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**JURISDICTION** : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
**ACT** : CORONERS ACT 1996  
**CORONER** : SARAH HELEN LINTON, DEPUTY STATE CORONER  
**HEARD** : 22 JULY 2022  
**DELIVERED** : 18 AUGUST 2022  
**FILE NO/S** : CORC 130 of 2019  
**DECEASED** : PAVLIDIS, NICHOLAS

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*Catchwords:*

Nil

*Legislation:*

Nil

**Counsel Appearing:**

Senior Constable C Robertson assisted the Coroner.

**Case(s) referred to in decision(s):**

Nil

Coroners Act 1996  
(Section 26(1))

## RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

*I, Sarah Helen Linton, Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of Nicholas Lutci PAVLIDIS with an inquest held at the Perth Coroner's Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth on 22 July 2022, find that the death of Nicholas Lutci PAVLIDIS has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was Nicholas Lutci PAVLIDIS and that death occurred on an unknown date as a result of an unknown cause in the following circumstances:*

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Nicholas Pavlidis ('Mr Pavlidis') was last seen alive by a friend on 14 October 2015. Starting on 24 October 2015, police received numerous reports from members of the public that Mr Pavlidis' vehicle had been seen abandoned in the Pine Plantation in Yanchep, and was progressively being damaged and stripped of parts. In response to the reports, police tried to call Mr Pavlidis a number of times, but were unable to contact him. As the car had not been reported stolen and he had not been reported as a missing person at that stage, they then referred the matter to the relevant government agency to deal with as an abandoned car.
2. Mr Pavlidis' friend, who had last seen Mr Pavlidis in mid-October and had been unsuccessfully trying to contact him since that time, became aware that Mr Pavlidis' car had been abandoned in the pine forest. This information prompted the friend to report Mr Pavlidis as a missing person to police on 8 November 2015. The Western Australia Police ('WA Police') then coordinated a search, based around Mr Pavlidis' car, and they also searched his house. Both searches failed to locate any sign of Mr Pavlidis, and none of his belongings were found in 20 kilometres radius of his car.
3. A police investigation found Mr Pavlidis had withdrawn a reasonably large amount of money in the month leading up to his disappearance, but there were no banking transactions made after the date he was last seen by his friend. Mr Pavlidis was known to be frugal and had mentioned to his friends that he had plans to live off the grid and travel around Australia. His family also thought he might have chosen to go and live in an alternative type of community. However, it was thought unlikely he would have done so without telling any of his friends. The state of his house, and the manner in which his car was left, were also inconsistent with Mr Pavlidis leaving on a long planned journey.
4. Mr Pavlidis' family and friends have not had any contact with him since mid-October 2015 and there have been no other known sightings of him by members of the public. He has not used his bank accounts or been in contact with any government departments. The Public Trustee has taken over management of Mr Pavlidis' estate given the length of time that has elapsed since he has been known to be alive. He has not attempted to access any of his assets through them. The WA Police missing person investigation has ultimately concluded that the evidence points to Mr Pavlidis being deceased.
5. On the basis of the information provided by the WA Police in relation to Mr Pavlidis' disappearance, I determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), there was a reasonable cause to suspect that Mr Pavlidis had died, and his death was a reportable death. I therefore made a direction that a coroner hold an inquest into the circumstances of the suspected death.<sup>1</sup>
6. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 22 July 2022. The inquest consisted of the tendering of documentary evidence compiled during the police investigation conducted into Mr Pavlidis' disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from

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<sup>1</sup> Section 23 *Coroners Act* Direction of Deputy State Coroner.

Detective Sergeant Judith Seivwright ('Det Sgt Seivwright'), the current Officer in Charge of the WA Police Missing Person's Team, and Mr Philip Barnes ('Mr Barnes'), who was the last known person to see Mr Pavlidis alive and the person who reported Mr Pavlidis missing.

