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**JURISDICTION** : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
**CORONER** : SARAH HELEN LINTON, DEPUTY STATE CORONER  
**HEARD** : 19 MARCH 2024  
**DELIVERED** : 5 APRIL 2024  
**FILE NO/S** : CORC 2815 of 2023  
**DECEASED** : KOBELT, NEIL LINDSAY

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*Catchwords:*

Nil

*Legislation:*

Nil

**Counsel Appearing:**

Acting Sergeant C Robertson assisted the Deputy State Coroner.

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

Nil

Coroners Act 1996  
(Section 26(1))

**RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH**

*I, Sarah Helen Linton, Deputy State Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of Neil Lindsay **KOBELT** with an inquest held at Perth Coroners Court, Central Law Courts, Court 85, 501 Hay Street, Perth, on 19 March 2024, find that the death of Neil Lindsay **KOBELT** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was Neil Lindsay **KOBELT** and that death occurred sometime after 8 February 1982 at an unknown location, from an unknown cause in the following circumstances:*

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Neil Lindsay Kobelt (Mr Kobelt) was originally from South Australia but moved to Kalgoorlie in 1981. He was last known to be living at the Angel Hostel in Boulder.
2. Mr Kobelt had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and had a history of unpredictable behaviour, often making sudden decisions to travel long distances to unfamiliar places. The evidence indicates he had moved to Kalgoorlie as he didn't like the medical treatment he was required to receive in South Australia, particularly his medication, and he had hoped that by moving states he would be able to escape the compulsory medical regime that he was subject to at home.
3. It appears Mr Kobelt was not receiving any treatment for his mental illness while living in Kalgoorlie and witnesses indicate his mental health deteriorated over time. There are reports he was found naked in the street and was taken to Kalgoorlie Hospital on 6 February 1982. He was admitted for two days for psychiatric treatment, before being discharged on 8 February 1982. That is the last time Mr Kobelt is confirmed to be alive. No one knows where he went after leaving hospital. He never collected his personal possessions or car from the hostel where he was living and his family have never seen or heard from him again.
4. Mr Kobelt's family understood that a missing person report had been filed with WA Police in late March 1982, after the hostel owners contacted Mr Kobelt's parents with concerns about what had happened to Mr Kobelt. His mother reportedly provided a photograph of Mr Kobelt to WA Police to assist with the investigation. However, the WA Police have found no record of a missing person report being filed for Mr Kobelt at that time.<sup>1</sup>
5. On 20 April 2021, after seeing some media coverage of police investigations into long-term missing persons, Mr Kobelt's sister, Betty Wilhelm, went to Salisbury Police Station in South Australia to provide a familial DNA sample to assist in hopefully locating her brother's remains. It became apparent following enquiries by SA Police that, contrary to the family's understanding, there was no missing person report on the WA Police database in relation to Mr Kobelt. A Missing Person Incident Report was created by WA Police that day, following the communication from SA Police. The missing person investigation has found no evidence that any person had seen or had any contact with Mr Kobelt since February 1982.<sup>2</sup>
6. On the basis of the information provided by the WA Police in relation to Mr Kobelt's disappearance, I determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), there was reasonable cause to suspect that Mr Kobelt had died and that 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>3</sup>
7. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 18 March 2024. The inquest consisted of the tendering of documentary evidence compiled during the police

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

<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 4.

<sup>3</sup> Section 23 *Coroners Act* Direction of Deputy State Coroner, dated 30 August 2023.

investigation conducted into Mr Kobelt's disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from Senior Constable Leigh Woods, who had the primary carriage of the investigation and prepared the report for the coroner.

