur.¹⁸⁸

Examination of the Dragster

- 137.** As noted above, prior to police attendance, some ANDRA officials inspected Anita's dragster and removed some items from it. One official, Mr Joshua Fowler, had been at the start line and saw Anita crash. He was also present when a tow truck took Anita's dragster and moved it to a shed. Mr Fowler immediately inspected the vehicle and noticed the butterfly steering wheel was damaged and nearly flat, which he believed came from Anita's body impacting it.¹⁸⁹ He also noticed the vehicle pedals "appeared strangely aligned."¹⁹⁰ There was evidence they had been deliberately bent, which Mr Fowler said he found strange, but Mr Stokes indicated later this had been clearly been done deliberately before the crash.¹⁹¹
- 138.** The throttle was fine and appeared to operate normally. Mr Fowler was involved in removing the safety harness from the vehicle before Mr Stokes came in and directed the inspection to cease. He noted the harness did not have any rips or obvious fatigue showing.¹⁹² Mr Fowler made a note that the steering was too badly damaged to be working correctly and also that the steering column lacked a locking collar to prevent movement into the cockpit as required by the rules.¹⁹³ He explained in his statement that the rules require it in the event of a front end collision, but he wasn't sure if it had been removed prior to him inspecting the car.¹⁹⁴
- 139.** The Chief Steward, Mr Stokes, also had a look at Anita's dragster in the shed. He looked at the steering wheel and rocked it back and forth and found that, other than crash damage, the steering remained intact. He also applied pressure to the foot brake pedal, resulting in a solid pedal and he noted a constant pressure was maintained.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁷ T 202.

¹⁸⁸ T 7.

¹⁸⁹ T 195 – 196.

¹⁹⁰ Exhibit 2, Tab 4 [36].

¹⁹¹ T 144, 195; Exhibit 3, Tab 1.

¹⁹² Exhibit 2, Tab 4 [36].

¹⁹³ Exhibit 2, Tab 19.

¹⁹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

¹⁹⁵ T 125; Exhibit 2, Tab 8 [23] – [24].

- 140.** Anita’s vehicle was seized and towed by WA Police to a police holding yard in Rockingham on the afternoon of 11 November 2017. Two examiners from the WA Police Vehicle Investigation Unit, both qualified mechanics, examined the vehicle at the holding yard over two days with a view to determining if there were any defects in the vehicle that could have caused or contributed to the crash.¹⁹⁶
- 141.** The examiners prepared a report. Their conclusion was that the build quality of the vehicle was of a “substandard condition.”¹⁹⁷ Many critical components were said to be in a “barely serviceable condition,”¹⁹⁸ with the following components identified as causing concern:
- Fuel pipes attached to the carburettor, fuel filter and fuel pump were not secured in place with pipe clamps, possibly permitting a fuel leak;
 - Engine exhaust system loose;
 - Accelerator and brake pedal assembly not fastened to a structural chassis member of the vehicle, thus allowing pedal assemblies to flex and distort when applied (which I note is a concerning issue Mr Stokes describes, set out further below);
 - Substandard fasteners had been utilised within the accelerator and brake pedal assemblies;
 - Rack and pinion steering assembly was worn, nil dust/dirt ingress seals present;
 - Rack and pinion steering assembly nylon bushing worn, excess free play evident;
 - Left and right side of the rack and pinion steering rods were loose; and
 - Right side steering king pin is not secured in place with a nut or fastener, therefore it had the possibility to dislodge.¹⁹⁹
- 142.** Vehicle Examiner Paul Kaye felt it was possible the loss of steering was due to the crash impact, and was not present before the crash. Mr Kaye did express some surprise that the defects were not identified during the scrutineering process, but Mr Kaye did not suggest any vehicle defect identified caused or contributed to the crash.²⁰⁰
- 143.** Mr Stokes also had an opportunity to examine Anita’s junior dragster after it was impounded to prepare a vehicle examination report for ANDRA. Like Mr Kaye, Mr Stokes noted a number of defects, namely:
- There was no collar or pin fitted to the steering shaft;
 - Misalignment of the apply arm on the master cylinder piston in the brake assembly; and
 - The required roll pin at the front of the pinion input shaft had been replaced by a pop rivet.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ T 266.

¹⁹⁷ T 265; Exhibit 2, Tab 22, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Exhibit 2, Tab 22, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 25; Exhibit 2, Tab 22.

²⁰⁰ T 267; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 25.

²⁰¹ T 129 - 130; Exhibit 3, Tab 1.

- 144.** At the end of his examination, Mr Stokes concluded that the defect to the roll pin would have had no bearing on the cause of the crash, and for reasons explained below, the missing steering collar/pin did not increase Anita's injuries. However, Mr Stokes believed the defect to the brakes may have extended the stopping distance of the vehicle in the event of an emergency, which could be relevant to the cause and severity of the crash.²⁰²
- 145.** Mr Stokes explained that this defect would not have been easy to see with the body of the dragster in place, which may explain why it was overlooked when the dragster was scrutineered. Simply putting a foot on the brake pedal, which is a common way for a technical inspector or scrutineer to test the brakes, would not have identified the problem.²⁰³
- 146.** Looking first at the steering wheel and harness, Mr Stokes noted that the installation adjustment of the five point harness, combined with where the lap part of the belt was inserted through the seat, may not have effectively restrained Anita in the event of a frontal impact, and may have contributed to her helmet striking the steering wheel. He believed the steering wheel had moved back about 25 mm due to markings on the shaft, at the same time that the safety harness allowed her to move forward because of her small frame. However, Mr Stokes noted that the fact the steering wheel moved backwards was probably beneficial in this case, as it meant that Anita's head did not move as far forward as it would otherwise have done.²⁰⁴ That is why he did not consider the defect to the steering pin to be a contributor to the injury she received although it would seem the way the safety harness was fitted to Anita did make a difference.²⁰⁵
- 147.** Mr Stokes gave evidence that the only way this would have been apparent is if Anita was seen sitting in the seat, with the harness done up, which in Mr Stokes' experience is rarely done during a technical inspection, as the racer is often not present.²⁰⁶ Mr Hay, who did the blindfold test, had seen Anita in the seat with her harness done up, and agreed she did look "a bit smaller in that car,"²⁰⁷ but he did not see anything that caused him any concern.
- 148.** As to the cause of the crash, Mr Stokes gave evidence that he believed the brake application may have played a role. Mr Stokes explained at the inquest that the misalignment of the apply arm on the master cylinder piston meant that when the foot pressed on the brake, the lever that pushes on a pin to operate the brake was offset and pushed on an angle, rather than straight.²⁰⁸ The picture below shows how it is offset. Mr Stokes explained that the piston is visible, when it should not be visible when the two components are in contact.

²⁰² Exhibit 3, Tab 1.

²⁰³ T 140.

²⁰⁴ T 130.

²⁰⁵ T 131 - 132.

²⁰⁶ T 140 - 141.

²⁰⁷ T 166.

²⁰⁸ T 129.



EXHIBIT 3, Tab 1, p. 15

- 149.** There were also score marks visible on the side of the piston, which demonstrated how the piston was being pushed sideways when it was applied. When Mr Stokes tested it, extreme pressure was required to be applied, due to the sideways movement.²⁰⁹ When testing it himself, Mr Stokes found he had to push almost all his weight physically onto it before the wheels stopped turning. He then conducted a test and found that it required 48 kg of pressure on the foot brake pedal to lock the rear wheels, whereas once the brake master cylinder was repositioned outward into its proper position, it only required 32 kg of pressure to lock the rear wheels.²¹⁰ Anita weighed only 29 kg, and was also small in stature. This meant she would not have been able to apply anyway near the pressure needed to bring the vehicle to a full halt rapidly.²¹¹
- 150.** Mr Stokes noted that Anita's vehicle should have been decelerating more rapidly than it did, in any event, if she had taken her foot off the accelerator after the finish line, but her lack of deceleration suggested she did not take her foot off the accelerator.²¹² An examination of the vehicle did not find the accelerator to be jammed, so it would have required Anita to have her foot pressed on it.²¹³

²⁰⁹ T 132 – 133; Exhibit 3, Tab 1, pp. 14 – 15.

²¹⁰ T 133 – 134; Exhibit 3, Tab 1, p. 16.

²¹¹ T 134.

²¹² T 134 – 135.

²¹³ T 135.

151. Mr Stokes suggested the evidence pointed to Anita not decelerating and braking at the finish line. If she then tried to brake heavily shortly before the exit gate, the defect with the piston would have made it very difficult for her to stop the vehicle sufficiently to go out the gate.²¹⁴

JUNIOR DRAG RACING AND THE EXIT GATE

152. The Perth Motorplex is situated on Anketell Road in Kwinana Beach. It is a purpose built, world class, motorsport complex. It was officially opened in December 2000 and has been known previously as the Quit Motorplex and the Kwinana Motorplex. The Perth Motorplex currently contains a dragstrip and a speedway and is a venue for both these sports on a national level.²¹⁵ The Peter Motorplex track met the minimum ANDRA requirements for championship drag racing and related events at all levels. It had passed ANDRA inspection most recently on 29 September 2017 and was considered to be a secure and safe environment for public use.²¹⁶

153. ANDRA is the primary drag racing sanctioning body in Australia. Presently, ANDRA sanctions races throughout regional Australia and in the capital cities. ANDRA was created in 1973 but junior drag racing is a more recent category of racing. Previously, people could only participate in drag racing after they were old enough to obtain their adult driver's licence. The junior dragster racing was developed by ANDRA for competitors between eight and sixteen years' inclusive. Junior dragsters are limited to competition over the 1/8 mile, which is half the distance generally raced by adult drag racers.²¹⁷

154. At the start of the track is the staging area. The staging area is located behind the starting line. Racing involves two racers staging then, when the Christmas tree lights turn green, accelerating and heading side by side down the straight track. There is not intended to be any interaction between the two vehicles. They are usually competing to try and be first across the finish line, so reaction time and speed are important, but in junior drag racing and some other forms of the competition, this is modified.