7. I asked for further information from the WA Police about the manner in which the reports of Mr Pavlidis' abandoned car were treated, and the limited attempts to contact him in that period until he was reported missing. Det Sgt Seivwright helpfully prepared a report, and gave evidence, in relation to that issue, which I discuss below.<sup>2</sup>

### **BACKGROUND**

8. Mr Pavlidis was born in Wollongong in New South Wales. He was the first born of male twins and also had two other brothers, one older and one younger. His father was a naturalised Australian and his mother was English. When Mr Pavlidis' father died, the family returned to live in the United Kingdom. Mr Pavlidis was four years old at the time, and he and his brothers were raised by their maternal grandparents. Mr Pavlidis' childhood in the UK was reported by his twin brother, John, to be unhappy. He grew up without any establishing any particularly close bonds with any of his siblings or other family.<sup>3</sup>
9. Mr Pavlidis was a bright student and after finishing school, he attended Polytechnic, but he dropped out before the end of the first year. He then trained and worked as a carpenter in England before moving to Australia. Mr Pavlidis had grown tired of carpentry before moving, so he looked for alternative types of work after his arrival in Australia.<sup>4</sup>
10. Mr Pavlidis' twin brother described Mr Pavlidis as a decent man at heart. He was clever with a dry sense of humour, hard-working, generous and self-sufficient. However, he could also be "moody and grumpy with violent verbal outbursts."<sup>5</sup> Mr Pavlidis' brother believed Mr Pavlidis had been adversely affected by his difficult upbringing, and this had led him to become emotionally troubled later in life.<sup>6</sup>
11. Mr Pavlidis returned to Australia to settle in Perth in 1990. His brother, John, also coincidentally moved to Perth shortly after. They saw each other sporadically until 2007, when they had a falling out after a family dinner while their mother was visiting Australia. Mr Pavlidis reportedly raised with his mother his feelings about his unhappy childhood in a violent verbal manner that led John to disassociate himself from Mr Pavlidis, as he no longer wished to witness these violent outbursts.<sup>7</sup> However, Mr Pavlidis' mother reported that she still kept in contact with him after that. She phoned and had long conversations with him from time to time, and visited

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<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

<sup>3</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>5</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 [16].

<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

Western Australia every three or so years. It appears she last visited Australia in 2014 and she stayed with Mr Pavlidis during her trip. After that visit, Mr Pavlidis' mother still kept in contact with him by phone, with her last reported contact with him at the end of August 2015.<sup>8</sup>

12. Mr Pavlidis tried different types of work in Australia, with his last job as a hospital laundry worker. He apparently enjoyed it, as it was "mindless and stress free."<sup>9</sup> Although he was clever and a hard worker, Mr Pavlidis seemed to realise after paying off his house that he didn't need much more money to maintain his lifestyle since he lived very frugally, and he preferred practical work over a professional career. He would also often take extended breaks from working when he would live off his savings. Mr Pavlidis did not seem to have any major goals to pursue or particular focus in his life. He would develop various new interests for a time, and then move on to something else.<sup>10</sup>
13. Mr Pavlidis never married and had no children. He had a few girlfriends, including at least one longer term de facto relationship, but his last long-term relationship ended in about 2004 and he was not in a relationship when he disappeared.<sup>11</sup>
14. Mr Pavlidis was described as being quite particular about his health, despite being a heavy smoker, and he liked to keep physically active. In the last period before his disappearance, he had taken to going on long walks. Mr Pavlidis had no known significant physical medical conditions but he did have a lot of problems with his teeth and had been seeing a dentist regularly for treatment for mouth abscesses and infections. The evidence indicates Mr Pavlidis also struggled with his mental health, and it was deteriorating in the period leading up to his disappearance. Mr Pavlidis was becoming increasingly reclusive and introspective and he was also very paranoid, as detailed below.<sup>12</sup>

### **EVENTS LEADING TO DISAPPEARANCE**

15. Mr Barnes had known Mr Pavlidis since 1997. They had lived together as housemates on a couple of occasions, and after they stopped being housemates, they remained in touch on an irregular basis. Mr Barnes was aware from a discussion early in their friendship that Mr Pavlidis was prescribed the medication Prozac for depression, but they did not discuss his mental health in any greater detail.<sup>13</sup> Mr Barnes was aware that Mr Pavlidis had been seeing a psychologist, and he understood that Mr Barnes enjoyed talking to the psychologist and looked forward to the sessions.
16. The psychologist, Ms Carole McLean ('Ms McLean'), saw Mr Pavlidis from early 2013 until June 2015. Consistent with his frugal nature, it appears he utilised the free sessions available to him under a mental health care plan each time, but did not pay

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<sup>8</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 9.

<sup>9</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7, Notes.

<sup>10</sup> T 15.

<sup>11</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 and Tab 9.

<sup>12</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 and Tab 9.

<sup>13</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

for any additional private sessions. Ms McLean reported to Mr Pavlidis' General Practitioner, Dr Haston, that Mr Pavlidis had been making good progress, but at their last session on 29 June 2015 he had fallen back into feeling paranoid. He reported feeling paranoid about people at work, "believing they were laughing about him and thinking bad things about him,"<sup>14</sup> to such a point that he quit his job. He also believed his neighbours were releasing gas. He had reported his suspicion to police and they had investigated but could find nothing.