### **SOURCES OF EVIDENCE**

8. Due to the delay in commencing the investigation, there were considerable gaps in the documentary evidence available and difficulties in obtaining accurate witness accounts of events. The officers involved in the WA Police investigation did their best to obtain whatever records were available, and to speak to as many witnesses as possible, but many of the relevant witnesses were no longer alive, and many records could not be found.
9. Police enquiries established that the Angel Hostel where Mr Kobelt had been living prior to his disappearance was gutted by fire in July 2011, resulting in all client records being destroyed. Of the two owners of the hostel at the time Mr Kobelt was a resident, one had died and one was elderly with diminished cognition and no longer had any memory of Mr Kobelt.<sup>4</sup>
10. There were also no police records of Mr Kobelt being located naked in the street and taken to hospital, just some general recollection of this occurring by some witnesses. Limited medical records were obtained that confirmed Mr Kobelt was admitted to Kalgoorlie Hospital on 6 February 1982 for treatment for 'psychiatric disease'. He was discharged two days later on 8 February 1982 as a 'Code 2', which apparently meant he was released home. The treating doctor was recorded as H Clarke, who was believed to be Dr Harry Clarke. Dr Clarke died in 2011, so the police were unable to speak to him. Dr Clarke's wife provided information that all his medical records were supposed to have been scanned electronically and kept at the Plaza Medical Centre in Kalgoorlie. Unfortunately, a search of all records on hand at the medical centre did not locate any record of Mr Kobelt. It was thought that because Mr Kobelt was an inactive patient when the records were transferred to electronic form, they may not have been added to the system. All the paper records were destroyed, so they could not be manually searched.<sup>5</sup>
11. Sadly, both of Mr Kobelt's parents have now passed away. However, his mother wrote some letters around the time that Mr Kobelt went missing, which provided very helpful background information and context for the investigation. In addition, Mr Kobelt's sister was able to locate some other correspondence, including a letter from Auckland Hospital Psychiatric Unit, dated 1 November 1979, which notified Mr Kobelt's mother of his committal to hospital in New Zealand for psychiatric treatment. A letter from The Gospel Tape Ministry to Mr Kobelt's mother on 6 November 1979 also provided some information as to how Mr Kobelt came to be committed to hospital at that time, which provided useful background information. While there was no specific detail provided, the author of the letter, Pastor Searle, referred to Mr Kobelt attempting to hurt himself and that he "did other things which

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<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>5</sup> T 5 – 6; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, Tab 12 and Tab 14.

were not good”<sup>6</sup> when he was taken to the police station, although the police were said to have been very kind to him.

12. The evidence obtained from Mr Kobelt’s family also established he had numerous psychiatric admissions to Hillcrest Psychiatric Hospital in South Australia, but the hospital closed in 1994 so no records were able to be obtained.<sup>7</sup>
13. After calling for witnesses, police officers did manage to identify some people who remembered meeting Mr Kobelt in Kalgoorlie in 1981 to 1982, when he was a member of the local church. Three of these witnesses provided statements to police about what they could recall of the last known movements of Mr Kobelt.<sup>8</sup>
14. Checks with all states and territories for any government records of Mr Kobelt after 1982 returned a result of ‘no record’, supporting the conclusion he did not leave Kalgoorlie and move to somewhere else within either Western Australia or Australia.<sup>9</sup>

### **BACKGROUND**

15. Mr Kobelt was born in South Australia. His parents raised him along with his five siblings. He attended primary school and high school in South Australia and was described as an average student. Mr Kobelt was also described by his family as quiet young man with a reserved personality and a deep thinker. He did not mix easily amongst his peer group. Mr Kobelt had many creative interests, including pottery, photography, gardening, natural painting, writing poetry and prayers.<sup>10</sup>
16. After completing fourth year in high school, he left home for the first time and began working on a dairy farm near Meningee on Lake Albert.<sup>11</sup> Mr Kobelt was described as a good and steady worker but in 1976 he began to show signs of disorientation and mood swings that were noticed by his workmates and family.<sup>12</sup>
17. Mr Kobelt was admitted to Hillcrest Psychiatric Hospital and he was eventually diagnosed with a form of schizophrenia. He was not known to be violent but often became disorientated. He was not admitted to hospital for long. After he was released, he was non-compliant with his medication as he didn’t like the side effects.<sup>13</sup>
18. Mr Kobelt then got a job on the national railways in South Australia, working a special gang. However, he relapsed and had to be readmitted to Hillcrest. He then had repeated admissions, usually of about four weeks duration. Each relapse was due to Mr Kobelt refusing to take his medication and he would descend into “the same kind of queer or eccentric behaviour.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 11, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>8</sup> T 5.