155. For junior drag racing, I am informed the 'dial your own' handicap system is used. This simply means the racer nominates their own handicap time. This gives the slower vehicle in the race a physical head start, which is programmed electronically into the Computerised Timing System. To stop someone nominating a time slower than they can actually run, thus giving the racer an unfair advantage, a 'breakout rule' is applied. Put simply, if the driver exceeds the time nominated for the 'dial-in' then they lose the race.²¹⁸

156. Junior drag racing is divided into three categories at the Perth Motorplex, designated as A, B and C. Anita was attempting to obtain her licence for the C category, which is for the youngest category of drivers, aged between 8 and 10 years' inclusive. They are limited to a time no faster than 11.90 seconds

²¹⁴ T 139 - 140.

²¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 2.

²¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 4.

²¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 3.

and a top speed no faster than 60 miles per hour (96 kilometres per hour) over 1/8 mile.²¹⁹

- 157.** The track is bordered by safety barriers on each side. The Perth Motorplex has a freestanding concrete barrier in place.²²⁰ At the Perth Motorplex there is an exit gate installed on the left hand side of the track, some distance down the concrete barrier. It is only open when junior dragsters are racing on the track and is closed when the adults race.²²¹ The distance between the open exit gates was said by Senior Constable Turner to be 7.9 metres and the gap between the gate and the concrete barrier, when open, 60 cm. The height of the concrete barrier wall is 1 metre.²²² According to Mr Treasure, who measured it, the gap between the open gates is actually exactly 9 metres.²²³
- 158.** The junior drag race ends at the 1/8 mile (roughly 200 metres) and then the junior drag racers continue down the track, past the 1/4 mile (roughly 400 metres) and then when they reached a point just past the 1/5 mile mark (roughly 450 metre) they turn out through the exit gates opening.²²⁴
- 159.** The coronial investigation raised a question mark over the safety of having the juniors exit through the side gate, particularly given the circumstances of Anita's crash. The police investigation identified several non-fatal incidents involving juniors hitting the exit gate in circumstances very similar to the events involving Anita. There had also been a number of incidents where the car had rolled due to the junior driver trying to make the turn when they were travelling too fast.

²¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 3.

²²⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

²²¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 16.

²²² Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 24.

²²³ T 95.

²²⁴ T 89; Exhibit 1, Tab 21 [138].

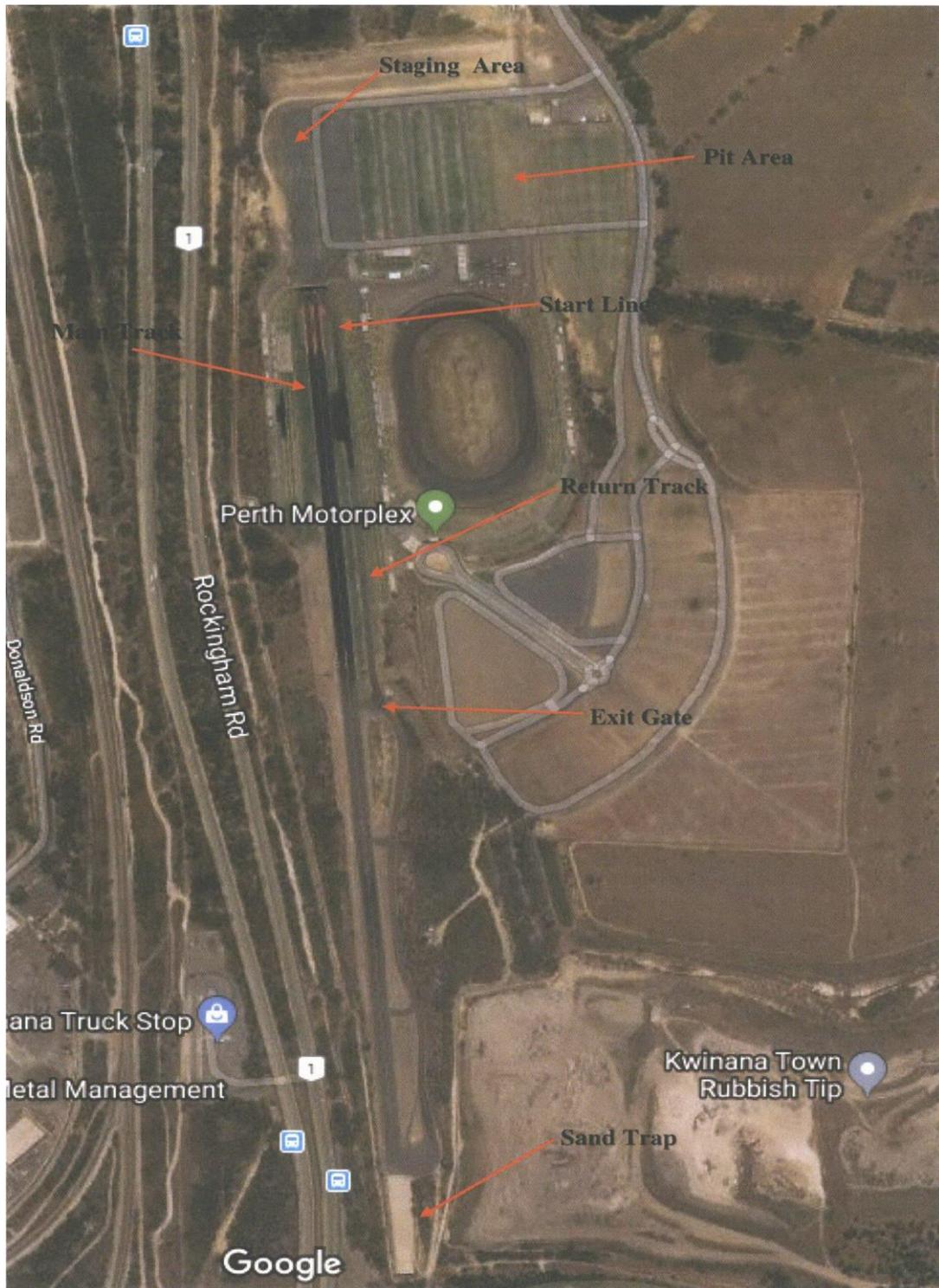


Exhibit 1, Tab 3 Annexure A showing a plan of the Perth Motorplex

Previous Incidents involving the exit gate at Perth Motorplex

- 160.** At the time of the investigation ANDRA officials suggested there had not been any other crashes similar to Anita's. ANDRA did provide information of two junior dragsters who rolled onto their right side after exiting the track and passing through the exit gate at speed. No injury was sustained by the drivers and only minor damage occurred to the dragster vehicle and the exit gate.²²⁵
- 161.** The police investigation found evidence of a number of other incident that could be said to have similarities to Anita's crash, all involving issues with turning to leave through the exit gate.²²⁶ Senior Constable Turner was able to identify four other crashes involving junior racers at the Perth Motorplex, prior to Anita's crash. There was some documentation in relation to these from ANDRA.²²⁷
- 162.** In January 2009 an 11 year old girl, who had completed numerous passes on the Perth Motorplex track without issue, did not wipe off enough speed after crossing the finishing line. When she tried to exit the side gate, as directed by an official, she rolled the vehicle and the dragster slid on the track towards the exit gate. As her arm restraints were not correctly adjusted, she was able to hold onto the roll cage, which resulted in the child nearly severing a finger on her right hand, which had to be surgically reattached.²²⁸ The girl's father provided a statement to police indicating his belief that if his daughter had not had to use the exit gate, the accident would not have occurred. In his opinion, if she had been allowed to continue down the track she could have wiped off speed.²²⁹ He expressed the opinion that "it is difficult to turn a dragster into a small opening, especially when travelling at speed and new to the sport/driving."²³⁰ He also believed the finish line was not obvious to her, which made it more difficult for her to know when she had completed the pass and to then reduce her speed. It appears from his statement that the finish line flags were installed after this incident.²³¹
- 163.** This girl's father said he voiced his concerns about junior drag racing safety after his daughter's crash but received no formal response from ANDRA in relation to his concerns and did not believe ANDRA investigated the crash. He expressed support for more training for new junior dragster participants as part of acquiring their drag racing licence, based on his daughter's experience.²³²
- 164.** In November 2011 an 11 year old girl participating in junior dragster B/JD class had a similar crash while trying to complete her first full track pass in a new car. Fortunately this child did not suffer any major injuries. She rolled her vehicle while trying to exit the gate at speed and the dragster slid across

²²⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 27.

²²⁶ T 24 – 25.

²²⁷ Exhibit 2, Tab 34.

²²⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 27; Exhibit 2, Tab 32.

²²⁹ Exhibit 2, Tab 32 [16].

²³⁰ Exhibit 2, Tab 32 [16].

²³¹ Exhibit 2, Tab 34.

²³² Exhibit 2, Tab 32.

the ground and crashed into the exit gate, which unlike the barrier, had some small amount of 'give' and ability to absorb impact energy. Her father believed the cause of the crash was driver error due to inexperience and being too focussed on the turn.²³³

- 165.** After the crash the girl's father understood there was talk amongst junior dragster families about what could be learned from the crash, and subjects like track staff training, using the exit gate and driver understanding and training of junior dragsters were discussed. However, he did not feel that there was any real formal investigation arising out of the incident and no changes occurred. This father said he feels devastated and let down that nothing more occurred, given what happened to Anita is so similar to the events involving his daughter, although his daughter was three years older. He indicated in his statement he "feels compelled now to speak out about changes"²³⁴ and is hopeful some good will come from Anita's death. I note this father still believes, like many of the witnesses, that the sport of drag racing is the safest form of motorsport, but acknowledged that there are still real dangers involved in drag racing that need to be mitigated, especially for juniors entering the sport.²³⁵
- 166.** In 2012 a 12 year old boy, Michael Naylor's son, had undergone his first licensing attempt at the Perth Motorplex. At the end of his run he was told by a track official to hurry up and he crashed his vehicle into the exit gate while trying to get off the track. He was not seriously injured but the vehicle did receive minor damage. He completed his licensing successfully later that day.²³⁶ Mr Naylor recalled his son crashed exactly where Anita later crashed her vehicle.²³⁷ Mr Naylor explained that his son had completed the pass and idled appropriately, but it was when he accelerated again that things went awry. Mr Naylor estimated his son was only travelling at about 20 km/hr when he hit the wall, so the only injuries he sustained were a seat belt burn and a bit of a sore neck.²³⁸
- 167.** In each of these incidents evidence was provided that track officials were standing on the track, near the exit gate, directing the vehicles off the track and through the gate. Footage provided by witnesses of some junior drag racing competitors shows inconsistent practices in relation to how junior drivers were directed off the track. Some footage showed officials on the track directing and on other occasions it was simply marked by traffic cones.²³⁹
- 168.** Mr Treasure was not working at the Perth Motorplex when these incidents occurred, but he gave evidence he was aware of them as news of these types of incidents is passed around through the industry. Therefore, when he began working at the Perth Motorplex he was aware that there had been prior incidents at the Perth Motorplex involving juniors and the exit gate.²⁴⁰

²³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 27 and Exhibit 2, Tab 36.