17. Ms McLean considered Mr Pavlidis' anxiety levels had escalated and noted he was "not sleeping or eating, living on coffee and cigarettes"<sup>15</sup> by the end of June 2015. He was very isolated, with only one or two friends. He essentially spent much of his time alone, especially as he was no longer working. Ms McLean informed Dr Haston that Mr Pavlidis was due for a review of his mental health care plan and she felt that it was most important that Mr Pavlidis continue his sessions with her in order to "get back on an even keel again."<sup>16</sup>
18. Dr Haston provided information that Mr Pavlidis was given a new referral to Ms McLean on 28 July 2015. This would have entitled him to a further six counselling sessions, but it does not appear that Mr Pavlidis actually attended any further sessions with Ms McLean.<sup>17</sup> Mr Barnes gave evidence that Mr Pavlidis had mentioned he enjoyed using the free sessions, so he may have been concerned that he might have to pay for further sessions, as it was apparent that he otherwise looked forward to the session with his psychologist.<sup>18</sup>
19. Mr Pavlidis last consulted Dr Haston on 23 September 2015, when he reported worsening anxiety symptoms. He had ceased taking his Aroprax medication, which was prescribed to help manage his anxiety and depression symptoms, and was still not employed at this time. Dr Haston discussed Mr Pavlidis' anxiety symptoms at length and he was given a repeat prescription for Aroprax and also for Diazepam. Dr Haston understood that Mr Pavlidis was booked in to see Ms McLean later that day, but it seems he did not attend this appointment.<sup>19</sup>
20. Mr Barnes believed that Mr Pavlidis had been despondent since the beginning of 2015 and had become very paranoid from that time, which is consistent with the reports of Ms McLean and Dr Haston. About six months before he disappeared, Mr Pavlidis had handed Mr Barnes some pieces of paper he had written titled, 'Computer hacked?'. They comprise extensive notes that Mr Pavlidis had written and dated 17 June 2014. They cover various subjects but do indicate Mr Pavlidis was feeling paranoid about text messages he had received. His notes indicate he also contacted the Computer Crime Squad as he was so concerned that his computer was coming being hacked. He recorded that he later turned off his phone, ceased use of the internet and went 'off-line'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 13, Report 29.6.2015.

<sup>15</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 13, Report 29.6.2015.

<sup>16</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 13.

<sup>17</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 14.

<sup>18</sup> T 16.

<sup>19</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 14.

<sup>20</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

21. Around the time of his disappearance, Mr Pavlidis had continued to shun the use of computer and similar electronic equipment, including a mobile phone, as he thought he was being spied upon while using a computer or phone by the Federal Bureau of Investigation or Federal Police. This made it hard for friends to keep in touch with him.<sup>21</sup>
22. Mr Pavlidis' friend, John (Sandy) Lyall ('Mr Lyall'), recalled that he would see Mr Pavlidis sometimes when he would drop in to visit him at work. Mr Lyall worked at the Yanchep Inn at the time, and he remembered Mr Pavlidis dropped in to see him on a couple of occasions. The last time was in September 2015. He visited Mr Lyall during his break, and they sat down, had a few drinks and chatted about Mr Pavlidis having to spend \$800 to fix his car. Mr Lyall recalled that he thought Mr Pavlidis looked unwell and noticeably skinny and pale.<sup>22</sup> Mr Pavlidis did not mention at this time that he had any plans to go away in the near future, although he had mentioned in the past that he wanted to go fruit picking around Australia in a van that he could travel and live in.<sup>23</sup>
23. Police later determined that he had his vehicle serviced at Mitsubishi Wangara on 7 October 2015. While it was being serviced, Mr Pavlidis walked to Warwick and then back along some bush tracks. He took minimal water with him and was in a poorly state when he got back to the dealership.<sup>24</sup> Mr Barnes gave evidence that he saw Mr Pavlidis at the end of that day and Mr Pavlidis was noticeable distressed, dehydrated and "just absolutely not caring about the damage he had done to himself and the duress he had put himself under."<sup>25</sup>