<sup>9</sup> T 6, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

<sup>11</sup> Exhibit 1, Tabs 7 – 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>12</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2, Tabs 7 – 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>13</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>14</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10, p. 1.

19. Mr Kobelt was of deep Christian faith and he travelled to New Zealand for a Christian convention in 1979. While there, Mr Kobelt became irrational. He came into contact with the police and was eventually committed to Oakley Psychiatric Hospital in Auckland under the *Mental Health Act* for psychiatric treatment. He apparently responded well to treatment.<sup>15</sup>
20. On being discharged from hospital, arrangements were made for Mr Kobelt to return to South Australia and he then continued to receive treatment for his mental health issues. Mr Kobelt was admitted to Hillcrest Psychiatric Hospital on a number of occasions and was being prescribed medication that he was required to take to treat his illness. He was put on a form of bond by the hospital that required him to report back fortnightly to the hospital to receive his medication injections. If he did not comply, the police were authorised to pick him up and bring him to the hospital.<sup>16</sup>
21. It seems that due to his deteriorating mental state, it had been flagged that if Mr Kobelt had to be admitted to Hillcrest again. Some additional safety measures would be considered, such as requiring him to live in a special hostel and some form of financial guardianship put in place to manage his financial affairs.
22. Mr Kobelt told his family he did not like taking his medication and thought it made him feel worse. He was also unhappy about the threat of stricter measures being instituted. In response, he moved to Kalgoorlie, Western Australia in order to avoid stricter supervision of his medical care and “to keep his freedom”<sup>17</sup> as he phrased it to his parents.<sup>18</sup>
23. Mr Kobelt last saw his sister, Ms Wilhelm in July 1981 at Aldgate in South Australia. Later that month, Mr Kobelt drove to Kalgoorlie in his Mini Moke. He took up lodgings at the Angel Hostel in Boulder and sent some postcards home to his parents from that address.<sup>19</sup>
24. While living in Kalgoorlie, Mr Kobelt joined a local church. It became apparent to some of the church members that Mr Kobelt was suffering from some mental health issues, although initially his symptoms were not serious.<sup>20</sup>
25. However, it seems his mental health deteriorated to the point that Mr Kobelt eventually came to the attention of police after he was found walking naked down the street. He was taken by police to Kalgoorlie Hospital, where he was admitted for psychiatric treatment on 6 February 1982. After a brief admission, Mr Kobelt was discharged from Kalgoorlie Hospital on 8 February 1982. Mr Kobelt has not been seen or heard from since.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tabs 7 – 11, Tab 13.

<sup>16</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tabs 7 – 11.

<sup>17</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 7 and Tab 9.

<sup>19</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2, Tab 7 and Tab 10.

<sup>20</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>21</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

26. Mr Kobelt's family were notified in March 1982 that he had not collected his belongings, including his car, from the hostel where he had been staying in Kalgoorlie. His brother went to the hostel in May 1982 and collected Mr Kobelt's personal possessions but there was no sign of Mr Kobelt. No other items known to be related to Mr Kobelt have been raised with his family or police in the intervening years. Mr Kobelt's family simply waited and hoped that one day he would return.<sup>22</sup>

