



Western

Australia

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

Ref: 19/18

I, Sarah Helen Linton, Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Giuseppe DEL BORRELLO** with an inquest held at the **Perth Coroner's Court, Court 51, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth** on **22 May 2018** find that the death of **Giuseppe DEL BORRELLO** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **Giuseppe DEL BORRELLO** and that death occurred on or about **1 January 1979** at **Yanchep National Park** as a result of an **unascertained cause** in the following circumstances:

Counsel Appearing:

Sgt L Housiaux assisting the Coroner.

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MISSING PERSON REPORT

1. Giuseppe Del Borrello went missing almost forty years ago in Yanchep National Park. He had gone there with his family and friends for a picnic on New Year's Day, 1 January 1979. After lunch, Mr Del Borrello went for a walk and did not return.¹
2. Mr Del Borrello had appeared to be enjoying himself during the day and he often went for a short walk after eating a meal, so no one was initially concerned. However, as the minutes passed and he did not return his family became concerned. They searched for him themselves and then eventually reported missing to the National Park Rangers at about 5.30 pm. After a brief unsuccessful search the Head Ranger reported Mr Del Borrello missing to police at 6.10 pm.²
3. A comprehensive search was conducted in the immediate and surrounding areas. The search team included police on foot, mounted police, Aboriginal trackers, helicopters, tracker dogs, park rangers and civilian volunteers. Caves, waterways, concrete bunkers and other such places were included in the search.³ The search continued until 5 January 1979 but no sign of Mr Del Borrello was ever found.⁴
4. In 2017 a report was provided to the State Coroner prepared by the then Officer in Charge of the Missing Persons Unit of the WA Police, Detective Sergeant Stephen Perejmibida. Detective Perejmibida submitted that, based upon the police investigation in 1979 and since, it is probable and reasonable to conclude that Mr Del Borrello is deceased. Mr Del Borrello's next of kin were informed and did not object to this conclusion.
5. On the basis of the information provided the State Coroner determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA) there was reasonable cause to suspect that Mr Del Borrello died in or 1979 and that the suspected death should be investigated. Following that direction it is a requirement that a coroner must hold an inquest into the circumstances of the suspected death.
6. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 22 May 2018. The documentary evidence comprised a report of the police investigation into the disappearance of Mr Del Borrello⁵ and Detective Perejmibida gave oral evidence in support of the report.

HAS DEATH BEEN ESTABLISHED?

7. Mr Del Borrello was a widower following his wife's death seven years before. He had lived with his daughter in Belmont for many years after her death. Mr Del Borrello had been happy living with his daughter, as he had his own

¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

² Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 4.

³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

⁵ Exhibit 1.

room and was living in a familiar area where he could take daily walks up the street to visit other local Italians.⁶

8. In June 1978, six months prior to his death, Mr Del Borrello had been forced to move to live with his son Peter and daughter-in-law Anna in Bullsbrook. At his son's home Mr Del Borrello had been required to share the room with a relative.⁷ He was no longer close to familiar places and friends and his family were also watching him more closely, due to his alcoholism, so he had less personal freedom.⁸
9. Shortly prior to his disappearance Mr Del Borrello's family believed he may have overheard a conversation between Peter, Anna and another of Mr Del Borrello's sons, Nick, about the possibility of Mr Del Borrello moving again. This time he would move to Nick's house, although Nick was concerned there was little room to accommodate him.⁹
10. Peter Del Borrello's children later told police that Mr Del Borrello had said that he would run away one day and no one would find him, because he wasn't wanted anymore, but their parents cast doubt on their accounts.¹⁰
11. Mr Del Borrello was 78 years old on the day he disappeared. He had last seen his regular doctor, Dr Frisina, two months before his death. Mr Del Borrello was being treated for mild heart failure, high blood pressure and chronic alcoholism, with alcohol-related depression. He was on regular daily medication. After Mr Del Borrello went missing Anna noticed that a packet of Mr Del Borrello's Mogadon sleeping pills had gone missing.
12. The day before he died, Anna had asked to borrow something of Mr Del Borrello's and had been surprised when he had said, "Yes, it is all yours, take it. I don't want it, it is all yours."¹¹ This was out of character for him.
13. Dr Frisina was asked whether it was likely Mr Del Borrello was experiencing suicidal thoughts given his depressive symptoms. Dr Frisina expressed his opinion it was more likely that Mr Del Borrello would go missing while in search of alcohol rather than due to suicidal intent. Mr Del Borrello was known to have had his wallet with him, with a reasonable amount of cash in it, when he went missing. Earlier that day he had disappeared for a short time and been found at some shops having purchased a can of soft drink and smoking a cigarette.¹²
14. However, I note that during lunch Mr Del Borrello had a glass of beer and a couple of small glasses of home-made Italian wine.¹³ There was obviously alcohol available and accessible so there does not seem to have been any need for Mr Del Borrello to go in search of it.

⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

¹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

¹² Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 4.

¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

15. All of Mr Del Borrello's personal papers, including his pension card and bank books, were found amongst his possessions at his son's home.¹⁴ Both of his bank accounts had money in them, and no further withdrawals were made after 1 January 1979.¹⁵
16. Every endeavour was made by police to find Mr Del Borrello in 1979, without success.
17. At the conclusion of the inquest I indicated that I was satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Mr Del Borrello had died but that I would have to give further consideration as to what conclusions I could reach about the circumstances of his death, given the limited information available.

DATE, PLACE, CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH

18. I note that Mr Del Borrello was born on 21 March 1901 and he was 78 years old when he disappeared. If he were alive today, he would be 118 years old, so there is no doubt he is dead.
19. Further, I am satisfied that Mr Del Borrello died around the time he went missing on 1 January 1979.
20. As Mr Del Borrello's remains have not been discovered, his cause of death is unable to be determined.
21. Mr Del Borrello was an elderly man, not in the best of health, and he disappeared in the middle of a Perth summer's day with no known food or water in what was then a very remote area.¹⁶ The known circumstances leave open natural causes, as well as accident and potentially even suicide given the missing tablets and some of the comments made by Mr Del Borrello prior to his death and his less than ideal living circumstances. There is insufficient evidence before me to make a finding as to what manner of death is more probable. Accordingly, I make an open finding as to the manner of death.

CONCLUSION

22. Giuseppe Del Borrello went missing from a family picnic on 1 January 1979. He has not been seen or heard from again and I am satisfied that he died on or about that date. The other circumstances of his death are, and must remain, unknown given the length of time based on the evidence available.

S H Linton
Coroner
31 May 2018

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

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