### **LAST CONFIRMED SIGHTING**

24. Mr Pavlidis visited Mr Barnes at his home on the evening of Wednesday, 7 October 2015. He arrived at about 5.00 pm and stayed for dinner with Mr Barnes and his wife. Mr Pavlidis seemed to be in good spirits and they had a normal evening together, talking and eating. Mr Pavlidis left to go home at about 8.00 pm. He borrowed a few of Mr Barnes' books to read as he left.<sup>26</sup>
25. Mr Barnes visited Mr Pavlidis at his home a week later on Wednesday, 14 October 2015. He dropped off some more books, as Mr Pavlidis had become a prolific reader. The visit lasted about half an hour before Mr Barnes then left. That was the last time Mr Barnes, or anyone else, is known to have seen Mr Pavlidis alive.<sup>27</sup>
26. Mr Barnes went to Mr Pavlidis' house again about a week later, but Mr Pavlidis did not answer the door. Mr Barnes returned after another week had passed, but

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<sup>21</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 and Tab 11.

<sup>22</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

<sup>23</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

<sup>24</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 1.

<sup>25</sup> T 15.

<sup>26</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>27</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

Mr Pavlidis still did not answer the door. Mr Barnes assumed Mr Pavlidis had gone away, so he left his business card at his front door, so Mr Pavlidis would be aware Mr Barnes had called over to see him. Over the next week, Mr Barnes continued to drive by Mr Pavlidis' house and could see his business card still placed in the front door, which he thought was strange.<sup>28</sup>

27. Eventually, Mr Barnes went to the neighbour's house and told her that he was going to jump the fence into Mr Pavlidis' garden and look in through the window to check on him. The neighbour told Mr Barnes at that time that she had not seen Mr Pavlidis for about a week and a half, and had taken Mr Pavlidis' bin inside for him, as it had been left out. This information increased Mr Barnes' level of concern.<sup>29</sup>
28. Mr Barnes jumped over the fence and looked in through the window of Mr Pavlidis' house. Everything appeared in order and he could see washing on the washing line outside. Mr Barnes looked in the garage and could see that Mr Pavlidis' car was not there, which suggested he had gone somewhere. Mr Barnes returned to the neighbour, told her that everything looked in order at his house, and that it appeared Mr Pavlidis had just gone out.<sup>30</sup>
29. A few days later, Mr Barnes received a call from another of Mr Pavlidis' friends, Mr Lyall, who told him that Mr Pavlidis' car had been found abandoned by police in Yanchep. As far as Mr Lyall was aware, the only reason Mr Pavlidis would have for going to Yanchep would be to visit him.<sup>31</sup> Mr Barnes thought this information was very strange given he had also not had any contact with Mr Pavlidis for about a month. He went back to Mr Pavlidis' house and told the neighbour that this time he was going to try to get into Mr Pavlidis' house. He climbed in through a second story window and looked around the house to see if there was anything unusual or any sign of Mr Pavlidis or that he had been there recently. He could see Mr Pavlidis' toothbrush was still in the bathroom, and in a report it was suggested there was also a book open with reading glasses next to it. The house appeared to be in the same state as when he had looked through the window. Mr Barnes did not feel reassured by what he saw, so he rang the WA Police and reported Mr Pavlidis as a missing person.<sup>32</sup>

### **REPORT THAT MR PAVLIDIS WAS MISSING**

30. Mr Pavlidis was single and living alone in Currambine at the time he disappeared, so he had no partner, children or housemate to report him missing. He was also unemployed at the time as he had chosen to take an extended break from work, so he had no employer to notice he was missing from work and make enquiries. He had ceased regular contact with his family, and his primary social contact was with a few close friends, including Mr Barnes.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>29</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9 and Tab 29.

<sup>30</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>31</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

<sup>32</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9 and Tab 29.

<sup>33</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.