### **EVIDENCE OF MR KOBELT'S BEHAVIOUR IN KALGOORLIE**

27. Silvano Fasolo (Mr Fasolo) recalled meeting Mr Kobelt in Kalgoorlie in 1981 through the church. Mr Fasolo told police that Mr Kobelt was a pleasant young man but it was quite obvious from the start that Mr Kobelt had some mental health issues. Mr Fasolo recalled he appeared to have "dual personality, he did not socialise very well, he had noticeable mood changes and on more than one occasion [Mr Fasolo] remembered him talking normally then stopping and just staring into space."<sup>23</sup>
28. Mr Kobelt occasionally socialised with Mr Fasolo and went to Mr Fasolo's house for dinner with Mr Fasolo and his wife on one or two occasions. After referring to his diary, Mr Fasolo was also able to inform police that Mr Kobelt had arrived in Kalgoorlie on 16 July 1981, had gone on a camping trip with Mr Fasolo on 25 September 1981 and had gone to Mr Kobelt's house for dinner on 1 October 1981. Mr Fasolo was aware at the time that Mr Kobelt was staying at the Angel Hostel. Mr Fasolo did not recall what happened to Mr Kobelt, but told police he had assumed Mr Kobelt had left Kalgoorlie on an unknown date and returned to South Australia.<sup>24</sup>
29. Leonard Harmalin (Mr Harmalin) is a retiree who was living with his wife Anne in Kalgoorlie between 1981 and 1982. Mr Harmalin recalled meeting Mr Kobelt during a church organised trip to Esperance. He remembered Mr Kobelt was in his mid-20's at the time and he seemed "clean cut."<sup>25</sup> He was aware Mr Kobelt was residing at the Angel Hostel.<sup>26</sup>
30. Mr Harmalin received a letter from Mr Kobelt's mother in August 1981. Mrs Kobelt had obtained his name and address as a person in Kalgoorlie whom she could contact in relation to Mr Kobelt. Mr Kobelt's parents had received postcards from their son, so they knew he had arrived safely in Kalgoorlie and was staying at the Angel Hostel in Boulder, but it is clear they were worried about him.<sup>27</sup>
31. In the letter, Mrs Kobelt provided some background information on Mr Kobelt, noting he was a good son but he had a long history of mental illness and he was resistant to his recommended treatment. Mrs Kobelt made it clear that she and her husband acknowledged the negative side effects Mr Kobelt experienced from his medication. They wished there were better alternatives available, but they remained supportive of

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<sup>22</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2 and Tab 8.

<sup>23</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 4 [6].

<sup>24</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

<sup>25</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5 [5].

<sup>26</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

<sup>27</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

Mr Kobelt engaging with his only available medical treatment as they understood that over time the medication would help stabilise his condition and help him to live a more functional life. Without the treatment, it had been made clear to them that Mr Kobelt's mental health would progressively deteriorate. Mrs Kobelt indicated to Mr Harmalin that she was providing him with this information as the future for Mr Kobelt without treatment was not very bright and they wanted those around Mr Kobelt to be forewarned about the state of his mental health.<sup>28</sup>

32. Mr Harmalin and his wife had observed Mr Kobelt on one occasion staring into space in the backyard for no apparent reason, but had otherwise not personally witnessed Mr Kobelt experiencing any other kinds of mental health episodes. However, three or four months after receiving the letter, Mr Harmalin heard that Mr Kobelt had been involved in an incident and been admitted to hospital and had since left town. Mr Harmalin said he would have visited Mr Kobelt in hospital, but did not find out about the admission until after he had left.<sup>29</sup>
33. Simon Cullinan (Mr Cullinan) also recalled meeting Mr Kobelt in Kalgoorlie around this time. Mr Cullinan was staying at the Angel Hostel and met Mr Kobelt in either late 1981 or early 1982. Like the other men, Mr Cullinan and Mr Kobelt were both associated with the same local church and came to know each other through that association. Mr Cullinan described Mr Kobelt as "a regular, easy going bloke who got on with everyone."<sup>30</sup> He was always clean cut and well presented. Mr Cullinan was aware that Mr Kobelt had some mental health issues because of his behaviour. He was aware Mr Kobelt would sometimes stare into space and he was informed of an incident when Mr Kobelt stripped naked and was picked up by someone. The last thing he heard, Mr Kobelt had been taken to hospital. He did not know when Mr Kobelt was discharged from hospital, but did recall some of the church members saying he might be missing or he might have gone back to Adelaide. Mr Cullinan has not seen or heard anything from Mr Kobelt since that time.<sup>31</sup>
34. Another possible contact of Mr Kobelt's, Leigh Goodall (Mr Goodall), was identified as now living in Queensland. Mr Goodall was spoken to by police and he indicated he had met Mr Kobelt but did not know him well. He reported he had found Mr Kobelt to be very strange and found it hard to converse with him. He had no information to add about what had happened to Mr Kobelt after February 1982.<sup>32</sup>

### **DISCOVERY THAT MR KOBELT WAS MISSING**

35. A letter sent by Mr Kobelt's parents to the owners of the Angel Hostel on 31 March 1982, appears to have been in response to concerns raised about his whereabouts by the owners of the hostel in a letter dated 23 March 1982. His parents were aware Mr Kobelt had been taken to hospital after being found naked in early February 1982 and that he was discharged on 8 February 1982, but they did not know where he had

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<sup>28</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

<sup>29</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

<sup>30</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 6 [10].