²³⁴ Exhibit 2, Tab 36 [99].

²³⁵ Exhibit 2, Tab 36.

²³⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 28.

²³⁷ Exhibit 2, Tab 9 [18].

²³⁸ T 217.

²³⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 28.

²⁴⁰ T 84.

Mr Treasure had also previously worked at the Perth Motorplex some years before, and at that time they used to have two people standing on the track but they found this to be confusing for the junior drivers, so they changed the practice to one official standing on the centreline. However, after there was an incident when a car took the corner too fast and tipped onto its side, they decided to remove that official from the centreline and just put witches hats on the track to indicate the turn off, with the instruction that if the driver was going too fast they should continue to go straight.²⁴¹

169. Mr Treasure gave evidence he was not aware that Mr Rosling had gone onto the track during Anita's licence pass. He said he always leans forward and looks down the track before giving the fire-up call, and he remembered looking down and seeing a track official standing in the normal position at the gate, so Mr Rosling must have moved onto the track after that.²⁴² Mr Treasure was clear in his evidence that he was not expecting anyone to be in the middle of the track that day as the cones were out to indicate where to turn and it was supposed to be left to the decision of the individual driver to know whether they were going too fast to turn.²⁴³ Mr Treasure gave evidence that if he had seen someone on the track, he would "normally instruct them to get off the track."²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as I have noted elsewhere, the experience of Mr Rosling and other witnesses, was that the practice was inconsistent. This is also despite the fact that the ANDRA regulations apparently stipulate that no one is permitted on the track.²⁴⁵

Police Recommendation

170. Based on the evidence obtained during the coronial investigation, the police investigators recommended consideration be given to discontinuing the procedure of opening the concrete barrier gate at the Perth Motorplex, and instead allowing the juniors to decelerate and wash off their speed over the full length of the track. This procedure would also allow sufficient time to exhaust the vehicle's restricted fuel supply.²⁴⁶ This prompted much discussion during the inquest. It is relevant to consider what is done in other States.

Practice with junior tracks and exit gates at other raceways

171. Evidence was provided at the inquest about the practices at other racetracks in Australia, as well as internationally, in relation to the use of an exit gate, to put the matter in a context.

172. Mr Zundans gave evidence that following the suspension of junior drag racing in Western Australia, in August 2018 in his role as the Perth Motorplex General Manager, he undertook a site visit of two drag racing tracks which were still operating junior drag racing, being the Willowbank Raceway near Brisbane, Queensland and the Sydney Dragway in New South

²⁴¹ T 85.

²⁴²

²⁴³ T 85.

²⁴⁴ T 86.

²⁴⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 31.

²⁴⁶ T 27; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 32.

Wales. These two tracks were selected given their similarities in design to the Perth Motorplex, although noting that they are both sanctioned by a different body to ANDRA, namely the International Hot Rod Association Australia (IHRA). Mr Zundans' review of the tracks focussed on the safety and procedural elements at each track, rather than any differences in rules arising from the different sanctioning body.²⁴⁷ In any event, Mr Treasure's evidence was that IHRA effectively adopted the ANDRA set of rules for junior racing when they came to Australia, so there are no significant differences.²⁴⁸

- 173.** At the Willowbank Raceway, it was noted that for junior drag racing finish markers are swung into position that sit on top of the safety wall on both sides of the track, which are much more visible than flags.



Exhibit 1, tab 27

- 174.** At Willowbank Raceway, they also open the single steel exit gate, which is approximately 4 metre wide when open (so approximately half the size of the exit area for Perth Motorplex) and is situated 735 metres from the start line, and 535 metres from the junior finish line.²⁴⁹ Two track officials position themselves in the centre of each lane prior to the arrival of the junior racers. Their role is to monitor the drivers in their respective lanes. Junior drivers

²⁴⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁴⁸ T 86.

²⁴⁹ T 244 – 245; Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

are instructed prior to racing that they must slow to a walking pace as they approach the official on the track.²⁵⁰ The officials direct the drivers through the gate, which generally requires the driver to accelerate again to make their way to the collection zone on the other side of the gate.²⁵¹

175. No changes have been made to the operation of junior drag racing at Willowbank since Anita's death, although it was noted that there was a heightened awareness in the drag racing community.²⁵²

176. I was informed that the Sydney Dragway has a racing configuration nearly identical in every way to the Perth Motorplex, but with the notable difference that the cars leave the track to the right rather than to the left. There is a 400 m race track and 600 m braking area with a sand trap at the end of the track. For junior drag racing, finish markers are swung up into position on the safety wall. They look different in design, but perform the same function, as those at Willowbank Raceway. Mr Zundans described them as being made of a lightweight plastic tubing that would disintegrate fairly easily on impact.²⁵³



Exhibit 1, tab 27

²⁵⁰ T 246; Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁵¹ T 246; Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁵² Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁵³ T 247.

177. Mr Zundans advised there are plans to change it to an orange colour for better visibility.²⁵⁴ Sydney Dragway staff advised they have also been considering the use of braking markers, similar to those used in circuit racing, for junior racers, to provide reference to the distance until they are required to stop at the exit gate. Mr Zundans indicated that as far as he is aware, they haven't actually installed anything to that effect yet.²⁵⁵
178. Sydney Dragway has also installed bespoke tyre barriers for junior racing, which consist of a single stack at the near corner of the gate and four stacks, held together with a chain, at the far corner of the gate (in the same spot that Anita's car struck). The stacks are installed and removed by a forklift. The tyre barriers were implemented as a direct response to the incident leading to Anita's death, and show a very marked difference.²⁵⁶



Exhibit 1, tab 27

²⁵⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁵⁵ T 248 – 249.

²⁵⁶ T 248; Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.



Exhibit 1, tab 27

- 179.** Like at Willowbank Raceway, when juniors are racing a track official is placed on the centre line of the track, adjacent to the exit gate. Junior racers here are then briefed to come to a complete stop between the quarter mile finish and the gate where the track official is positioned (approximately 30 metres), before they are escorted by the official through the gate to await collection.²⁵⁷
- 180.** Mr Cope had made enquiries in the USA, where juniors drag race at a couple of hundred different racetracks, and found that it was a universal practice that the juniors exited through a gate at the junior finishing line. Mr Cope advised that his enquiries found only the three tracks in Australia use the full quarter mile end for juniors, being one in Darwin, one in Melbourne and one in Adelaide.²⁵⁸ The reason given for this at the inquest was that these three tracks do not have an exit gate, so that option is not available to them.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

²⁵⁸ T 208.

²⁵⁹ T 224 - 225.

STATISTICS FOR JUNIOR DRAG RACING

- 181.** The impression I have gained from being involved in this inquest is that if you asked an average citizen in the street, they would say that children like Anita should not be permitted to participate in drag racing as it is too dangerous. They point to the fact that people in WA are not allowed to get a driver's licence until they turn 18 years old, so why should they be allowed to drive a dragster on their own at 8 years of age?
- 182.** The counter argument from those involved in drag racing is that there are inherent dangers in all sports and, as I've noted above, this is the first known fatality of a child participating in this sport at any time across the world. They point to other motor sports that children participate in every day, such as go-karting and motorcycling, which are the training ground of Formula 1 drivers like our State's own Daniel Ricciardo. Statistically, these sports have a higher incidence of serious and fatal injury than drag racing, but children are still allowed to participate in these sports in Western Australia.
- 183.** It was noted that the sport of drag-racing is relatively small in Australia and very community-based, largely manned by volunteers. Nevertheless, it has been considered to be generally very well administered.²⁶⁰ Mr Zundans, who has only recently become involved in the sport through his role with VenuesWest, noted that there is a misconception in the community that it carries a high level of risk, whereas the reality is that it is generally an extremely safe sport and the participants are very safety conscious.²⁶¹
- 184.** No child has been permitted to participate in drag racing in Western Australia since the day of Anita's crash, but children have continued to race in other states and territories across Australia, as well as in other parts of the world. There was no evidence put before me that any serious injury has occurred to another junior racer in the other jurisdictions since Anita's death and Anita's death, thus far, really has been an isolated tragic event. The most serious prior incident that was put before me, at least occurring in Perth, was a child who nearly severed a finger when her dragster rolled because her arm restraints did not work effectively. Mr Naylor was aware of a few other incidents in other States involving junior drivers trying to leave through the exit gate, but none where a driver has impacted the wall.²⁶² Inquiries by ANDRA identified an incident in the late 1990's in the USA where a young junior racer was involved in an incident that led to the child becoming a paraplegic. No deaths internationally were identified.²⁶³ Even in adult drag racing, I'm told the number of incidents of serious injury or death is small
- 185.** As I've noted above, Anita's father gave evidence at the inquest that he specifically chose the sport for his two daughters as he was satisfied that it was a much safer option than other possible motor sports available. As testament to his firm belief that drag racing is a relatively safe option for

²⁶⁰ T 254.

²⁶¹ T 254.

²⁶² T 218.

²⁶³ T 105.

children, Mr Board and his wife have gone to great lengths to ensure their remaining daughter has been able to continue to participate in drag racing by driving her to events held outside Western Australia. He emphasised in his evidence how important it was for Zara's mental health to continue to race as she regarded being in the car as her 'happy place', despite what happened to her sister.