31. Mr Pavlidis owned a Mitsubishi Lancer. He enjoyed driving, often over long distances, so he kept the car well maintained, although the interior was not always tidy.<sup>34</sup>
32. As noted above, Mr Barnes became aware that Mr Pavlidis' car had been found abandoned in Yanchep by police. This prompted him to make more enquiries and then report Mr Pavlidis as a missing person.
33. The police provided information to the Court that preceding the missing person report on 8 November 2015, a number of calls were received by the WA Police in relation to Mr Pavlidis' white Mitsubishi Lancer, which was reported to have been abandoned in the vicinity of Yeal Swamp Road, intersecting with Pigeon Road, Yanchep. The first report was received on the afternoon of 24 October 2015, ten days after Mr Pavlidis was last seen by Mr Barnes at his home. This first report, made by a member of the public, indicated that the vehicle was unlocked and had a smashed window. Police attempted to call Mr Pavlidis' mobile telephone (which we now know he had not been using for some time) and checked that the vehicle was not listed as stolen, then closed the job and referred the matter to the relevant local government authority, City of Wanneroo, as per the policy.<sup>35</sup>
34. A second report was received on 30 October 2015, by which time the car was reported to have signs of more damage, and another couple of similar calls were received the next day. On this occasion, contact was made with the City of Wanneroo, who advised that the vehicle was actually the responsibility of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservations and Attractions ('DBCA') given the location where it was situated. There is an indication more attempts were made to contact Mr Pavlidis by telephone, then the matter was referred to DBCA to arrange removal of the vehicle and the job was closed. Police had not attended to inspect the vehicle at this stage.<sup>36</sup>
35. On 7 November 2015, another call was received by police from a member of the public. This person reported that they believed the vehicle was suspicious, as all the windows were now smashed, the car was jacked up and the wheels had been removed, and, importantly, bullet holes were seen in the glass. Police again tried to call Mr Pavlidis, whose phone was noted to be switched off. Police officers were also tasked to attend Mr Pavlidis' home to check on his welfare at this time. Police officers went to Mr Pavlidis' house at 9.00 pm that evening and found no one at home. They spoke to neighbours who indicated they had not seen Mr Pavlidis for approximately two weeks. The house appeared secure and there were no signs of disturbance. At this stage, police began inquiries to establish the welfare of Mr Pavlidis. Det Sgt Seivwright indicated that it appeared the information about bullet holes being seen prompted the police to take the matter more seriously, as it opened up the possibility that some harm might have come to Mr Pavlidis. The next day, Mr Barnes reported Mr Pavlidis missing and the earlier job code was changed to a missing person investigation.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9 and Tab 11.

<sup>35</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

<sup>36</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

<sup>37</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

## THE SEARCH

36. The initial missing person investigation was undertaken by officers from the Yanchep Local Policing Team and Joondalup Police Station, with assistance from the Missing Persons Team.<sup>38</sup>
37. Between 4.50 pm and 5.30 pm on 8 November 2015, Police Air Wing conducted an aerial search of the location around Mr Pavlidis' abandoned car and police foot patrols were commenced in the area surround the vehicle to look for any sign of Mr Pavlidis. Nothing of note was identified.<sup>39</sup>
38. On 9 November 2015, Forensics Officers attended the abandoned vehicle and conducted an examination. There were no car keys in the vehicle. There were no items located within or around the vehicle that might suggest that anyone had been injured while in the vehicle. It was felt the bullet holes had most likely occurred as a result of vandalism, sometime after the vehicle was abandoned, rather than having anything to do with Mr Pavlidis' disappearance. There was an empty sleeping bag case and empty tent bag in the boot of the car, which suggested to the police that Mr Pavlidis may have walked into the bush to go camping, although it would seem strange to remove them from their cases for that purpose, as it would make them harder to carry when on foot.<sup>40</sup>
39. Two officers were also sent to Mr Pavlidis' home to conduct a search. They noted that laundry was still hanging on the line and there were no signs of suspicious activity at the home. Officers returned to the home a couple of times over the next two days and conducted further searches. They noted that medication prescribed to Mr Pavlidis was located in the fridge and a visa permit from Hutt River Province dated 30 October 2014 was on the fridge, along with his psychologist's number. There was also a handwritten note on top of the fridge that recorded Mr Pavlidis had turned his phone off on 2 July 2015. No electronic devices, other than his television, were found in the house. This is consistent with Mr Barnes' understanding that Mr Pavlidis had disposed of all his electronic devices as he was concerned about being spied on. Eventually, sometime later, a further search found a laptop in a store room under the stairs. It was reviewed by Technology Crime Services and nothing of note was found.<sup>41</sup>
40. At 10.26 am on 10 November 2015, a full Land Search and Rescue was commenced. Police officers and State Emergency Services personnel conducted a systematic search of area around the vehicle via foot patrols and mobile patrols, including the main roads and places where Mr Pavlidis might have walked to from that area. The search was assisted by aerial support from Polair. In total, a search area of over 30 km<sup>2</sup> was sectorised and covered by foot, air and vehicle with no sightings of Mr Pavlidis or evidence of his presence. Many of the walking tracks in the area were through extremely dense vegetation that was not suitable for camping, so it seemed unlikely that he would have pitched a tent there. At the end of the day, it was