<sup>31</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 6.

<sup>32</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.



gone from there. They questioned whether Mr Kobelt ever returned to the hospital after his discharge to pick up any clothes or other personal property, given when he had been taken to hospital he presumably had nothing with him.<sup>33</sup> It is not known if the hostel owners ever replied.

36. It is clear from the letter that Mr Kobelt's parents understood Mr Kobelt had gone to Kalgoorlie to get away from the enforced medication regime imposed on him in South Australia, so it must have been in their contemplation that he would not have wanted to come back to South Australia to be subjected to the same regime again.<sup>34</sup>
37. Mr Kobelt's parents acknowledged in the letter that Mr Kobelt often exhibited unpredictable behaviour and made spur-of-the-moment decisions when in a mentally disturbed states, so they were very concerned for his welfare. They emphasised he was a quiet and reserved person and a good son, so they had no reason to think he might have done anything wrong or harmed anyone else, but they were very concerned for his welfare as his mental health symptoms had become progressively worse over time.<sup>35</sup>
38. Mr and Mrs Kobelt mentioned in the letter that on a previous occasion Mr Kobelt had taken off without warning and ended up out of petrol in the middle of New South Wales and had to be collected from Orange, NSW. On another occasion he had to be collected from Snowtown in South Australia, but he then hired a taxi and went back there again. Mr Kobelt's parents commented that "W.A. is a mighty big place to find him this time and he hasn't taken his car to locate him by that."<sup>36</sup> They had contacted Mr Kobelt's cousin who lived in Collie on the off chance Mr Kobelt had called in there. Otherwise, they had placed their trust in God that he would turn up.<sup>37</sup>
39. Police later checked with the cousin's wife (unfortunately Mr Kobelt's cousin had died in 2020). She confirmed that Mr Kobelt's cousin was living in Collie in 1982 but she did not recall her husband ever mentioning Mr Kobelt.<sup>38</sup>

### **POLICE INVESTIGATION**

40. As noted above, contrary to Mr Kobelt's parents' understanding that his disappearance had been reported to WA Police in March 1982, the police missing person investigation did not commence until Ms Wilhelm made contact with South Australia police in April 2021 and the enquiry was put through to WA Police. Attempts were made to go back through records, including occurrence books, but no record was found in either the WA Police or SA Police archives.<sup>39</sup>
41. The delay is obviously regrettable and has greatly reduced the chances of finding out what happened to Mr Kobelt, given the loss of records and deaths of key witnesses in

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<sup>33</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

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

<sup>35</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>36</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>37</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>38</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

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

the intervening period. There is no way of identifying where the error occurred and it may simply have been a miscommunication. I am confident that police processes are very different today and if a similar contact was made by a member of the public with police about a possible missing person, there would be a record available to indicate the nature of the contact.

42. I am satisfied that in the present day, WA Police have diligently pursued all possible areas of investigation since receiving the recent enquiry from Mrs Wilhelm.
43. Proof of life inquiries, including Medicare records, searches of police databases, Centrelink checks and checks with standard banks in all states of Australia have all failed to find any record of contact with Mr Kobelt.<sup>40</sup>
44. Checks with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages found a record of Mr Kobelt's birth in South Australia but no record of his death in South Australia nor Western Australia.<sup>41</sup>
45. The only records of Mr Kobelt leaving Australia related to his trip to New Zealand in 1979, so there was nothing to suggest he had left the country after being released from hospital in Kalgoorlie.<sup>42</sup>
46. There was evidence before me that Mr Kobelt was very attached to his Mini Moke car, so it was very unlikely he would have left without collecting his vehicle if he was able to do so.
47. Amongst Mr Kobelt's personal possessions that were located in his room were some notes written by Mr Kobelt. The notes portray Mr Kobelt as a troubled man who at the time he wrote some of the notes was questioning his identity and worth and he appeared to be saying farewell. In one of the notes signed by Mr Kobelt he describes how he would like his personal possessions distributed amongst his family and friends, which could be interpreted as a will. The note was found with all of his personal possessions at his accommodation. Another note suggested he wasn't in a 'good place' mentally and could be interpreted as a suicide note, although it is undated and is ambiguous. There are also poems and prayers amongst the papers.<sup>43</sup>
48. Information was provided to the media about Mr Kobelt's case as part of National Missing Persons Week in August 2022, in the hope of eliciting new information. A number of witness statements from people in Kalgoorlie who had known Mr Kobelt were signed in December 2022. They spoke of Mr Kobelt's behaviour prior to his disappearance, but none of them could shed any light on what happened to Mr Kobelt after he was released from hospital in February 1982.<sup>44</sup>
49. Senior Constable Woods confirmed in evidence that the environment surrounding Kalgoorlie is harsh and unforgiving, with very high temperatures during the day, so if