- 186.** Evidence was given that statistically, only a small number of children participate in junior drag racing Australia wide. As at 13 November 2017, around the time of Anita's death, there were a total of 107 junior licence holders across the country registered with ANDRA, from ages 8 up to 16 years.²⁶⁴ The number of licence holders in the youngest category being 8 to 10 years old, was half that in the other two, with only 22 licence holders registered. In Western Australia at that time, there were only three registered junior licence holders who were 8 or 9 years of age. The span of age is depicted more simply in the tables depicted below:

Junior Licence Holders current at 13/11/2017

Category	Age group	NT/NQ	WA	SA	SQ	NSW	VIC/TAs	Total
AJD	13 – 16	5	13	4	6	8	5	41
BJD	11 – 16	7	11	9	7	2	8	44
CJD	8 - 10	2	5	8	4	2	1	22
Total		14	29	21	17	12	14	107

WA junior licence holders

Age group	No of racers
8 & 9	3
10 & 11	5
12 & 13	6
14 & 15	10
16 and over	5
Total	29

- 187.** This information accorded with Mr Treasure's experience that most of the children who start continue racing, but many children come into the sport a bit later, so that the numbers increase as the age bracket increases.²⁶⁵
- 188.** Submissions filed on behalf of ANDRA provided information on the age restrictions on junior drag racing internationally. In the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Finland and the Netherlands the minimum age for participants is 8 years of age, the same minimum as currently applies in all parts of Australia. In the USA and Lithuania, the minimum age is even younger, with trainees able to begin at 5 years of age,²⁶⁶ although I understand from other

²⁶⁴ Exhibit 3, Tab 8.

²⁶⁵ T 76.

²⁶⁶ Submissions filed on behalf of the Australian National Drag Racing Association Ltd, dated 18 April 2019.

evidence that the children in this age category in the USA, at least, participate in a very modified form of racing, at much lower speeds.

GENERAL ROAD SAFETY INFORMATION

- 189.** Mr Ian Cameron is the Chair of the Western Australian Road Safety Manager and the Acting Director of the WA Department of Transport. He is also an independent Director on the board of the Australasian New Car Assessment Program, which provides consumer information about the safety of vehicles. Mr Cameron gave evidence at the inquest to provide general evidence in relation to road safety matters pertinent to public roads, which is his area of expertise, rather than any evidence specific to drag racing. However, as I noted at the inquest, much of his evidence was relevant to the issues I need to consider in this inquest, such as the outcome of research into the ability of children and young adults to judge and perceive speed and distance and manage risk, as well as issues relating to vehicle safety and road safety.²⁶⁷
- 190.** Mr Cameron explained that there is a body of evidence that is broadly accepted in most jurisdictions nationally and internationally that children's cognitive development under the age of 10 years does not allow them to judge and perceive speed and distance in the way that an adult can. This has translated into an understanding that children under 10 years of age will struggle to judge the speed of an oncoming vehicle, so as pedestrians they should be accompanied by an older child or adult when crossing the road.²⁶⁸
- 191.** When the focus moves to young adults learning to drive, the research indicates "the older, the better, from a safety point of view,"²⁶⁹ due to cognitive and actual physical brain development. The ability to match actions with consequences is not fully developed until a person is in their early 20's. This means that a teenager or young person, who may already have a propensity to take risk, also lacks the ability due to their stage of brain development to fully understand and think through the consequences of their actions.²⁷⁰
- 192.** Nevertheless, Mr Cameron gave evidence that there is a general acceptance in communities and societies that there needs to be a balance in terms of safety and young people being able to be mobile in our communities. Therefore, with that balance in mind, a recent focus has been on the preparation of young drivers, with the focus moving from simply the skill of controlling a vehicle to also include the ability to perceive and anticipate risks, as well as assisting them to gain experience in judging risk. Mr Cameron explained that the difference between an experience mature adult driver and a young driver is that the adult has much more experience of potential risk situations that can occur, as well as the ability to understand and think through the consequences of their decisions and actions. Therefore, the training now includes extensive supervised hours of

²⁶⁷ T 271.

²⁶⁸ T 271.

²⁶⁹ T 272.

²⁷⁰ T 273.

experience, which allows learner driver's to practice on the roads in all conditions, whether it be "in light traffic, heavy traffic, high speed roads, country roads, congestion, rainy conditions, and night time conditions."²⁷¹ Mr Cameron indicated the research points to around 100 hours of supervised experience as having a protective benefit or effect, which then means the young drivers are better prepared through experience to make the kind of risk assessments and judgments necessary to drive safely.²⁷²

193. In Western Australia, where the new learner driver regime has been in place for a number of years, the crash involvement of young people aged 17 to 20 years has dropped by nearly 60% over the last 10 years, which is a reduction of approximately twice that of the general population. This supports the research behind the graduated licensing program. Mr Cameron noted that there are also other factors at play, including other on-demand transport options such as Uber, safer vehicles, reduced speed limits and increased speed enforcement, improved road infrastructure and a generational change in attitude to drink-driving. However, the graduated licensing program must be seen to be a factor in this increasingly positive road safety culture.²⁷³

194. Mr Cameron also noted there is an increasing trend across Australia for young people to get their licence at a slightly older age, which often means they are spending a longer period of time as a supervised learner driver.²⁷⁴

195. Also relevant to this inquest, Mr Cameron noted that there has been a general trend in road trauma prevention to accepting that human beings are not perfect, and will make bad decisions through mistake, perception and misjudgement rather than recklessness or deliberate risk-taking. Therefore, there is a system approach to improving the safety of the roads and environment and the vehicles themselves, so that when a driver makes an error, the consequences of that error are reduced.²⁷⁵

196. Mr Cameron noted that it is "very simple physics that it is the transfer of kinetic energy into the human body that causes trauma."²⁷⁶ So if we can prevent crashes where that transfer of kinetic energy is greater than the human body's ability to withstand it, then the outcome won't be fatal or serious.²⁷⁷ Mr Cameron referred to research that in a head on collision, where the speeds of the vehicles is above 50 km/hr, there is an 85% chance a person will be seriously injured or killed. In the case of a collision between a vehicle and a rigid object, such as a tree or pole, that speed reduces to 40 km/hr or even less for the same 85% chance the vehicle occupants will be seriously injured or killed. It is relevant to this case, where Anita hit a narrow, rigid barrier (narrow because she hit the corner of the wall), which meant the penetration of the energy impact into the vehicle was much higher.²⁷⁸ Mr Cameron also indicated a 90 degree impact, particularly into a

²⁷¹ T 274.

²⁷² T 274.

²⁷³ T 274.

²⁷⁴ T 274.

²⁷⁵ T 275.

²⁷⁶ T 275.

²⁷⁷ T 275 – 276.

²⁷⁸ T 277.

narrow object, is “probably the worst” potential crash in terms of the transfer of kinetic energy to the driver. And as Mr Cameron noted, if the crash is into “a concrete barrier there is no forgiveness.”²⁷⁹

- 197.** The above statistics are based on healthy, average adults, not children or young adults, whose bodies are smaller and more vulnerable.²⁸⁰ This has led to the development of additional safety measures for very young children travelling in cars.²⁸¹
- 198.** Mr Cameron was asked about the safety features of new vehicles as compared to older vehicles. Mr Cameron’s evidence was consistent with the general comments of Mr Cope and Mr Naylor, noting that “[c]rash protection and crash avoidance has dramatically changed” so the age of vehicle manufacture is relevant, as generally the older the vehicle the less ability it has to provide crash protection and it will have less crash avoidance features.²⁸² Crumple zones, which were mentioned by the witnesses, are such a feature that can sacrifice themselves to take energy from the passenger cell.²⁸³ Mr Cameron also emphasised the importance of a seatbelt to provide good restraint against the forces.²⁸⁴
- 199.** In conclusion, Mr Cameron summarised the five pillars of road safety that needed to be considered as: road environment, the vehicle and safety gear, the driver themselves, speed and a fifth ‘post-crash’ element, related to how quickly an emergency response can be provided.²⁸⁵

VIEWS OF ANITA’S FAMILY

- 200.** Given they are the people who have lost their daughter and only sister, it is important that I take into account the views of Anita’s immediate family in considering the evidence before me.
- 201.** Mr Board has made it clear throughout the coronial investigation that his family regard Anita’s death as a tragic and unprecedented accident. Mr Board and his family remain supportive of junior drag racing continuing in this State and Zara continues to participate in other parts of Australia. Mr Board described Zara’s ongoing participation in drag racing as part of their healing process. He explained that being in her car and on the track is Zara’s “happy place.”²⁸⁶ They are continuing as a family to do something that they had all enjoyed together with Anita and support her memory in that way. They have received a lot of support from the wider drag racing community.
- 202.** In his statement to police, given a few months after Anita’s death, Mr Board indicated he did not believe huge changes needed to be made to the sport

²⁷⁹ T 278.

²⁸⁰ T 276.

²⁸¹ T 276.

²⁸² T 278.

²⁸³ T 278 – 279.

²⁸⁴ T 279.

²⁸⁵ T 281.

²⁸⁶ T 292.

but he did believe there were a few things that could be done to make it safer. He suggested a safety impact barrier be installed on the exit gate, if it was to continue to be used, as well as the introduction of a 'P plate' system for junior drivers in their first year to help them get used to the track. He also felt better and more frequent extraction training for the safety officers and paramedics at the Perth Motorplex could be done, as well as better training for track officials. Mr Board acknowledged that these changes would not bring Anita back, but might prevent a similar incident occurring and another family having to go through the loss of a child.²⁸⁷

203. Mr Board gave evidence at the inquest, after more time had elapsed from Anita's death and he had an opportunity to hear all of the other evidence. Mr Board agreed with the general evidence that there are ways in which the safety of junior drag racing can be improved, particularly through an improved training programme and ability to help juniors familiarise themselves with the track pre-race.²⁸⁸ Mr Board also indicated that his family have been to Sydney Dragway, the sister track of the Perth Motorplex, since Anita's death and they were extremely impressed with the changes that have been implemented there, such as the barriers at the gates and the fixed indicators rather than flags at the end of the junior track.²⁸⁹ Mr Board noted that Zara's race at the Sydney venue was her first time back in the car after her sister's death, but the changes meant Zara felt safe again.²⁹⁰

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

204. Anita had only just turned eight years old when she died and her death was a shock to everyone present at the Perth Motorplex that day. The community has been united in their sadness and agreement that her death was a tragedy. However, views differ between the general community and the local drag racing community as to whether her death could be said to be foreseeable. The sport of drag racing is inherently dangerous, given the aim is extreme speed over a short distance. This is acknowledged by ANDRA.²⁹¹ Junior drag racers have minimum speeds set, to modify the risk, but there remains an obvious risk of serious injury or death given young children are still independently driving vehicles at high speeds. However, all of the evidence indicates there has been no fatal incident involving a junior drag racer in any country in the world until Anita's death in November 2017 in Perth. This cannot be said of other junior motorsports, and supports the argument made that the risks are lower than might be first perceived.

205. Nevertheless, Anita's death has highlighted a need to review the safety of junior drag racing for its participants, to ensure that Anita's death is not only the first, but hopefully the last of its kind in the sport.