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<sup>38</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>39</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>40</sup> T 9; Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>41</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

concluded that there was an extremely high probability that, if Mr Pavlidis was in the search area, he would have been located. The search was concluded that afternoon.<sup>42</sup>

### **POLICE INVESTIGATION**

41. On 11 November 2015, Police Media released information about Mr Pavlidis to the public, but it did not elicit any new information. Police have also included Mr Pavlidis' disappearance as part of National Missing Persons Week in an attempt to locate further witnesses, but no persons have come forward with any further sightings or information.<sup>43</sup>
42. Mr Pavlidis' mobile telephone records were obtained for the period 12 October 2015 to 11 November 2015, covering the time he was last seen until he was reported missing. No outgoing calls or messages were made from that number, confirming that he was no longer using his mobile phone by that time.<sup>44</sup>
43. The police investigation found that Mr Pavlidis had withdrawn \$10,000 from his home loan on 21 September 2015 and closed his access account with ANZ bank. He deposited \$9,000 into his P&N bank account on the same day.<sup>45</sup> The police assumed Mr Pavlidis had kept out the remaining \$1,000 to live off, as friends informed police that Mr Pavlidis generally lived off cash, withdrawing amounts of \$500 at a time and using the cash to live on and pay bills. He could make it last at least a month or even longer, because he was very careful with his money. I also note Mr Lyall recalled that around this time Mr Pavlidis had to pay approximately \$800 to repair his car, so some of the money would have gone to paying that.<sup>46</sup> The last transaction on Mr Pavlidis' P&N account was on 7 October 2015 at an ATM in Joondalup. There remained over \$9,000 in the account that has not been accessed since.<sup>47</sup>
44. Information was provided during the investigation that Mr Pavlidis had taken his mother to the Hutt River Province for a day trip when she visited in 2014,<sup>48</sup> and there was a card on his fridge, so police made enquiries there to confirm that Mr Pavlidis had not made his way there after he disappeared. They had no record of him in their non-resident subject list.<sup>49</sup> Interstate checks with Australian Federal Police and all interstate Missing Persons Teams revealed there had been no contact with Mr Pavlidis, and the Department of Immigration and Border Force confirmed he had not left the country using his passport.
45. There are no unidentified remains at the State Mortuary that could be identified as Mr Pavlidis.

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<sup>42</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>43</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>44</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>45</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>46</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9 and Tab 11.

<sup>47</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>48</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>49</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 29, Running Sheet, p. 1 of 88.

46. In July 2020 the WA Police concluded that all possible investigative avenues had been exhausted and they were unable to locate Mr Pavlidis or establish the circumstances of his disappearance. The evidence obtained during the investigation did not point to any criminality surrounding Mr Pavlidis' disappearance or any suggestion of another persons' involvement. Detective Senior Constable Rosanna McKee, from the Homicide Squad – Missing Persons Team, concluded there was evidence to suggest Mr Pavlidis went for a walk in the bush near his car, with the intention of returning, but possibly succumbed to fatigue or became disorientated and lost.<sup>50</sup>
47. Det Sgt Seivwright gave evidence at the inquest that she also believes that, on the basis of the evidence of Mr Pavlidis' deteriorating mental state, and the absence of any contact or evidence of proof of life since he was last seen by Mr Barnes in mid-October 2015, she believes Mr Pavlidis perished in the bush around the time his vehicle was first discovered abandoned.<sup>51</sup>

### **VIEWS OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

48. Mr Pavlidis' twin brother, John, mentioned in his statement to police, signed on 23 January 2018, that he wouldn't be surprised if Mr Pavlidis could be "found living in some off beat or religious community where the major decisions are made for him."<sup>52</sup> Prior to the inquest, Senior Constable Robertson contacted John and he confirmed that while he still left that as a possibility, he accepted that it is most likely that his brother is deceased.
49. I note that Mr Pavlidis' brother disposed of his vehicle at an early stage, as it was damaged, and took over management of his house for a time before it was taken into the care of the Public Trustee. He has not had any contact with Mr Pavlidis since his disappearance, although even if he was still alive that would not be out of the ordinary.
50. Mr Pavlidis' mother indicated to police during their investigation that she hoped he had "gone walkabout but who knows."<sup>53</sup> She noted he had a knowledge of the outback from his work in geological surveying and security work that might have assisted him to keep alive in the bush. However, I also note that the tone of her comments was more hopeful than certain that he could still be alive, and she provided that information to police back in 2016.<sup>54</sup> Many more years have passed since that time, with no sign of Mr Pavlidis.
51. Mr Pavlidis' friend, Mr Lyall, indicated that he believed if Mr Pavlidis had been intending to go away, he would have told him, Mr Barnes or another friend, Chris Van Blommestein ('Mr Von Blommestein'). He told police it was out of character for Mr Pavlidis to go away without telling at least one of his friends. Mr Lyall went

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<sup>50</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>51</sup> T 13.

