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**JURISDICTION** : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
**ACT** : CORONERS ACT 1996  
**CORONER** : SARAH HELEN LINTON, ACTING STATE CORONER  
**HEARD** : 8 JANUARY 2025  
**DELIVERED** : 10 JANUARY 2025  
**FILE NO/S** : CORC 3216 of 2024  
**DECEASED** : JENG, MUH TUU

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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, Acting State Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Muh Tuu JENG** with an inquest held at the **Perth Coroner’s Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth** on 8 January 2025, find that the death of **Muh Tuu JENG** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **Muh Tuu JENG** and that death occurred on or about 7 September 1988 in the **Indian Ocean approximately 40 nautical miles off the coast of Broome** as a result of drowning in the following circumstances:*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Muh Tuu JENG was born in Taipei, Taiwan, on 3 August 1960. He grew up to become a fisherman. On 7 September 1988, Mr Jeng was a crew member onboard a Taiwanese fishing vessel in waters off Broome, Western Australia, when he and another crew member, Jiin Tarnng Su, fell off the vessel. Mr Jeng was last seen disappearing below the surface of the water by Mr Su. Mr Su was eventually rescued from the water but there was no further sign of Mr Jeng.
2. On the basis of the information provided by the WA Police in relation to Mr Jeng's disappearance, I determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), there was reasonable cause to suspect that Mr Jeng 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>
3. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 8 January 2025. The inquest consisted of the tendering of a limited amount of documentary evidence compiled during the police investigation conducted into Mr Jeng's disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from Detective Senior Constable Paul Ayton.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES OF DISAPPEARANCE**

4. On 7 September 1988, Mr Jeng was on the Taiwanese fishing vessel *Hua Kao 606/607 – Boat No 2*. The vessel was situated about 40 nautical miles west of Broome, Western Australia, and operating under contract to the Kailis Fishing Group.<sup>2</sup>
5. Sometime between 7.00 pm and 7.50 pm, Mr Jeng and Mr Su were on shift and standing near the rear of the vessel. The seas were rough and Mr Jeng and Mr Su lost their footing and fell overboard into the water below. Mr Jeng was fully dressed, wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and sandals when he fell in.<sup>3</sup>
6. The last sighting of Mr Jeng was by Mr Su in the water. Mr Su was eventually rescued from the water by other crew members on the same vessel at 8.55 pm. Mr Su told his rescuers that he last saw Mr Jeng disappearing below the surface of the water before the rescue team arrived.<sup>4</sup>
7. Local authorities were notified of the incident and an extensive search by private fishing vessels, Customs Department vessels and a Customs Department aircraft was conducted. The search failed to locate any trace of Mr Jeng.<sup>5</sup>
8. The vessel returned to shore in Broome on 3 October 1988 and a missing person report was completed at Broome Police Station on 4 October 1988. Local police spoke to the ship's Captain, radio operator and Mr Su with the aid of an interpreter to

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

<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

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

<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>5</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

obtain what limited information was known about Mr Jeng and his disappearance. It was noted in the report that the chances of Mr Jeng's body being found by that time were considered extremely remote.<sup>6</sup>

### **RECENT POLICE REVIEW**

9. Detective Senior Constable Ellie Wold from the WA Police Homicide Squad Missing Person Team recently conducted a review of the materials on the file and then undertook some additional enquiries.
10. Det S/C Wold contacted Interpol in Canberra for assistance in obtaining any additional information on Mr Jeng and his antecedents. Attempts to obtain additional information through the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office were hampered by a lack of information about Mr Jeng's passport details, so unfortunately, no new information was able to be obtained.<sup>7</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

11. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Mr Jeng died around the time of his disappearance on 7 September 1988 after he fell from the vessel he was working on into the ocean in rough seas. Based upon the evidence of the other crew member who was with Mr Jeng in the water and saw him disappear below the surface, I am satisfied Mr Jeng's cause of death was drowning and the manner of death was by way of accident.

S H Linton  
A/State Coroner  
10 January 2025

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<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 5.

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