206. Under s 25(2) of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), a coroner may comment on any matter connected with the death, including public health or safety issues. In

²⁸⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [331] – [338].

²⁸⁸ T 292 – 293.

²⁸⁹ T 293.

²⁹⁰ T 293.

²⁹¹ T 110.

this case, the focus of my comments is predominantly on the safety of junior drag racing, and the ways it can potentially be improved based upon what has been learnt from Anita's death.

207. It was made very clear on behalf of VenuesWest and ANDRA that they are committed to implementing to the best of their abilities any recommendations that arise out of this inquest that will improve the safety of junior drag-racing overall and can be seen to be Anita's legacy to the sport. Mr Stevens indicated ANDRA sanctions 22 race tracks around Australia and it proposes to roll out the recommendations from this inquest nationally.²⁹² I indicated to the parties I would do my best to ensure that any recommendations I made were practical and well supported by the evidence, so that the task of ANDRA and VenuesWest in fulfilling that commitment is made easier. I have also generally restricted myself to recommendations relating to the Perth Motorplex, as that is where the death occurred.

208. Mr Cameron's evidence conveniently signposts the areas where the focus should be for safety improvement for junior drag racing. Mr Cameron's evidence also matches with the evidence of witnesses such as Mr Naylor and Mr Cope, as well as the submissions from the parties. The five pillars can be distilled in the context of junior drag racing to:

- *Road environment* – which would include the consideration of whether the exit gate is still used and, if so, should it have added safety barriers; better markers for the 1/8 mile mark; and the role of track officials;
- *Vehicle and safety gear* – which could cover the need to encourage participants to purchase newer vehicles with improved safety features; better scrutineering of the vehicles used; and improved personal safety gear in the form of the mandating of the use of the additional neck support, such as is used by Mr Cope's daughter;
- *The driver themselves* – which in this inquest raised issues such as the age of the driver; better training for the junior drivers; and a graduated licensing programme including orientation on the track;
- *Speed* – prompting consideration of a graduated speed introduction for junior drivers; and the possibility of remote cut-off; and
- *Emergency Response* – raising issues such as better coordination and training of fire and rescue staff.

Road Environment

209. The use of the exit gate for juniors was a significant focus of the investigation and evidence. The investigating officer, Senior Constable Turner, has been a police officer for many years and has particular experience in coronial investigations and major crash investigation. He expressed his opinion that an eight year old child, male or female, is too young to control this type of vehicle at that speed. Senior Constable Turner concluded that an eight year old child would not have the necessary capability to judge distances, to judge the exit gate and to take instructions from track officials. He based his opinion on his experience as a police officer and the information he obtained in investigating Anita's death, as well as

²⁹² T 104.

being a member of the community with a family of his own. However, Senior Constable Turner also felt if the vehicle was not required to turn through the exit gate and could continue all the way down the track, this could reduce some of the risk of harm.²⁹³

- 210.** Detective Senior Sergeant David Shillingford, who was the Officer in Charge of the Coronial Investigation Squad at the time of Anita's death, and played a role in the investigation and preparation of the report to the coroner also gave evidence at the inquest. Detective Senior Sergeant Shillingford has completed priority pursuit driving training, which involves training in driving at high speed while negotiating hazards. Based upon his training and driving experience, his experience as a police officer for 29 years and his personal knowledge of children as a father of four, Detective Senior Sergeant Shillingford supported the conclusion of Senior Constable Turner that an eight year old child lacks the capacity to make the sort of decisions that might be required when drag racing in the manner Anita attempted.²⁹⁴ Detective Senior Sergeant Shillingford agreed with Senior Constable Turner's suggestion that allowing junior drivers to travel the length of the track could make a significant difference, allowing them time to wash off speed.²⁹⁵
- 211.** Detective Mead, who attended the Perth Motorplex on the day of Anita's death and had an early role in the investigation, also agreed that taking the exit gate out of the equation might give the junior drivers "one less decision for to have to make."²⁹⁶ Detective Mead also emphasised a need for better training on the track for junior drivers, which I will come to later.²⁹⁷
- 212.** In summary, at the conclusion of the police investigation, which involved a number of experienced police officers, the conclusion reached was that the evidence, and their experience, suggested a young person of eight years of age lacks the cognitive ability to process and make split second decisions to avoid hazards they confront when travelling at speed. Allowing the children to continue driving in a straight line would necessarily eliminate some of these concerns by reducing the need to make decisions and negotiate a hazard.²⁹⁸
- 213.** Other witnesses, such as Mr Cope and Mr Naylor, also queried whether it is safe for juniors to turn at the gate. In the end, Mr Cope seemed to be all on the side of thinking the exit gate was the lesser evil, provided the junior drag racers stopped first. Mr Naylor, on the other hand, expressed the view that the junior drag racers should go the entire way down the track. Given his personal experience with his own son hitting the gate, I can see why he would take this view and there is certainly a lot of evidence in support of it.²⁹⁹ Mr Naylor acknowledged there is a risk the older children might be tempted to gain excessive speed as they would be aware there is a lot longer braking area, which would be a safety concern. Nevertheless, Mr Naylor has seen it done on three tracks in Australia and believes it is the appropriate

²⁹³ T 28.

²⁹⁴ T 40.

²⁹⁵ T 41.

²⁹⁶ T 58.

²⁹⁷ T 58.

²⁹⁸ T 39; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 33.

²⁹⁹ T 224.

practice to adopt. I do, however, note that these tracks do not have the option of an exit gate available to them, which would explain why they have adopted the practice, since there is no viable alternative.³⁰⁰

214. The reasons given for not allowing the juniors to travel all the way down the track were generally:

- to keep the racers moving efficiently and off the track relatively quickly;³⁰¹ and
- to avoid the risk that junior racers might accelerate as they continued down the track, allowing them to increase their speed.³⁰²

215. Mr Stevens also noted that, irrespective of whether juniors go through the exit gate or travel to the end, at some point they still need to be able to control the vehicle through a turn and exit the racing surface.³⁰³

216. A suggestion was made that, instead of keeping the exit gate closed and sending the junior racers down the entire track, an alternative was to require them to come to a full stop before turning. Mr Stevens suggested, on behalf of ANDRA, that getting the racers to come to a complete stop would mitigate the risk of incidents involving the gate considerably and it was noted that this is part of the changes that have been put in place at the Sydney Dragway since Anita's death.³⁰⁴

217. Mr Treasure confirmed it would make no real difference to running events if the juniors were to be instructed to bring their vehicles to a complete stop before trying to exit. Indeed, Mr Treasure indicated that the vehicles in the right hand lane ordinarily are required to do so when racing, in order to let the vehicle in the left hand lane leave the track first.³⁰⁵ On the other hand, if the juniors have to run full length of the track, VenuesWest has indicated it might have to consider running juniors as a separate event given the time issues. This would, of course, carry additional costs for the families of the junior participants, which is never desirable.³⁰⁶

218. My concern with simply requiring the junior driver to come to a complete stop before making the turn, is that the incident involving Mr Naylor's son, and the incident involving the female junior racer in late 2011. Mr Naylor explained that it is part of the design of the dragster vehicles that they can accelerate very quickly, which may take the junior racer by surprise. Therefore, the solution is either to allow them to continue down the full path, or reduce the risk of harm if they do lose control while trying to make the turn.

219. This is where the barriers introduced at the Sydney Raceway might come into play. I specifically sought submissions from ANDRA on this point. The

³⁰⁰ T 224 - 225.

³⁰¹ T 88.

³⁰² T 89.

³⁰³ T 104.

³⁰⁴ T 104 - 105.

³⁰⁵ T 92.

³⁰⁶ T 262.

submissions indicated that ANDRA's view was that "any sort of barrier engineered for drag racing would need to have fairly significant rigidity to have any appreciable effect in the event of a collision."³⁰⁷ It was submitted that while a tyre barrier *may* assist in the very rare instance of a head on collision with the corner of the exit gate, it was noted that it could also potentially create a *catch* point on the barrier, which is more likely to cause the dragster to spin and flip, rather than deflect away, in the case of a collision that is not head on.³⁰⁸

220. However, I note the evidence from Mr Cameron that one of the worst types of crashes is a 90 degree impact into a narrow, immovable, object, given the transfer of kinetic energy to the driver.³⁰⁹

221. I accept ANDRA has some concerns about the type of barrier being proposed, but I am not intending to dictate a type of barrier, but only to suggest that if the option of travelling the full length of the track is not practical, then the option of some kind of barrier should be considered. I note that the tyre barriers were created independently of this inquest and put into use at Sydney Dragway, and there has been no mention of adverse incidents with them since they have been in use for around two years. I accept the submission of ANDRA that different tracks may have different requirements, but at least for the Perth Motorplex (which I'm told is for all intents and purposes a twin of Sydney Dragway) the solution is relatively simple. For the other raceways, I accept that the individual layout and design would need to be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 1

I recommend that ANDRA give consideration to requiring all junior drag racing participants to continue all the way down the track, rather than through the exit gate. In the alternative, if junior drag racers are required to exit through a side gate, then all junior drag racing participants should be required to come to a complete stop before beginning to execute the turn and VenuesWest should give consideration to installing some form of barrier to the corners of the exit gates, in a similar fashion to what is currently in use at the Sydney Dragway.

222. Mr Zundans indicated during his evidence that the Perth Motorplex is open to changing the white flags to a fixed flag model, such as is in use at Sydney and Willowbank, for junior racing.³¹⁰ This is a sensible, and simple change

³⁰⁷ Further Submissions on behalf of ANDRA filed 7 August 2019.

³⁰⁸ Further Submissions on behalf of ANDRA filed 7 August 2019.

³⁰⁹ T 278.

³¹⁰ T 263.

to make, that may greatly assist junior racers to orient themselves on the track.

RECOMMENDATION 2

I recommend that VenuesWest give consideration to replacing the previously used white flags at the Perth Motorplex with some form of fixed and highly visible finish markers that can be swung into position on the safety barrier wall to mark the end of the junior track.