<sup>52</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 [42].

<sup>53</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8, Notes 20.1.2016.

<sup>54</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

to Mr Pavlidis' house on 17 December 2015 with Mr Pavlidis' brother, John. Mr Lyall noticed that a couple of items of Mr Pavlidis' clothing were missing, including his brown suede walking boots, as well as a black and blue backpack and his reading glasses.<sup>55</sup>

52. Mr Von Blommestein was spoken to by police at an early stage in the police investigation. He confirmed that he had last seen Mr Pavlidis about six weeks before he disappeared. He told Mr Von Blommestein at that time that he had bought a tent and intended to go south, picking fruit. He acknowledged that Mr Pavlidis was a very good walker and enjoyed his own company, but he thought his disappearance was unorganised, which is out of character for him, and noted that the area where Mr Pavlidis' vehicle was found was not an area Mr Pavlidis knew well or frequented regularly.<sup>56</sup>
53. It was very clear from the overall evidence that Mr Pavlidis' friends and family have held out hope over the years that he simply made a choice to go 'off grid' and live an alternative lifestyle. However, as time has passed, that option has become increasingly less likely. Det Sgt Seivwright expressed the opinion that, even if this were true, he would have been expected to come into contact with other people or the authorities by now.<sup>57</sup> It was also noted by his friends and the police, that if he had intended to do so, he was the kind of person who would have planned it more and not simply left home, with the bins out, laundry on the line, and without telling any of his friends he was leaving.
54. Mr Barnes attended the inquest and heard the opening address and the evidence of Det Sgt Seivwright before giving evidence himself. Mr Barnes indicated that after hearing the evidence, he has reluctantly come to accept that Mr Pavlidis has passed away. He found it very hard to verbalise it as it put an end to the hope that he was still enjoying life in some remote part of the world, but Mr Barnes acknowledged that all of the evidence points to this conclusion.<sup>58</sup>

### **POLICE POLICY REGARDING ABANDONED VEHICLES**

55. I had identified through Senior Constable Robertson a concern that the police abandoned vehicle policy did not seem to address the situation where a vehicle is abandoned and the owner of the vehicle cannot be contacted. This was raised with the WA Police prior to the inquest, so that further information could be provided on this issue.
56. Det Sgt Seivwright very helpfully provided a report outlining what steps were taken by police initially in relation to the reports of Mr Pavlidis' abandoned vehicle, as well as information about the policy and procedures police are directed to follow in relation to such matters. It is relevant to note that there are a lot of abandoned vehicle reports, with Det Sgt Seivwright identifying that in 2015 a total of 8,823 related tasks

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<sup>55</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

<sup>56</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>57</sup> T 10.

<sup>58</sup> T 20 – 21.

for abandoned vehicle CAD jobs were recorded. The average attendance to those jobs was 39% in the metropolitan area, and a much higher 80% in the regional areas, with the discrepancy explained by greater tasking pressures in the metropolitan area as well as the greater risk that the location of abandoned vehicles in remote areas might present.<sup>59</sup>

57. The relevant WA Police Force Policy *TR 01.04* specifies:

*WA Police do not take any responsibility for vehicles abandoned in public or privately owned locations.*

**Procedure**

*Members locating an abandoned vehicle shall;*

- *Inspect the vehicle and make sufficient enquiry to establish the vehicle is not stolen or involved in criminal activity, and*
- *Record the description and location of the vehicle and notify the Local Government Authority.*

*Where the vehicle is in an unsafe location or is obstructing traffic, refer to TR-13.01 Towing Vehicles.*