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<sup>40</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

<sup>41</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

<sup>42</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

<sup>43</sup> T 7; Exhibit 1, Tab 16 and Tab 17.

<sup>44</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

Mr Kobelt had left Kalgoorlie on foot and walked into the desert, he is unlikely to have survived. In addition, if he died outside the town, there is a large amount of area that is not frequently visited given it is largely uninhabited, so his body might not be discovered. Ms Wilhelm's DNA sample has been obtained and it does not currently match any unidentified remains on the National Database. It will remain on the database, in case any remains are found in the future that might possibly be Mr Kobelt's.<sup>45</sup>

50. After establishing that no more information was likely to be obtained, a police officer spoke to Mrs Wilhelm about progressing the matter to the coroner. Mrs Wilhelm confirmed that she and her surviving siblings had all felt for many years that Mr Kobelt was deceased, and was content for his suspected death to be referred to the State Coroner.<sup>46</sup> Senior Constable Woods and Acting Sergeant Robertson confirmed at the inquest that Mr Kobelt's family believe he is deceased as they are certain he would have been in contact with them if he was still alive.<sup>47</sup>

### CONCLUSION

51. Following as thorough an investigation as was possible to conduct, given that around forty years had elapsed since Mr Kobelt's disappearance, Senior Constable Wood prepared a report to the coroner in September 2023. Senior Constable Woods concluded the evidence suggests Mr Kobelt died around the time he was discharged from hospital and confirmed that there are no suspicious circumstances or evidence to suggest there was any criminality in relation to Mr Kobelt's disappearance.<sup>48</sup>
52. It seems Mr Kobelt had kept in regular contact with his parents, even when he was out of the state, so his lack of any communication with his family after February 1982 is concerning and suggestive that something happened to him to prevent him from making contact. In addition, when Mr Kobelt went to hospital he apparently had no clothing or any of his possessions with him, so the fact he never returned to the hostel to collect any of his possessions is also very concerning, particularly his car which he valued highly.
53. Mr Kobelt had a well-documented history of mental health issues and there was evidence he had attempted self harm in the past. Some documentation suggests he might have been putting his affairs in order prior to his disappearance. It is also clear he had suffered an acute relapse immediately prior to his disappearance that had required hospitalisation, so it is unclear whether he was capable of considering and planning at that time or immediately prior to his disappearance. I cannot rule out the possibility Mr Kobelt might have had an intention to take his life, but it is equally possible he died by natural causes, accident or misadventure.
54. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt on the evidence before me that Mr Kobelt died on or around the time he was last known to be alive on 8 February 1982.

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<sup>45</sup> T 7; Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

<sup>46</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

<sup>47</sup> T 8.

<sup>48</sup> T 8.

There is no evidence to suggest that another person was involved in his death but very limited evidence to suggest how he died. Accordingly, the cause of death must be recorded as unascertained and I make an open finding as to the manner of death.

55. I regret that this does not provide Mr Kobelt's family with much more information than they already knew, but hopefully it provides his remaining family members with some small level of closure. There remains the possibility in the future that his remains might be discovered and, thanks to the DNA provided by his sister, he can be formally identified. However, for now I simply make the formal declaration that I am satisfied he is deceased, so Mr Kobelt's death can be registered.

S H Linton  
Deputy State Coroner  
5 April 2024