223. As to the use of track officials on the track, as Mr Cope noted, the inconsistency as to: a) whether there is an official on the track and, if so, how many, and b) their instructions to racers, is one of the greatest difficulties. Mr Cope explained at the inquest that he has always told his daughter to pay no attention to the track official as there is a lack of consistency in their practices. His instructions are for his daughter to use the kill switch to shut the motor off and if necessary, drive straight at the official, as it is more dangerous for her, the official and other racers if she tries to turn as the car would be likely to roll over.³¹¹ Mr Cope gave examples of the many different ways he has seen the practices alter on the track.³¹²

Sometimes they put the cones out and they will put them right in the middle of the lane which, if the kid does have to go straight they're going to have to run over it. Sometimes they will put three cones out, sometimes they will put six cones out, sometimes there's one person on the track, sometimes no-one's there, other times there's two people, sometimes they don't put the flags up because they forget. That's really confusing to little kids [if every time they go on the track something different happens].

224. Mr Cope said his way of circumventing this was to tell his daughter, "Know where the finish line is, come to a stop, turn off, go really slow."³¹³

225. It wasn't disputed by Mr Zundans, on behalf of the Perth Motorplex, that the practice of using officials on the track at the Perth Motorplex appeared to be inconsistent, and the training of track officials was largely through mentoring or 'on the job' training. Mr Zundans acknowledged that the potential failing in such a system is that one person with bad habits may pass them on. Inconsistencies between various tracks also can potentially lead to error. Mr Zundans gave evidence that the Perth Motorplex is intending through the next season to implement a standard operating procedure for various positions to try to set out key responsibilities and practices.³¹⁴

³¹¹ T 209.

³¹² T 209.

³¹³ T 209.

³¹⁴ T 251 – 252.

226. In my view, there is much to be said for implementing a standard practice across the jurisdictions, to ensure that junior racers who are competing at different racetracks are faced with a similar procedure at each place. While I don't consider it necessary to make a recommendation about it, I encourage ANDRA to consider standardising the procedures for the use of track officials in junior drag racing events, and encouraging the various venues to adopt these practices, to ensure that there is less chance for confusion.

The Junior Driver

227. There were two real issues that arose in relation to the junior driver. The first was the question of an appropriate age for a child to begin racing. The second was the question of training and the benefits of a graduated licensing programme for new junior participants.

228. The general tenor of the evidence was that the age of the child is less relevant than the skills and temperament of the individual. For example, Mr Treasure gave evidence that he was aware of quite a number of eight year olds completing their licence pass over the years, but it was also the case that some children start much later, either by their own choice to wait a little longer or because they don't come into the sport until they are a bit older. Mr Treasure suggested it was very much related to the individual person.³¹⁵

229. Similarly, Mr Cope expressed the view that some children are ready to race at eight years of age, and some need more time. His own daughter, who was the track champion at the time of Anita's death, had started at eight years of age but had taken longer than some to build up her confidence.³¹⁶ Mr Cope believes the fact his daughter started at eight years of age has "made her a much better driver, not just very competitive and pretty good at winning, but she has also always been very cautious and considerate, and quite aware of what is going around her on the track."³¹⁷ However, Mr Cope agreed that some children simply aren't ready at eight, and others may never be ready.

230. Mr Cope disagreed with a total junior drag racing ban and did not believe raising the age limit was the answer, but felt it was important for ANDRA to enforce the rules properly and for somebody to be in a position to determine if children are actually ready before they start racing.³¹⁸

231. This leads in to the topic of training. I note in the minutes of an ANDRA WA Division meeting in February 2009, shortly after the serious incident involving a young girl's crash at the Perth Motorplex, the girl's father was present and a suggestion was made "that driver education is lacking across the board for racers and perhaps a written learners test needs to be given before commencing practical licensing."³¹⁹ It does not seem that anything progressed following this suggestion towards a formal training program.

³¹⁵ T 74.

³¹⁶ T 205.

³¹⁷ Exhibit 2, Tab 33 [39].

³¹⁸ Exhibit 2, Tab 33.

³¹⁹ Exhibit 2, Tab 34.

- 232.** Mr Treasure confirmed that, at the time of Anita’s licence pass, there was no requirement for a junior driver to complete any specific number of hours of driving, or complete a written test or any practical driving testing, other than the blindfold test.³²⁰ In effect, it was for the parent or guardian of the junior driver to provide practical driving experience and assess their child’s ability to drive a car and steer and stop. They would then nominate that their child was ready to undertake the licence testing. There was, therefore, no objective testing of their driving abilities prior to going on the track, other than what could be testing in the blindfold test.³²¹
- 233.** Mr Treasure confirmed that the VenuesWest staff would “assume that the person in the car is capable of understanding instructions and what to do at that point.”³²² Those instructions would be to get to the start line and do a burnout and then prepare for the pass, with the intention that they then drive off briefly before idling the rest of the way down the track on their first pass.³²³
- 234.** There was some discussion about whether children could have an opportunity to practice on the track, prior to their first licence pass, as Mr Board indicated that this opportunity had been denied to them. Mr Treasure suggested the juniors could usually do so at a ‘test n tune’ event, although it was entirely up to the driver and their parent.³²⁴ It does seem there was no formal opportunity to do this, as part of any junior training program.
- 235.** Mr Treasure explained that in ordinary circumstances, if Anita had successfully completed her licence pass on 11 November 2017 and then come to the next event, they would still have sent her down the track again on a solo pass to give her some additional familiarity with the track and make sure she was still comfortable and at a suitable standard to race against another competitor.³²⁵ For other children, it might take a season to pass, with their success generally depending on the aptitude and confidence of the driver.³²⁶
- 236.** Mr Treasure indicated, consistently with other witnesses, that the expectation is that junior drivers will have had tuition and know how to operate the dragster before they come onto the track.³²⁷ However, after these events, Mr Treasure accepted that ‘pre-education’ or training of junior drivers is the key to improving the safety of junior drag racing and it should involve a theoretical test as well as a number of practical tests in a controlled environment.³²⁸ Mr Treasure suggested that this sort of testing would assist in identifying the relevant skills and ability of the individual child, rather than imposing arbitrary age limits.³²⁹

³²⁰ T 67.

³²¹ T 67.

³²² T 67.

³²³ T 68.

³²⁴ T 67.

³²⁵ T 65 – 66.

³²⁶ T 66.

³²⁷ T 75.

³²⁸ T 86 – 87.

³²⁹ T 87 – 88.

- 237.** Evidence was provided that the Sydney Dragway conducts an unofficial junior induction programme for any new junior drivers. This programme has been in place for many years, dating back to the 1990's. The content and nature of the programme has evolved over time, but aims to provide newcomers with a staged introduction to the sport and to develop skills ahead of taking to the track in a car. The program is run by a volunteer, Mr Joe Princi, who has over 30 years' experience as a driver, trainer and drag car owner. Importantly, as part of the programme, the novice driver is taken for a walk over the track and landmarks are highlighted throughout the walk, such as the burnout zone, start line, start lights (tree) operation, finish line and markers, track exit and post-race staging area.³³⁰ This gives the junior driver a real sense of the distances and what to look out for.
- 238.** It was noted by Mr Zundans that Sydney Dragway would seem to be leading the charge in Australia in terms of changes to junior drag racing to improve the safety of the sport. Mr Zundans acknowledged that an induction programme for new junior drivers is a great initiative to ensure new drivers possess sufficient skills to be on the track and provide officials with comfort as to the minimum skill level of drivers taking to the track.³³¹ He described it as a "passport system."³³² Mr Zundans accepted that allowing new competitors an opportunity to 'walk the track' with an official ahead of a race meet is also a good initiative.³³³
- 239.** In a similar vein, Detective Senior Sergeant Shillingford suggested that training of other children involved in this sport should be prioritised, including more training and familiarisation with the track itself, so that the junior drivers could be more aware of the surroundings and the exact location of exit points and distances that need to be travelled, even when wearing full safety gear and in the confined area of a junior dragster.³³⁴
- 240.** I'm informed that in the USA, junior drag racers start at five years of age, but have a significant orientation and they use a modified engine for the young racers, which has greatly reduced power. This means that their passes are generally about 20 seconds (travelling at perhaps around 40 km/hr) as the car physically can't go any faster. In comparison, there was evidence that Anita's dragster had a 210cc engine and was capable of travelling at over 100 km/hr.³³⁵ Mr Cope suggested a similar system to the US system should be introduced in Western Australia, and participants should be signed off at each step of the way.³³⁶ Mr Cope suggested that the graduated licensing process should involve children starting with passes of 20 or 30 seconds over a few race meetings, to allow the driver to build up confidence and experience over time.
- 241.** Mr Cope suggested there should also be a paper theory test so that children can point to a map and identify the exit gate and staging area and all the key

³³⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³³¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³³² T 250.

³³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³³⁴ T 41.

³³⁵ T 9.

³³⁶ T 206.

parts of the track, as well as how the staging beams work and other basic knowledge. He expressed the opinion that there should then be a very graduated introduction to the actual driving component. Some children might progress through these stages quickly, and others more slowly, depending upon their knowledge, experience and ability.³³⁷ Mr Cope also agreed that it is important for the assessment to be objective, performed by someone external to the junior racer's family and who is experienced in the sport.³³⁸

242. Mr Cope and Mr Naylor also suggested it would be helpful if the parents of the junior drag racer participated in a theory test, given they are the primary support person and usually assist them to stage, are usually the person maintaining the car, etc.³³⁹ Mr Naylor commented that "it's quite a task to actually stage a car if you've never done it before," so it might be important for parents new to the sport to get practical experience themselves, as well as their children, if they are going to assist and support them.³⁴⁰

243. Mr Zundans accepted that there is no consistency in practices throughout the industry in Australia for the delivery of junior drag racing, although it is a sport where people are encouraged to travel around the country to participate in different events so they can generate points. Mr Zundans commented that it would be of benefit to both the participants and the operators to know that participants have a certain agreed level of competency and ability to follow instructions.³⁴¹ Mr Zundans acknowledged that the rules are thorough and straightforward, but it is the responsibility of administrators from a venue perspective, and from a sports perspective, to ensure there is consistency in their application.³⁴² Mr Zundans suggested that ANDRA and IHRA would probably be best placed to create the junior induction training programme, while the Perth Motorplex would then be active in ensuring individual competitors are familiar with the particular venue and have met the industry standard.³⁴³

244. Mr Zundans indicated that the Perth Motorplex has a very good working relationship with ANDRA, and he felt confident that the two organisations can collaborate to put together an appropriate training program and implement it, noting that "all their interests are aligned in terms of making sure that we improve the sport."³⁴⁴ Mr Zundans also agreed that it would need to be done collectively with the Junior Drag Racing Association, which is predominantly run by parents.³⁴⁵ Mr Zundans noted that Mr Treasure has the experience and knowledge to play a similar role to the volunteer at Sydney Dragway, with Mr Zundans noting that Mr Treasure would be one of the more experienced people in the country in this sport.³⁴⁶

³³⁷ T 212.