58. Det Sgt Seivwright indicated her understanding that the call takers had followed standard police procedure when receiving the first three calls from the public in relation to Mr Pavlidis.
59. That may be true, although I note that, separate to the policy, the Police Assistance Centre call guide section for abandoned vehicles does suggest that if there is any reported damage to the vehicle (such as damage to the windows), this would usually prompt a job for police to attend and assess the vehicle.<sup>60</sup> Given even the first report indicated a window on Mr Pavlidis' vehicle was damaged, it would suggest that it could have prompted a job to send police to assess the car, although I accept that with stretched resources this might not be considered a priority.
60. In any event, Det Sgt Seivwright acknowledged that, having regard to the unusual bush location and the reported damage to the vehicle, it could be argued that a cause for suspicion was present even at that early stage. It may have been prudent for officers to attend in person to inspect the vehicle for themselves before referring the matter to the local government agency, particularly as the registered owner could not be contacted on the telephone. It is possible if police had attended the vehicle, it might have led to Mr Pavlidis' disappearance being identified at an earlier stage.<sup>61</sup>
61. However, Det Sgt Seivwright, who is very experienced in missing person investigations, also expressed the opinion that even if police had commenced a

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<sup>59</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

<sup>60</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32, Attachment B.

<sup>61</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

missing person investigation at that earlier time, it is very unlikely it would have altered the outcome in this instance.<sup>62</sup>

62. Det Sgt Seivwright noted in her report that over time, “crucial evidence can be lost, moved or degraded therefore it is always preferable in any investigation, including missing persons cases, that an inquiry is commenced as soon as possible.” With that in mind, I am advised that the WA Police Force *Person At Risk* project had developed practical process to assist frontline decisions making, with a new Missing Person Policy and supporting operational guide and decision support tool to be endorsed corporately in 2022. However, in the meantime, Det Sgt Seivwright acknowledged that the current abandoned vehicle policy is silent on establishing the welfare of the registered owner.<sup>63</sup>
63. Det Sgt Seivwright has suggested in the conclusion of her report that in order to improve guidance for officers attending abandoned vehicle tasks, where the vehicle may be involved in a missing person event (with a missing person defined as someone for whom there is a genuine and serious concern for their welfare and safety), the police could be amended to add in words to the effect,

*Inspect the vehicle and make sufficient inquiry to establish the vehicle is not stolen, involved in criminal activity, or serious welfare concerns exist for any occupants.*

64. Det Sgt Seivwright advised at the inquest that her suggestion for an amendment to the policy has been forwarded to the Coronial Investigation Section, with the request that it be onforwarded to the State Traffic Division, who have responsibility for the policy.
65. I agree with Det Sgt Seivwright’s suggestion for an amendment to the policy, and since it has not yet been implemented, I make a recommendation to that effect.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**I recommend that the WA Police Force amend WA Police Force Policy *TR 01.04* (relating to abandoned vehicles), to require members to consider not only whether the vehicle is stolen or involved in criminal activity, but also whether there are any serious welfare concerns for the owner of the vehicle or the known occupants, before diverting the responsibility for the abandoned vehicle to the relevant local government authority.**

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<sup>62</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

<sup>63</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 32.

**CONCLUSION**

66. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Mr Pavlidis died on an unknown date, sometime in the ten days period between when he was last seen by Mr Barnes on 14 October 2015 and his vehicle was first reported abandoned on 24 October 2015. As his body has not been found, and the exact circumstances around his last moments are unknown, his cause of death must remain unascertained and the manner of death open. However, I am satisfied that there is no evidence to suggest Mr Pavlidis' death arose as a result of foul play.
67. I accept the suggestions of the investigating officer and Mr Barnes' evidence that it is most likely that Mr Pavlidis parked his car and began walking, without due care and preparation for a long walk, and without any thought to ensure that he would be able to make it safely back to his car. There is evidence he was not in a good state of health at that time, both physically and mentally, and Mr Barnes was aware of at least one previous incident where Mr Pavlidis had spontaneously gone for a long walk when his car was being repaired and barely made it back. If he went for a long walk without taking a proper supply of water and a phone to call for help, he could easily have become lost and succumbed to heat exhaustion. Alternatively, there are other risks, such as snake bite and injury, that could have been prevented Mr Pavlidis from making it safely back to his car.
68. Although some might consider going on an unplanned walk without a good preparation to be akin to act of suicide, there is no evidence that Mr Pavlidis had ever experienced any suicidal thoughts or made any attempts. He had certainly been anxious and despondent at times, and was increasingly paranoid about the conduct of others, but there is no evidence to suggest he was contemplating ending his life. However, he had indicated to Mr Barnes that he might be reckless as to whether he would be able to return.
69. In the end, all I am able to find conclusively is that Mr Pavlidis is deceased. Although this is not, perhaps, the conclusion his family and friends have wanted to reach until now, they appear to have already come to this conclusion themselves, so my finding will simply formalise what they already know in their own hearts.

S H Linton  
Deputy State Coroner  
18 August 2022