³³⁸ T 214.

³³⁹ T 212, 226 - 227.

³⁴⁰ T 227.

³⁴¹ T 252 - 253.

³⁴² T 253.

³⁴³ T 254.

³⁴⁴ T 256.

³⁴⁵ T 256.

³⁴⁶ T 257.

RECOMMENDATION 3

I recommend that VenuesWest and ANDRA work together, and in consultation with the Junior Drag Racing Association in WA, to create and implement a training programme for new junior drag racers, similar to the current training programme in place at Sydney Dragway. In my opinion, the children should not be able to commence the training programme until they are at least eight years old. It should involve the child going through a number of theoretical and practical tests that the child must pass in stages, assessed by a person other than their parent or guardian, before they are able to drive down the track in a dragster at anything more than idling speed. The speed should then gradually be increased. The training should also involve 'on the track' orientation at the Perth Motorplex, so that the child will be familiar with the landmarks before they attempt their first licence pass.

245. In relation to the above recommendation, I add that I did consider recommending an older age for children to commence the programme than eight years of age, particularly given the evidence of Mr Cameron about the ability of a child under 10 years of age to assess risk. However, I note the disadvantage this would place children in this State in competition against children in other States and internationally. I also note the small number of children statistically who actually participate in this younger age category, and I am satisfied that a thorough training programme would ensure that of those small number of children, only those children who objectively demonstrate a good understanding of what they are required to do and have shown they are capable of handling the vehicle, will be able to participate. This may mean that some of the children will be significantly older than eight years old before they are assessed as being able to meet the necessary requirements.

Vehicle and Safety Gear

246. The three main areas that were raised in the evidence in this regard were in relation to the possible mandating of an additional neck support, more focus on encouraging participants to invest in newer vehicles that have access to improved safety technology, and greater scrutineering of the vehicles being raced.

247. The neck support seems relatively uncontroversial. Mr Stevens, the General Manager of ANDRA, indicated that ANDRA is considering mandating a frontal head restraint device (one known brand is HANS, another is Necksgen) made of fibreglass, plastic or carbon fibre that sits on the

shoulders. The belts then sit over the top. It is designed to stabilise the head during an accident and, in effect, it prevents the head from moving independently of the shoulders in the event of a crash.³⁴⁷ It is currently mandated in the faster adult classes, but not the slower ones, nor the juniors.³⁴⁸

248. Mr Stevens exhibited an example of such a device at the inquest. He explained that it tethers to the helmet and pulls down at the shoulders, so the head and shoulders are unable to move separately. As the shoulders are restrained by the five point harness, it is designed to then hold the head and body in place together.³⁴⁹
249. Mr Cope gave evidence that his daughter was the first junior racer in Australia to use a HANS's device, having purchased it in 2013. He recalled that his family received some ridicule from other people involved in junior drag racing at the time, but said that "there was no way I was going to stick her in a faster car without one because of the risk of neck injuries." Mr Cope noted that this type of device can now be purchased on eBay for about \$350 and expressed his incredulity that they had not yet been made mandatory.³⁵⁰
250. Based upon the evidence of Anita's injuries, it would seem likely that such a device could have potentially reduced the harm she suffered, although I do not take it so far as to say it could have prevented her death as there was no evidence before me to that effect.

RECOMMENDATION 4

I recommend that ANDRA introduce a mandatory requirement that all junior racers must include in their personal safety gear a frontal head restraint device as described and demonstrated at the inquest.

251. As to the issue of increased scrutineering of vehicles, Mr Zundans advised that officials at Willowbank Raceway in Brisbane conduct random scrutineering of 25% of the junior dragster bracket at any scheduled race meet, and complete a full scrutineering of all vehicles once every two years, including driver safety equipment.³⁵¹ In my view, this is appropriate and necessary, to ensure a greater level of safety and compliance. I also assume it is practical to implement, given it is performed at another raceway in Australia.

³⁴⁷ T 103; Exhibit 6.

³⁴⁸ T 156 - 157.

³⁴⁹ T 156 - 157.

³⁵⁰ T 205.

³⁵¹ T 246 - 247; Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

RECOMMENDATION 5

I recommend that VenuesWest, in conjunction with ANDRA, make it a requirement at all junior drag racing events at the Perth Motorplex that officials must conduct scrutineering of 25% of the vehicles participating in the junior dragster bracket and complete a full scrutineering of all vehicles once every two years, including driver safety equipment.

252. As I noted earlier, Mr Cope, in particular, commented on the need for greater monitoring of the cars being used for junior drag racing. Mr Cope noted that the vehicles may comply with the rule book but many of the existing cars are approximately 20 years old or even older. This means they do not have the advantages of new technology that can provide flexibility in materials and allow for crumple zones to absorb energy in an impact, and the like.³⁵² Mr Cameron gave evidence about the importance of improved safety technology in reducing crashes, and also reducing the harm in the event of a crash.
253. Mr Cope expressed the view that some of the vehicles in use should be retired because they are not suitable for the speeds that even junior dragster racers can reach, as being able to run an eighth of a mile in 11 seconds is a lot faster speed than they were ever built to travel.³⁵³
254. Mr Naylor also agreed with the concerns expressed by Mr Cope about the older cars still in use. He acknowledged that people will often buy the cheapest car they can, which is what he himself had done, but noted it often then requires a lot of additional expense to ensure it complies with ANDRA regulations and is competitive. Accordingly, Mr Naylor agreed there should be some phasing out of the older cars used in the competition.³⁵⁴
255. It is not clear to me how best to make a recommendation about this issue, so I have restricted myself to a comment. I encourage ANDRA to promote the benefits of purchasing newer cars as part of the junior training programme and include information for the parents on the additional safety features that are available, and how this can reduce the risk of injury for their children.

Speed

256. The above discussion leads into another pillar of road safety, that of speed.
257. Mr Cope's daughter, who is now a very accomplished junior drag racer, took almost four and a half minutes to complete her first pass down the track and Mr Cope recalled she didn't become comfortable or confident enough to get

³⁵² T 206.

³⁵³ T 206.

³⁵⁴ T 225.

down to the 12 second range until after four or five meetings.³⁵⁵ Mr Cope explained that at first his daughter's car did not even have an accelerator that could be fully pushed down, to ensure that she could only really idle down the track.³⁵⁶

258. It was known that Anita's dragster could reach speeds beyond her race category, as it had been raced faster than permitted for her category in October 2017. Mr Board believed he had altered the throttle to prevent that occurring, but it would seem that she was still able to drive it at extreme speed on the day of her crash, and apparently faster than he intended.

259. Mr Cope gave evidence that he had noticed a concerning trend in junior dragster racing, particularly in the eastern states, for new racers to try to run an 11 second pass on their first time out. Mr Cope believed there was pressure on parents and children to go fast and it was also done for "bragging rights,"³⁵⁷ although he emphasised he was not saying this was the case for Anita. Mr Cope suggested this practice was ineffective, given junior dragster competitors are not judged by how fast they travel, and it was also a dangerous practice.³⁵⁸ Mr Cope commented that he didn't "know why people are so eager to make their kids go fast, being fastest doesn't win DYO, racing consistency does."³⁵⁹

260. I acknowledge Mr Naylor has a somewhat fractious history with ANDRA, as detailed in his police statement, including a suspension he was contesting around the time of Anita's death. However, his evidence was given in the spirit of wanting to promote the sport of junior drag racing and from a genuine desire to improve safety for the participants, particularly as his son was involved in a previous crash at the Perth Motorplex in similar circumstances to Anita. I considered both he and Mr Cope to be sincere, honest and knowledgeable witnesses about the issues I am considering.

261. Mr Naylor's evidence was also quite similar to that given by Mr Cope in relation to the safety issues and concerns about speed. The issue was also raised in the statements of some of the parents of other children involved in incidents at the track. Mr Naylor described in his statement having repeatedly raised concerns about junior dragster safety, in particular the fact that the rules that govern speed are not always followed.³⁶⁰ He expressed the opinion that junior dragster "is the most contentious bracket racing in the ANDRA racing championship."³⁶¹

262. As part of his commitment to junior training at the Sydney Dragway, I am informed that the key coordinator, Mr Princi, has developed an engine cut-off device used to assist in providing a safer training environment for new drivers. The device has two controls, one attached to the car's engine and the other held by the trainer. It enables the trainer to switch off the engine remotely. It does not enable the trainer to steer or brake but does stop the

³⁵⁵ T 204; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 18.

³⁵⁶ T 205.

³⁵⁷ T 204.

³⁵⁸ T 204.

³⁵⁹ Exhibit 2, Tab 33 [31].

³⁶⁰ Exhibit 2, Tab 9.

³⁶¹ Exhibit 2, Tab 9 [41].

engine running, so that the dragster is incapable of generating any more speed. It is being used at Sydney Dragway to train new junior drivers. The IHRA are apparently now looking to further develop Mr Princi's invention and implement the system on junior drag cars as a standard requirement.³⁶²

- 263.** A different system, known as the ElectriMotion System, is currently utilised at the Perth Motorplex and other tracks around the world for adult vehicles as an additional safety measure where the vehicles can be travelling at speeds in excess of 200 miles/hr (320 km/hr). It will cut off the engine, deploy parachutes and cut off fuel in the car at a designated point along the track.³⁶³
- 264.** Mr Zundans accepted in his evidence that the remote cut-off device for junior cars seems an advantageous innovation to consider implementing, if at all possible.³⁶⁴

RECOMMENDATION 6

I recommend that VenuesWest, in conjunction with ANDRA, explore the feasibility of requiring a remote cut-off device to be installed on all junior dragsters.

Emergency Response

- 265.** Arising from this inquest were two issues relating to the emergency response. One, which more fits more clearly in the category identified by Mr Cameron, was the response of the fire and safety crew at the track. It was unclear from the evidence who were the fire and safety crew and what their interaction was with the paramedics. There was evidence before me suggesting they were waiting for direction from the paramedics, but also evidence from the paramedic Ms Strike that no one other than Mr Board responded to her requests for assistance.
- 266.** Mr Treasure understood the fire and safety crew, who are Perth Motorplex employees, attended within seconds, however it was clear they did not assist to get Anita out of the car.³⁶⁵ Mr Treasure advised that there are two sets of Jaws of Life on site at the Perth Motorplex and the staff are trained to be able to use them, but it was clear from Ms Strike's evidence that she did not believe there was time to use them.³⁶⁶
- 267.** The evidence points to a need for better communication between the ambulance staff and the fire and rescue crews, as to what roles each play and how they interact. I understand the ambulance staff will vary, so it is more a matter of ensuring there are protocols in place so staff can be briefed

³⁶² Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³⁶³ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³⁶⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 27A.

³⁶⁵ T 77.

³⁶⁶ T 83.

quickly on arrival, rather than training of individuals. I don't take this so far as making it a recommendation, but I raise it as a matter that should be given attention by the Perth Motorplex, in terms of both the training of their own staff and the establishing of protocols with St John Ambulance.

- 268.** The other issue in terms of an emergency response, was the role of the attending police and the confusion about whether racing should be stopped.
- 269.** The Perth Motorplex and VenuesWest staff followed their protocol and immediately advised the WA Police of the incident. There was some bouncing around until it was left to the local police to attend. It was apparent during the inquest that there was a reluctance on the part of specialist traffic and major crash police officers, or at least members of their hierarchy, to attend the crash as it did not occur on a public road. Instead, it was initially attended by local police officers from Kwinana Police Station. Major Crash Investigation Section was contacted by one of these attending officers and it was stated that the crash was not within their charter and they would not be attending. This remained the case even when the full extent of Anita's injuries became known.
- 270.** Senior Constable Turner expressed the opinion that Major Crash should be the lead contact for any serious crashes at the Perth Motorplex, given their experience and expertise in crash investigation and reconstruction and the specialised equipment they use for the same.³⁶⁷ Senior Constable Turner noted that if they had been involved at an early stage in this matter, their expertise could have helped to gain a better understanding of what occurred.³⁶⁸ Detective Senior Sergeant Shillingford agreed that the officers at Major Crash are the "experts" in investigating vehicle crashes who have vast experience in the area and vast technology to utilise in their investigations, which places them as the "best group of people to assist the court with the preparation of this evidence."³⁶⁹
- 271.** It was suggested that the fact that Major Crash Section does not attend, as a matter of course, crashes involving vehicles or machinery on worksites or farming properties was analogous to this situation. However, the difference here seems to me that the event is clearly taking place on a 'road', it is just not a public road, and is much more similar to the types of crashes that the Major Crash Investigations Section would usually attend, and to which they could apply their special investigative skills and tools.
- 272.** Submissions filed on behalf of the WA Police noted that the State Traffic Command is responsible for the oversight of both the Tactical Traffic Sergeant and the Major Crash Investigation Section. It was noted that both units have been provided with clear instructions of the expectations for Major Crash Investigation Section to attend when and where they are able, to provide expert investigation assistance at the earliest opportunity. I assume that means although crashes at the Perth Motorplex do not occur on a public road, where possible, Major Crash Investigation Section Officers should be available to assist if requested.

³⁶⁷ T 27.

³⁶⁸ T 27.

³⁶⁹ T 42.

- 273.** Nevertheless, in my opinion, there needs to be consideration of better protocols between ANDRA and the WA Police to ensure a consistent approach to accident investigation and reporting procedures. Mr Stevens, on behalf of ANDRA, agreed there needed to be a better line of contact within the WA Police department so that in the event of a life or limb threatening event ANDRA staff can contact the appropriate section of the police. Alternatively, given Kwinana Police Station will ordinarily be the local station for the Perth Motorplex, there needs to be a better understanding between the Officer in Charge of this station and the Major Crash Investigation Section so that any incident can be appropriately assessed and expert assistance can be sought, and received, quickly.
- 274.** One other issue, that is somewhat related, is the unavailability of CCTV footage or any other camera footage of the crash. It was noted that there are CCTV cameras at the Perth Motorplex, but the evidence was that they are placed at the venue specifically to monitor patrons at the venue and are intended more for liquor licensing and crowd management issues than to monitor the race track. When the adults are racing, there are film crews and the like, but these are not present during junior racing.
- 275.** Whilst I accept the current purpose of the CCTV cameras, I suggested that there is no reason why an attempt could not be made to expand the use of the cameras, to at least have one camera fixed to capture the junior exit gate, if it is to remain in use. Mr Zundans accepted that it would be feasible to install a camera focussing on the exit gate, given that is where the primary issues have arisen.³⁷⁰ In the event that there are more such incidents, CCTV footage will be a valuable investigative tool.

RECOMMENDATION 7

I recommend that, if the junior racers are to continue to exit the track through the side exit gate, then a CCTV camera(s) should be installed at the Perth Motorplex to capture junior dragsters leaving the gate.

Promotion of a Safety Culture

- 276.** This category could arguably fit within the ‘driver’ pillar identified by Mr Cameron, but given we are dealing with junior drivers here and within a sport, it also encompasses the parents and the race organisers, so I have given it a separate category.
- 277.** A common theme at the inquest from parents involved in the sport was a concern that there was not a true ‘safety culture’ developed and encouraged

³⁷⁰ T 261 – 264.

within the junior drag racing sport. Some of the comments related to the failure to impose an automatic disqualification when the junior exceeded the speed limit restriction, and others related to failing to comply with general rules about registering and other off-track protocols.

- 278.** Mr Cope believes “there has been an ongoing disregard for applying the current rules consistently for a long time.”³⁷¹ Mr Cope felt that if applied properly, there are adequate safety rules and proper penalties for safety infractions.
- 279.** Mr Cope believes more needs to be done in junior drag racing to promote a more safety conscious attitude generally, both on and off the track, with more consistency in the way rules are enforced and promoted.³⁷² Mr Cope indicated he had contacted Mr Stevens at ANDRA following Anita’s death and offered to volunteer his time and, if necessary, funds to set up a rules committee to help establishing junior training rules but the matter did not progress, possibly due this inquest pending. Mr Cope had noted in his email to Mr Stevens and others that while Anita’s death could be described as a freak accident, he had witnessed many disturbing safety issues that had made him feel an incident like this, while unprecedented, was inevitable. Mr Cope detailed concerns about the construction and safety of some of the vehicles and the failure of the scrutineering process to identify them, as well as concerns about driving practices and a general disregard for following rules. He described it as a systemic issue that put having fun over safety and wanted some good to come from Anita’s tragic death.³⁷³
- 280.** Interestingly, Mr Cope commented that he believed some of the complacency came from the fact that many of the people involved in junior drag racing are used to racing really fast cars, that can do 300 or 400 km/hr, so the junior racing speeds appear less significant to them from that perspective. Further, because it is a relatively small community of people, there is a tendency for rules not to be enforced at times, despite the ANDRA rule book being clear about rules and penalties. This includes junior drag racers exceeding set speed limits. Mr Cope also noted that parents pushing for the rules to be enforced can experience resistance and/or resentment from other parents.³⁷⁴
- 281.** Mr Naylor also agreed with Mr Cope’s evidence about the need for stronger enforcement of rules.³⁷⁵
- 282.** I do not propose to make a recommendation in this regard, but I do support the comments of Mr Cope and Mr Naylor. It is very important that the organising bodies take a consistent and rigorous approach to safety issues, given the inherent dangers of motor sports. The participants and their parents and guardians need to have a proper respect for the rules, which to some extent comes from an understanding as to why the rules exist, but also comes from understanding that sanctions will follow breaches of the rules. Consistency in practice will ensure that parents who do prioritise safety will

³⁷¹ Exhibit 2, Tab 33 [35].

³⁷² T 206 – 207.

³⁷³ Exhibit 7.

³⁷⁴ T 211.

³⁷⁵ T 225 - 226.

not be left feeling excluded or ostracised for properly asking that the rules are enforced. Prevention is a key part of road safety, and this is a simple way in which ANDRA can promote a safety culture amongst the participants.

CONCLUSION

- 283.** Anita Board will be remembered as a bright and bubbly eight year old girl who died doing what she loved. Her family were, and remain, actively involved in the sport of drag racing and it had been Anita's dream to have a chance to participate. Tragically, the first time she attempted to get her junior drag racing licence, she crashed and suffered injuries that led to her death.
- 284.** A serious event like this in junior drag racing is so rare that it seems no one, other than perhaps the paramedics, fully appreciated the seriousness of the situation at first. Compared to the fiery crashes that are seen in adult drag racing, Anita's crash appeared relatively minor and people believed and hoped she would be fine. There is no doubt now, after a number of years have elapsed and junior drag racing has been suspended in this State, that all of the people involved in drag racing in WA, and indeed the world, are aware of the worst that can happen when a junior driver is not fully prepared and able to remain in control of their vehicle.
- 285.** As a coroner, who sees the worst that can happen in everyday life, it is difficult to come to terms with the idea of children being put at risk in this way. However, I have heard, and I accept, the evidence of the witnesses involved in drag racing that the risks for junior drag racers are much lower than they might superficially appear. The objective evidence from the National Coronial Information System supports their opinions. This is the first known death of a junior drag racer internationally, and I was directed to only one other case where a child in the USA was gravely injured. While there have been other incidents, the children have fortunately come out of them relatively unscathed.
- 286.** Nevertheless, I am satisfied from the evidence I heard from Mr Cameron and many others at this inquest, that there is a lot to be said for ensuring that the children who participate in this sport have more comprehensive and independently regulated training before they are permitted to get their drag racing licence³⁷⁶
- 287.** I am also satisfied that more can be done to improve the general safety of the venue that hosts junior drag racing in Western Australia, namely the Perth Motorplex, and I have made recommendations that hopefully will go some way to ensuring this occurs.
- 288.** During this inquest, it was apparent that Anita's death has had a far reaching effect on the relatively small drag racing community. Many witnesses were visibly affected when giving their evidence and it was apparent that people have given a lot of thought as to how changes can be

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made that will improve safety and reduce the risk for all junior participants. I have appreciated the cooperative way in which ANDRA and VenuesWest and all the parents and other participants have approached this inquest and the respect that people showed to each other during the inquest. It was clear that everyone involved wanted to respect Anita's legacy and hopefully, the changes that arise from this inquest will do that.

S H Linton
Coroner
14 August 2019